

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | AGENDA

10 MAY 2022

Physically at CCLA's London Office, Senator House, 85 Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4V 4ET and by Zoom – logins to be e-mailed separately.

From 11:00 a.m. – 15:00 p.m.

Any member wishing to submit an apology for this meeting please contact NALC at NALCcommittees@nalc.gov.uk or call on 020 7290 0302.

There will be a ten-minute refreshment break between **Noon and 12:10 p.m.** and a 30 minute lunch break between **13:00 and 13:30.**

1. Welcome & apologies [11:00 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.]

- 1.1 Welcome to the session (committee chair) (5 minutes)
- 1.2 To receive any apologies (committee chair) (5 minutes)

2. Minutes and matters arising from previous committee Zoom call on 22 February 2022 [11:10 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.]

Appendices
2.1-2.2

- 2.1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022 and to note any matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda – appendix 2.1. (5 minutes)
- 2.2. To note the actions completed since the 22 February 2022 session of the Committee, in the action log – appendix 2.2. (5 minutes)

3. National stakeholder update [11:20 - 11:30]

3.1 Stakeholder update from Kelly Watson / Mark Davis, CCLA – with questions from members. (10 minutes)

4. Committee work priorities 2022 [11:30 a.m. – Noon]

- 4.1 To receive an update on the committee work

programme for 2022 and to discuss – see appendix 3.1 (up to 30 minutes)

Noon – 12:10 p.m. 10 minute refreshment break

5. Super Councils' Network updates [12:10 – 12:30 p.m.]

5.1 To receive a short written report from the policy manager on the number of Super Councils taking up the national cyber security pilot from NCSC and to receive a general update from participating council representatives - see appendix 4.1 [10 minutes]

5.2 To receive a short written report from Member Services on peer challenge – see appendix 4.2 [10 minutes]

6. Levelling up and devolution - member updates [12:30 p.m. - 12:50 p.m.]

6.1 To receive and discuss round robin updates from committee members on levelling up, devolution and county deals in their areas in the light of the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper (20 minutes).

7. National Assembly vacancies on committee [12:50 p.m. - 13:00]

7.1 To receive a verbal update from the Executive Officer on any new committee members recruited from the corporate process for filling National Assembly vacancies for the 2022-23 tenure to this committee.

Lunch 13:00 – 13:30 (30 minutes)

8. National networks [13:30 p.m. – 14:45]

8.1 To receive a short verbal update on the various new national networks which have been created by NALC including what issues the committee would like to have raised in the upcoming Super Councils Network session on 17 May 2022 (up to 45 minutes)

9. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman [14:15 – 15:00]

9.1 To receive a verbal update from the head of policy and communications on the recent (4 May) NALC meeting with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and consider next steps (up to 45 minutes)

10. Date and time of next committee meeting [15:00]

10.1 To note that the next meeting of the Larger Councils' Committee will take place at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday 26 July, 2022 by Zoom call (committee members attending the session physically and wanting to catch up in person with NALC officers, other committee members or the CCLA Relationship Manager should feel free to remain briefly at the end of the 10 May session at CCLA's offices to do so before heading home). © NALC 2022

Appendix 2.1

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Zoom meeting of the Larger Councils Committee on 22 February 2022 at 11.00

Present:

Councillors Peter Astell (committee vice-chair, for part), Mike Drew (NALC vice-chair, member services), Paul Harvey (committee chair), Mathew Hulbert and Richard Parry; and directly elected clerks Jane Biscombe, Jennifer Childs, Carl Hearn and Shar Roselman.

Staff present: Chris Borg (policy manager), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications) and Jonathan Owen (chief executive).

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 The committee chair welcomed everyone to the session.

Resolved: That the welcome be noted.

1.2 To receive any apologies

Resolved: That apologies be noted from Cllr. Dave Barton.

2. Minutes and matters arising from previous committee Zoom call on 15 December 2021

2.1 The committee chair asked the committee if there were any matters arising from the minutes of the 15 December 2021 governance session and they were none.

Resolved: That the minutes from the 15 December 2021 committee session be noted.

2.2 Action log – the committee chair asked the committee if there were any observations on the committee's action log compiled since the 15 December 2021 session – there were none.

Resolved: That the committee's action log from the period 15 December 2021 – present be noted.

3. National stakeholder update

3.1 Mark Davies from CCLA provided the committee with the usual excellent update on the work being undertaken in the previous quarter by CCLA. CCLA had just undertaken a governance review as a result of which the NALC chair now had an observer seat at the LAMIT council. CCLA were offering a 0.3458% return on their products at present – a huge achievement in the current financial climate. The fortunes of CCLA continued to look positive as it continued to collect rents. A retail park in Maidenhead had just been purchased. The charity sector was taking a financial hit on equity and CCLA had also sold a couple of office spaces recently.

Resolved: That Mark Davies and CCLA be thanked for the excellent update and that the next session of the committee take place on 10 May 2022 at the CCLA London offices.

4. Introductions and committee work priorities 2022

4.1 Introductions from incoming committee members not at 15 December committee governance session

Jennifer Childs, incoming elected clerk to the committee, introduced herself to the committee as she had been unable to attend the 15 December 2021 committee governance session.

Resolved: That the committee welcomes Jennifer Childs to the committee.

4.2 To develop and expand the committee's work programme 2022

The policy manager provided a verbal update regarding the committee's work programme for 2022. It was linked to the committee's terms of reference and the NALC strategic plan.

There was then a general discussion regarding NALC services to the largest (Super) Councils. There had been some recent unhappiness amongst some Super Councils regarding clarity of the NALC provision for them and what this service (amongst constricted staff resource) constituted. There had been very few networking opportunities for Super Councils in 2021, and a few online in 2020. There would be four networking sessions online for Super Councils in 2022. Communications between NALC, county associations and Super Councils needed to vastly improve in 2022, but once this was achieved it was hoped the situation could stabilise consistently.

Resolved: That the strategic objectives from the work programme also link to NALC's work on levelling up; that the committee be updated on the current number of Direct Access councils; that councillors become more involved in networking sessions of the Super Councils Network; and that NALC share good practice amongst Super Councils having regard to the unique selling points of Super Councils.

5. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Update

The committee chair introduced a discussion about the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), following an update from the head of policy and communications. Mick King, the LGSCO had spoken at the NALC Future Communities conference on 2 December 2021, the same as the LGSCO Triennial Review had been launched. NALC had responded to the review agreeing that there should be a pilot of larger councils over coming years with coverage by the LGSCO ahead of any full rollout to local councils. The LGSCO was currently awaiting any response to the publication of its review, from the government.

Resolved: That anyone from the committee interested in helping NALC with any of its future piloting work (as part of a sounding board grouping) regarding larger councils and the LGSCO should contact relevant NALC officers as appropriate.

6. Super Councils Network updates

6.1 LGA associate membership option for Super Councils

The policy manager provided a brief verbal update stating that there were currently 70 Super Councils, 4 of whom had taken out the option of LGA associate membership for the 2022-23 financial year. No SCN councils had taken out this option during the 2021-22 financial year. There was a brief discussion about the process for forming the Network every year and it was confirmed that if county associations notified NALC of councils in their areas at anytime during the financial year who otherwise qualified for membership of SCN, those councils could join the Network real-time.

Resolved: That local councils confirmed to NALC by county associations to otherwise qualify for network status at anytime during a financial year – be added onto the network.

6.2 Update on National Cyber Security Centre local government pilot

The policy manager provided a brief verbal update that there were three Super Councils who had joined the National Cyber Security Centre local government pilot so far (Farnham Town Council, Newport Pagnell Town Council and Sevenoaks Town Council). NALC had also joined the pilot, corporately. The committee would be kept updated.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6.3. Peer challenge

The committee chair introduced a brief discussion on peer challenge which it was hoped would re-commence (subject to the COVID-19 situation improving) – in the Autumn. Other NALC officers were engaging with Cirencester Town Council on potential interest for a peer review. Future peer reviews would likely need to take place at Super Councils which had achieved Quality Gold status.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

7. Levelling up and devolution - member updates

The committee chair introduced a round-robin item on levelling up and local councils. The need to improve communication between NALC and county associations needed to be picked up in the NALC governance review. After a short further update from the policy manager, members provided the following local updates on devolution and levelling up in their own areas:

- There was a belief from Newport Pagnell that borough councils do not understand the levelling up agenda;
- In Newbury the levelling up agenda was considered to be political and residents were not receiving the services they deserved;
- It was noted that there were only two references in the levelling up white paper to local councils;
- In Weymouth the town council cannot make an impact on the deprivation agenda as its area is not considered deprived enough; waste bins are disappearing in the town and there is a case of service dumping, also;
- In Devon there is the Team Devon model, but regarding the combined authority approach it is hard for local councils to make an impact;

- In Yate it was recognised that local council services had to be very local; for this reason the council had adopted youth services for the area.

Resolved: That the verbal updates be noted.

8. National Assembly vacancies on the committee

The chief executive confirmed that there was no need for additional co-options to a committee this size. However there would be a proper central process communicated by NALC over coming weeks regarding filling all National Assembly vacancies on all committees, including this one.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

9. National networks

The head of policy and communications provided a short verbal update on the rationale behind the creation over the last year of several new national networks. There was then a broader discussion during which it was agreed that a balance was needed between sharing good practice and available resource. The networks were also an attempt by NALC to reach out directly to local councillors, councils and the wider sector, also on thematic issues.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

10. Date and time of next meeting

11:00 – 13:00, 10 May 2022 at CCLA's London Offices, Senator House, 85 Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4V 4ET.

Councillor Paul Harvey
chair

Appendix 2.2

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

Date	Activity	Item number	Action Complete (Y / N)
22 February 2022	<p>Minutes and matters arising from previous committee Zoom call on 15 December 2021</p> <p>ACTION: That the committee's action log from the period 15 December 2021 – present be noted.</p>	2.2	Y
22 February 2022	<p>National stakeholder update</p> <p>ACTION: That Mark Davies and CCLA be thanked for the excellent update and that the next session of the committee take place on 10 May 2022 at the CCLA London offices.</p>	3.1	Y
22 February 2022	<p>Introductions and committee work priorities 2022</p> <p>ACTION: That the committee welcomes Jennifer Childs to the committee.</p>	4.1	Y
22 February 2022	<p>Introductions and committee work priorities 2022</p> <p>ACTION: That the strategic objectives from the work programme also link to NALC's work on levelling up; that councillors become more involved in networking sessions of the Super Councils Network; and that NALC share good practice amongst Super Councils having regard to the unique selling points of Super Councils.</p>	4.2	Y
22 February 2022	<p>Super Councils Network updates</p> <p>ACTION: That local councils confirmed to NALC by county associations to otherwise qualify for network status at anytime during a</p>	6.1	Y

	financial year – be added onto the network.		
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Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager e. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049

Appendix 3.1

Draft committee work programme 2022

A: Terms of Reference (TOR) – Setting NALC’s strategic policy objectives		
a)	To develop, formulate and respond to the policy issues affecting larger councils within the overall NALC framework (avoiding committee duplication).	
b)	To provide, by direct access, a full range of national services, including legal advice and oversight of the NALC larger council delivery offer.	
c)	To provide networking opportunities for elected members, clerks and staff of larger councils in terms of conferences and seminars – having regard to the unique needs of this special interest group.	
Work programme objectives/activity		
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing good practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Direct Access Scheme, answering queries, growing membership of Scheme Ensuring Direct Access councils continue to feature as case studies in NALC online events and publications (not just SCN councils) 	Ongoing Ongoing
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piloting extension of LGSCO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor government response to LGSCO consultation (Triennial Review, 2021) - on pilot extension of LGSCO to local councils 	Ongoing
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence base for direct funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure evidence base for direct funding of local councils as part of annual NALC finance survey of sector 	Q1 22-23 FY
B: TOR – Detailed consideration/implementation		
a)	To provide specific and relevant training on issues identified by, and affecting larger councils, also identifying what larger councils can do to assist the wider sector (including by peer challenge and peer support).	
b)	To contribute to the NALC flexible and diverse funding campaign.	
c)	To oversee facilitation of the SCN, supporting other relevant special interest groups, also working with the LGA where appropriate.	
d)	To promote to larger (including urban) councils the advantages of being in membership of NALC and county associations.	
e)	To promote regional groupings of larger councils.	

Work programme objectives/activity		
1)	Identifying future membership needs for advice and guidance - Potential development of a member survey.	Ongoing
2)	Further peer reviews with Local Government Association - To start to deliver peer reviews again with Super Councils, (which have achieved Quality Gold status) starting with Cirencester Town Council.	Q3
3)	Piloting cyber security with National Cyber Security Centre - Encouraging as many SCN councils as possible to take up the free pilot offer with NCSC.	Ongoing
4)	Market towns —supporting NALC campaigns and big themes - To continue to lobby government on high street funding for larger councils and issues such as banking which affect market town councils.	Ongoing
C – TOR: Ways of working		
a)	To deliver an annual work programme using the vehicles of both task and finish groups and officer co-ordination.	
b)	To use blended forms of technology to communicate regularly with all larger councils in membership.	
c)	To promote best practice across all policy themes from larger councils, to larger councils across England – using different media	
Work programme objectives/activity		
1)	Effective National Network: Super Councils -To provide national networking virtual sessions for this special interest group.	Ongoing
2)	Continuing National Network: Coastal communities - To continue to provide national networking virtual sessions for this network of coastal town councils.	Ongoing Ongoing

3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering with Rural Services Network on potential National Network <p>- To investigate possibility of setting up a joint national network on rural issues with RSN.</p>	Ongoing
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Appendix 4.1

National Cyber Security Centre Local Government Programme

1. Summary

In the Autumn of 2021 the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) offered up to NALC and Super Councils the chance to take part in its free local government cyber security programme.

2. Context

NALC itself joined the cyber security programme with NCSC. It encouraged Super councils to take out such an opportunity liaising directly with NCSC. Three councils have done so at the time of writing:

- Newport Pagnell Town Council;
- Sevenoaks Town Council; &
- Farnham Town Council.

The committee will be kept updated.

3. Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager e. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049

Appendix 4.2

Peer challenge

1. Summary

The Local Government Association (LGA) have agreed to undertake two peer challenges for larger local councils in the year 2022-3. This follows on from the successful pilots with Falmouth and Chippenham in 2020.

2. Context

The peer challenges are likely to take place in September or October as this fits best with the timetable they have for the peer challenges they are undertaking for principal authorities. The costs of these peer challenges and the majority of the administration will be covered by the LGA.

Although the peer challenges look at the council as a whole, they will work with the council in advance to identify key areas on which they wish to focus. This will also help identify appropriate peers to take part. These peers will be made up of councillors and clerks from similar councils and with experience of undertaking similar reviews. The peer challenge does not simply review the council but will also work with them to put together an action plan on how they will seek to improve after the visit has taken place and the report compiled.

We are currently identifying appropriate councils to take part. One council has already expressed an interest in a peer challenge but they are also considering other potential routes to achieve the same end. We are also looking at super councils that have achieved Quality Gold status in the Local Council Award Scheme as they may see a peer challenge as the next logical step in their development. We are however keen to see a geographical spread and so are encouraging suitable councils in the North or East of the country to express an interest.

3. Recommendation

To note progress.

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