

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Larger Councils Committee held at The Bloomsbury Building on 30 April 2024.

Present:

Councillors Mike Drew (committee vice chair), Iain Hamilton (committee chair), Katherine Keats Rohan, Rufus Lunn, Paul Harvey and directly elected clerks, Carl Hearn, and Steve McNay.

Staff present: Chris Borg (policy manager), Jessica Lancod-Frost (policy officer) Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications) and Claire Fitzgerald (administration manager, for part).

Other guests in attendance: Jennifer Bevan, finance advisory network advisor at CIPFA (for part) and Lisa Bowman, clerk at Exmouth Town Council (for part).

1. Apologies

Resolved: Apologies were received from Cllr David Francis, Cllr Sophia Vaughan-Hodkinson and Shar Roselman.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: That the draft minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 be approved.

3. Work plan 2024/2025

The committee considered a report on the Committee's work plan for the next two years, noting this had been agreed by the Management Board and National Assembly. Points made during discussion included cyber security being part of work on AI, increasing places at future Study Tours plus a place for the committee chair or vice chair, sharing information and resources from this year's Study Tour and considering holding meetings of the Super Councils Network in the evening to increase participation, especially from councillors.

Resolved: That the committee workplan for 2024/2025 be noted.

4. Artificial intelligence and its application to larger council operations

The committee split into groups to discuss what the term artificial intelligence (AI) means in local government terms, how it currently impacts the operations and

service delivery of their larger council and how they think it will impact larger council operations and service delivery in the future. Feedback included AI should be a facilitator, not a replacement for council interaction with communities, policies and proper training for councils need to be in place to ensure that AI is used in an ethical and responsible manner, the request for advice and guidance including policies on AI, engaging with organisations such as the Local Government Association including on guidance.

Resolved: That the discussion on artificial intelligence and its application to larger council operations be noted.

5. Financial resilience

Jennifer Bevan, finance advisory network advisor at the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), joined the meeting remotely to deliver a presentation on financial resilience. Jennifer spoke on the fundamentals of financial resilience, pillars of financial resilience, risks and warning signs, common themes of financial instability, best practice, building on good practice, the way forward, CIPFA's facilities management code and the importance of financial resilience.

Jennifer informed the committee that when deciding to raise the precept, a balance should be struck between funding services and not increasing it so much that citizens encounter financial difficulties and need to use more services. Jennifer also advised the committee to have a reserve strategy in place setting out how their council uses reserves.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted and made available on the NALC website, and Jennifer Bevan thanked for attending.

6. Member services update

Resolved: That the item be deferred until the next meeting.

7. Committee elections feedback

The administration manager delivered a presentation on the number of nominations received in the 2021 and 2023 committee elections and invited feedback.

Resolved: That the feedback questions be inputted to Forms and circulated to all committee members after the meeting.

8. Martyn's law update

The policy manager provided an update following the latest meeting of the Martyn's Law Steering Group. The group had met on 7 March to agree NALC's response to the Martyn's Law: standard tier consultation. **Resolved:** That the update on Martyn's Law be noted.

9. NALC National Networks

Lisa Bowman, clerk of Exmouth Town Council, provided an update on the work of the Coastal Communities network since September 2023. The group's recent emphasis had been on inviting industry experts to lead informed discussion, including LGA Special Interest Groups on Coastal Water Quality, Coastal Landfill and Coastal Adaptations, Jen Treadwell from the think tank Onward, the National Oceanography Centre and Luke Douglas Home from the Crown Estate. The network also looked at how coastal communities can respond to antisocial behaviour during peak season.

The policy manager provided an overview of the last meeting of the Climate Emergency Network, during which updates were provided on the Climate and Ecology Bill and the Place Based Initiative.

Cllr Paul Harvey and Cllr Mike Drew informed the committee about the latest work of the Super Councils Network. Super Councils had been invited to take part in the NALC/LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Programme and encouraged to help create age friendly communities.

Resolved: That the updates on the national networks be noted.

10. Shared Intelligence Proposal

The policy manager informed the committee about a proposal from Shared Intelligence to set up focus groups for local (parish and town) councils to share challenges and discuss practical steps on delivering Net Zero.

Resolved (1): The policy manager to gauge interest in the proposal, including with the Super Councils Network.

11. Date and time of next committee meeting

Tuesday 23 July 2024 from 10.00 to 12.00 noon via Zoom.