

DRAFT MINUTES | MANAGEMENT BOARD

14 September 2021

Welcome and apologies

Present:

Cllr Sue Baxter (chair)	Cllr Richard Parry
Cllr Bob Blezzard	Cllr Keith Stevens (vice chair, finance)
Cllr Ken Browse	Cllr David Francis
Cllr Peter Davey	Cllr Paul Harvey
Cllr Mike Drew (vice chair member services)	Cllr Mike Scott

Also present:

Jonathan Owen, chief executive
Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications
Jane Moore, acting head of member services and senior solicitor
Steve Walker, head of finance and administration

Apologies

None were received

Minutes 15 June 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record, subject to confirmation that the management board meetings should start at 10.00 and generally last until 12 with a 15 minute break as necessary. There were no matters arising.

1. Internal Management and Finance Issues

A. Finance

The Board received an update from the vice chair (finance) and the chair of the finance and scrutiny committee.

Cllr Stevens reported that the external auditors had issued an unqualified set of accounts for 2020/21 which he would be signing and reporting to the assembly and agm. These showed a surplus of £102000, due to underspends in operational expenses, governance and other areas; largely due to the pandemic. As previously

agree £85000 has been allocated to reserves to support strategic investment in IT and the web-site and the civility and respect project. He also reported that the auditors had proposed a significant reduction in the valuation of 109 Great Russell Street. This was not a formal valuation and would be re-visited this year.

He had worked with finance and scrutiny colleagues to rework the 2022/23 budget to reflect the change in the proposed budget affiliation fee increase from 3% to 1%, as agreed by the last management board and assembly. This would reflect pressures placed on society generally during the pandemic whilst enabling the Association to go some way to meet expected salary and NI increases and maintaining reserves, which continued to be below the recommended level.

Cllr Davey reported on the meeting of the finance and scrutiny committee on 7 September which had reworked the budget for 2022- 2025 to reflect the reduced affiliation fee increase and to set a broadly balanced budget for future years. They had also heard about this year's first quarter outturn which showed a surplus of £9500. Heads of Service had updated the committee on expenditure and income targets in their area which were broadly on track.

The committee had also continued its review of key governance documents including pensions explained, financial regulations and the constitution. A separate meeting would be convened to consider other corporate documents.

In discussion, Cllr Blezzard expressed his opposition to the affiliation fee increase. On pensions there was discussion of the association's overall enrolment policy which would be continued but kept under review as necessary.

B. Operational efficiency

The chief executive reported on a risk assessment to prepare for the use of 109 following the easing of restrictions imposed during the pandemic. The office was now open for use by those staff who wished to use it and occasional team and whole team meetings would be held when required. The position would be kept under review as the situation changed.

Cllrs Parry and Scott stressed importance of clarity on future use and ensuring any HR issues were managed. The chief executive confirmed that the management team was being regularly advised by its HR partners and would keep the position under review. Cllr Drew emphasized the importance of investment in IT etc. to ensure effective remote working by staff and councillors.

The chief executive also reported on progress with moving its IT system to the cloud and reviewing the website in the light of user testing. Cllr Davey noted that whilst these projects were to be completed sequentially, it may make sense to tender for a single provider for long-term support.

C. HR matters

The board received an updated staff organogram and agreed to consider how to make it available to county associations.

D. Governance matters

The board received reports on a number of governance matters and agreed the following.

Review of committee operation and consideration of new voting process

The board noted that the finance and scrutiny committee was responsible for the review of key governance documents and agreed to recommend that the wider review of governance including any move to a single transferable vote electoral process should be agreed by the new national assembly with the recommendation that it a task and finish group be set up to recommend any changes to the July 2022 meeting for consideration as appropriate by AGM,

Cllr Blezzard indicated his continued preference for enacting a move to the STV system as part of this year's elections.

Paper from the smaller councils committee

The board considered a paper from the chair of this committee setting out some proposals for change. The board had a range of views on the committee's future and agreed that this should be considered as part of the review above, with consideration given to establishing a broad based network.

It was noted that a number of its recommendations around membership and representation on the board could be addressed through the use of co-options.

Length of remote meetings

The board agreed that meetings should be held at a time agreed by the individual committee. Generally remote meetings should be no longer than 2 hours duration with a 15 minute break.

Communication from Vice-president Lord Lytton

The board noted correspondence from Lord Lytton identifying potential problems arising from differences in company and association law depending on whether county associations were incorporated or not. Guidance may be required. The board agreed to feed this into the governance review.

NALC national networks

The head of policy and communications reported on good progress with setting up national networks for super councils, coastal communities, climate change, LGBT+ councillors, women councillors and young councillors which the board welcomed and agreed might have implications for the development of the committee structure as part of the governance review.

President and vice-presidents

The chairman and vice-chairmen had been delegated the responsibility for drawing up proposals for the association's parliamentary president and vice-presidents to strengthen its cross party support and influence in parliament. The board noted that a number of candidates had been identified and supported recommending them to the AGM.

The board also agreed to recommend a constitutional amendment to allow for the appointment of a separate category of parliamentary vice presidents.

The board also asked Cllr Baxter to consider becoming a working vice-president which she agreed to consider.

Use of the term chair

The board also agreed to propose a constitutional change to replace the term chairman with the gender neutral term in line with a number of county association's changes.

Last committee cycle 2021

The board agreed to invite committees to reflect on their operation over the last 2 years and identify any on-going priorities for consideration by new committees.

2. External affairs

A. Civility project with Society of Local Council Clerks and One Voice Wales.

The notes of the meeting of the Civility Project Working Group held on 28 June were received and it was noted that a project manager had been appointed within NALC and SLCC's budgets and employed by NALC. Cllr Parry asked for a copy of the spreadsheet of projects referred to. Cllr Blezzard queried whether Trades Unions should also be invited to be involved in the project.

B. Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments

The notes of the meeting held on 11 August were received. Cllr Francis registered some concerns about why parish meetings with little or no precept or income were

included in the regime and NALC should be pressing government to remove them from the regime's remit.

C. JPAG meeting – minutes of 8 June were noted.

D. Meeting with SLCC Chair

Sue Baxter reported on her meeting with the SLCC's new chair on 29 July where it had been agreed to revisit the current protocol, and set up regular leadership meetings

E. Pay claim.

It was noted that the Trades Unions were recommending the rejection of the Employers' latest pay offer and ballots were being held into October.

3. Any other business and date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Management Board will be held on 16 November from 10.00am to 12.00am via Zoom.

In other business, Cllr Blezzard expressed some reservations about the proposal to extend the remit of the ombudsman to cover the sector and Cllr Drew highlighted whether they had the capacity to engage with 10000 councils.

David Francis drew attention to a communication from MHCLG indicating that applications for loan approvals appeared to be increasing in value. It was agreed that this should be monitored.

The board noted the tensions between board members role as board members and their role as representatives of their associations on assembly which had been an on-going issue for many years which had generally not been a problem but the new board may want to give it some consideration.

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