

MANAGEMENT BOARD | DRAFT MINUTES

11 January 2022

Present:

Cllr Keith Stevens (NALC chair), Cllr Mike Drew (vice-chair member services), Cllr Peter Davey (vice-chair finance), Cllr Bob Blezzard, Cllr David Francis, Cllr Paul Harvey, Cllr Richard Parry, and Cllr Graham Ford.

NALC staff present:

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

1. Minutes 16 September 2021

These were received, subject to a minor correction to include a missing date; and a further report on the national employment framework requested. Cllr Blezzard asked for his opposition to the exclusion of a confidential note from the published minutes.

2. Board terms of reference

The board considered its current terms of reference.

The following issue was identified for immediate amendment: the inclusion of the scheme of delegations to officers. There was a debate whether the urgent decision role of management board was relevant given scope for remote meetings. On balance it was agreed to retain.

A number of other general issues were identified for possible inclusion in the upcoming governance review:

- A. Frequency of meetings and the need for greater councillor involvement in decisions, giving a steer on direction of travel. There should be a call for items for inclusion on the agenda
- B. Minutes should be reported to assembly for agreement
- C. The terms of reference should include oversight of relationships with trades unions ideally through a negotiating committee
- D. The board should have a role in hearing grievance appeals

Resolved: It was agreed to hold monthly informal Management Board meetings excluding officers (see dates below) and that the other matters be fed into the work of the governance review.

3. Filling National Assembly committee vacancies

Management Board noted that there were three vacancies for National Assembly members on the board. It also noted that it could co-opt non-assembly members. The board agreed that given its role and accountability to assembly, its membership should be drawn from assembly members.

The board also noted that there were other National Assembly member vacancies on committees, and it was resolved that the chief executive draft a letter to National Assembly members and county associations seeking expressions of interest from National Assembly members to serve on committees taking into account the need for diversity and geographical balance. The final decision on appointments should be taken at the next National Assembly.

A number of other points were made which should feed into the governance review including: the need to promote diversity; the need to encourage more people to get involved in the work of their CALC and NALC; the importance of face-to-face meetings and conferences in encouraging engagement; directly elected positions have provided a route to get people involved in the assembly; and the importance of existing assembly members promoting their work to colleagues.

4. Corporate risk register, priorities and board work programme

Management Board received the current risk register, commenting that its excel format was difficult to read. The board identified the following risks facing the sector and NALC:

Sector risks

- a) Poor communications and relationships between councils and other agencies
- b) Adequate finances, income streams and access to grants
- c) Top-down local government re-organisation
- d) Threat of abolition
- e) Imposition of referendum principles
- f) Lack of understanding of sector and its potential by government and other bodies. Get government to listen
- g) "overloading" of councils, particularly smaller ones
- h) Devolution
- i) Patchy collaborative work with other agencies – districts/counties, police, health etc
- j) Demonstrating relevance through work on climate change and health etc
- k) Standards and civility including public attitudes

- l) Lack of access to government funding
- m) Unintended consequences of legislation
- n) Adverse publicity from errant council
- o) Recruitment and retention of clerks
- p) Diversity of councillors and more participation in elections
- q) Need to retain remote meetings
- r) Creation of new councils - ring fenced funding for upper tier councils to parish their areas?

NALC risks

- i. Income and loss of membership
- ii. Lack of financial transparency
- iii. Weak national assembly, clarity of assembly member roles including informing county associations of NALC work/initiatives
- iv. Demonstrating vfm
- v. NALC driven by minority not majority
- vi. Mutual understanding, support and trust
- vii. Ceasing to be relevant and threat of other bodies representing/supporting the sector
- viii. More resources for NALC
- ix. Better website
- x. Ability to resource roll-out of local council award scheme.
- xi. Resilience and succession planning for staff
- xii. Modernisation and building capacity
- xiii. 109

The chair and vice-chair also reported on their emerging priorities: modernising NALC, promoting the sector as the first tier of local government, the big issues including health and climate change, financial planning and transparency, robust corporate systems, local council award scheme, website, getting councillors more involved in CALC and NALC, closer working between CALCs and NALC.

The chief executive reported that the committees were also identifying their priorities, and these would be circulated to the board separately and included in the committee minutes. They are attached as an appendix to these minutes for information.

Resolved: that NALC officers amend the risk register and develop draft work programmes for the board and committees for further discussion, prioritisation and resourcing.

5. NALC governance review

Management Board had agreed to set up a task and finish group (TFG) to examine the effectiveness of NALC's committees and its election processes.

Management Board agreed that Paul Harvey should be the Management Board representative on the task and finish group, and that National Assembly should be invited to consider draft terms of reference and the composition of the task and finish group. The board recommended that there should be an assembly member from each of the eight regional groupings.

Terms of reference should include effectiveness of current structure; elections process and how to encourage greater participation; proposals to change committees; proposals to change electoral processes; committee terms of reference; standing orders; engagement with county associations and their governance/constitutions in light of recent letter from Lord Lytton.

The task and finish groups proposals should be considered by Management Board and reported to National Assembly and then agreement at the AGM for implementation from 2023.

Resolved: That draft proposals be drawn up for consideration by National Assembly.

6. Lobby day

The board considered arrangements for this year's lobby day in the light of the current COVID pandemic situation. The board resolved that it should be held on 23 March, primarily remotely and a parliamentary reception deferred to the summer.

7. Rural Services Network – market town grouping

Justin Griggs reported that a number of NALC national networks had been created to increase engagement. The RSN had a rural market town grouping and discussions had been held with them to see if this could be opened to wider participation from NALC councils as a forum to address market town issues. <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/page/rural-market-town-group> The RSN had agreed to this with a discounted rate for NALC councils.

Resolved: To authorise Justin Griggs to continue and implement this proposal.

8. Dates of future meetings

Informal meetings of the board

To note that the board will meet informally on the following dates at 11 am via zoom for 30 minutes.

- 14-Feb-2022
- 11-Apr-2022
- 13-Jun-2022
- 8-Aug-2022
- 10-Oct-2022
- 12-Dec-2022

Date and times of next meetings

The next meeting of the board be held on Tuesday, 29 March 2022 starting at 10:00 via zoom. The following meetings will be held at 10.00 am on:

- Tues, 5-Jul-2022
- Tues. 20-Sep-2022
- Tues, 22-Nov-2022

Appendix – initial committee priorities

Management board possible priorities

- Oversight of modernisation of NALC
- national employment framework
- Civility and respect project
- Development of SAAA/ finance support etc

Policy Committee

- Enabling members of the committee to message each other during meetings using Zoom chat.
- Bringing in additional external expertise to provide evidence and information to inform the committee's work.
- There had previously been a range of views on how the allocated budget for planning support should be used and further work was needed to scope this out.
- Potential reform of Local Enterprise Partnerships and developing proposals for alternative structures.
- Devolution and working with other organisations to expand the sector in urban areas.

- The importance of close working and involvement of county officers, greater use of fortnightly meetings between county and national officers and proactivity by the County Officer Forum representative.
- Ensuring there are effective practices in place to identify consultations and announcements and gather input from the committee in parallel with responses from councils; &
- Agreeing the need to strengthen the involvement of the County Officers' Forum in NALC's policy work.

Smaller Councils Committee

- Practice regarding planning consultations
- carbon literacy
- Identifying future membership needs for advice/guidance and providing feedback/input on NALC services
- Practical issues arising from limited capacity
- Sharing good practice
- Supporting NALC campaigns/big themes and helping develop the evidence base including through surveys
- Improving good governance and increasing take-up of the Local Council Award Scheme and CiLCA

During discussion several comments and further suggestions were made, including:

- Cllr Lillian Burns said she was keen to write a report on the Levelling Up White Paper and a report with a working title of 'You can do anything' to provide encouragement to smaller councils including expanding examples from NALC's Points of Light publication
- The committee should avoid duplicating the work of other committees but instead ensure linkages were in place, for example responding to the Levelling Up White Paper was a Policy Committee responsibility
- The committee should advise on the language that would resonate with smaller councils

Larger Councils Committee

- Sharing good practice
- Piloting extension of LGSCO
- Supporting NALC's campaigns and big themes including developing an evidence base for direct funding
- Identifying future membership needs for advice and guidance

- Further peer reviews with the Local Government Association
- Piloting cyber security with the National Cyber Security Centre
- An effective National Network: Super Councils
- Continuing National Network: Coastal communities
- Partnering with the Rural Services Network on the National Network:
Market towns

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