

MANAGEMENT BOARD |

Draft minutes

Date: 19 September

Venue: Hybrid

Present:

Cllr Pat Ansell (for part), Cllr Sue Baxter, Cllr Bob Blezzard, Cllr Mike Drew (vice-chair member services), Cllr David Francis, Cllr Loraine Rape, Cllr Stuart Roden, Cllr Keith Stevens (chair)

Jonathan Owen chief executive, Justin Griggs head of policy and communications, Charlotte Eisenhart, head of member services and Steve Walker, head of finance and administration.

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Davey and Cllr Paul Harvey (who attended the beginning of the meeting).

1. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting of Management Board meetings held on 25 May and 12 June were agreed.

Under matters arising, it was agreed that discussion of portfolios for management board should be deferred until after the forthcoming elections.

The new board member from Cornwall, Stuart Roden, was welcomed to the meeting.

2. Governance issues

Single transferable voting for NALC elections. It was noted that the introduction of the single transferable vote process for direct elections to committees would require initial registration by electors. Whilst disappointing, it was agreed that the STV process should be introduced this year. The timing of the ballot could be extended to help address additional registration required.

Draft National Assembly and AGM agendas were agreed.

Motions to AGM. The board noted that motions had been received from Shropshire on access to national grants and Northamptonshire on abolishing the national assembly. The board also agreed recommending to assembly that a motion be put

calling for all political parties to commit to introducing the recommendations of the committee on standards in public life to strengthen the sanctions regime. It was agreed that these motions should be put forward to assembly. The board generally was not supportive of the Northamptonshire proposal at this time.

New member services committee and separating roles of finance and scrutiny. Discussion was deferred until after the elections. The board noted that the smaller councils committee was keen to retain its role. Finance and scrutiny committee had had an initial discussion of developing the scrutiny role at its last meeting.

New committee and assembly processes, training, and induction. The board asked officers to come forward with suggestions for consideration on timing etc of distributing committee papers, training, and development in roles and a bringing together of committee chairs. Consideration should also be given to how to support members with caring responsibilities.

Encouraging more people to come forward and get involved in the work of their national and county associations. The board received reports from discussions of this issue at assembly and with county officers and agreed that assembly should be recommended to agree that this be further progressed by county associations.

Review of sector support. The board received a copy of the paper from the chair of the county officers' forum proposing that there should be a major review of sector support. This had been sent to county associations for comment. Board members indicated that this had not been drawn to their attention within their county associations at this time. Several practical, factual, and timing issues were flagged up.

3. Update on NALC's strategic direction following national assembly discussions.

The board considered a revised draft of the chief executive's paper prepared for the last meeting of the assembly which, if agreed, would be included in the annual report to AGM.

4. Member services update

New HR service and reviewed finance service. CE reported the Worknest HR service was developing well with 387 queries from 18 county associations. There was also a range of how-to-guides and webinars available. Finance support was being provided by Derek Kemp especially on JPAG and individual queries, and Steve Parkinson for written guidance. He was currently leading on the review of the model financial regulations. Bob Blezzard reported that there had been discussion

of this at the recent smaller councils committee which was keen to see simplification.

National template contract of employment. Charlotte Eisenhart updated on the latest discussions with SLCC. Keith Stevens reported that he would be having further discussions with their chair shortly and attending their annual conference. SLCC concerns centred around the promotion of Green Book terms which has been substantially endorsed in the latest draft of the contract. The board noted this was a difficult issue especially when developing a template with some potentially filled in elements. Overtime this might be better developed as an on-line document. There was also debate about what could be recommended around pensions especially as this was an issue each council had to consider fully itself. Charlotte Eisenhart agreed to circulate the latest draft of the contract and SLCC comments to the board.

Local Councils Explained review project. Charlotte Eisenhart reported that discussions were planned with lawyers in local government who would be candidates to conduct the review. There may be merits in considering an on-line version behind an additional payment restraint.

Civility and respect project and relationship with the improvement and development board. Charlotte Eisenhart reported that a new independent chair of the board had been recruited and would be confirmed soon. She also reported that following discussions with SLCC and others the intention was to integrate the civility and respect work within the improvement board. To facilitate this, officers were proposing using the current budget contingency of £20k. The board supported this overall direction noting the opposition of Cllr Blezzard. Concerns were expressed that there was a risk of duplication between the civility and respect documentation and material available from Worknest. Cllr Blezzard re-iterated his scepticism of the objectives of the project. It was agreed that there needed to be evaluation of the continuing work on civility and respect and that it should become part of business as usual within existing resources after the current extension to integrate with the improvement board stressed the importance of full details of the financial implications of the project being reported to the finance and scrutiny committee.

Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments. Jonathan Owen reported that the new board was developing well and had appointed new chief executive. Chair David Bowles would speak at next assembly. The new board was looking at increasing transparency, developing a digital return, building the audit market and use of reserves.

5. Finance update

Steve Walker presented the quarterly accounts to June 2023 and the draft budget for 2024/5 agreed by the finance and scrutiny committee.

The board also supported the recommendation from the finance and scrutiny committee to propose to national assembly and the AGM, that the affiliation fee for 2024/5 be 7.94p per elector, capped at £2037 for larger councils.

6. Policy and Communications update

Climate change support. Chris Borg reported on proposals to set up a website and other support for parish councils on climate change which had been flagged up at the last Assembly. The board agreed to watch the development of this initiative before taking a decision to formally support or not.

Party conferences. Justin Griggs updated on plans to attend Lib-Dem, Conservative, Green and Labour conferences. Jonathan Owen would be presenting at Lib-Dems and Cllr Stevens at Labour. There was discussion of having a stand at future conferences which had previously been rejected due to cost. Officers were asked to identify costing and options for future. Jonathan Owen and Steve Walker gave an update on the latest estimate of the likely outturn for the 2022/3 financial year which was still being finalised. It was broadly in line with budgetary expectations.

Star councils and parliamentary reception. Justin Griggs reported on preparations for this event taking place on 29 November.

Due to time constraints other items on banking and insurance, LGA, network for black and Asian councillors and SLCC were not discussed.

7. NALC review

Jonathan Owen briefed the board confidentially on feedback received from staff on his request for views on the future development of NALC in the light of the move to new offices and IT and web-site developments. Further reports on options would be made to the board.

8. Dates of future meetings

- 9 October informal via zoom
- 21 November
- 11 December
- 8 January 2024.