



nalc

Information
Quarterly
summary report

**National Association
of Local Councils**

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INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period January – April 2023.

The report sets out progress delivering NALC's strategic plan including information on important internal issues, progress with our parliamentary and government affairs work, events, media coverage and publications and legal advice. The report will be largely work around the aims set out in the strategic plan and how we are working to achieve those aims.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

109 update - The first three months of this year have seen frenzied activity at our HQ office, 109 Great Russell Street, as we have cleared its contents to enable its sale. I'd like to thank NALC staff for their hard work in achieving this and National Assembly members for their support in meeting quickly to authorize its sale. The property is due to be sold as we complete this report and details of our new office premises will follow. There will be no changes to e-mail addresses or phone numbers. The next quarter will see the implications of these changes assessed and discussed with councilors as we set out plans.

NALC events - Despite this internally focused activity there have been a number of notable achievements too. The profile of the sector has been raised in Parliament through the activities of our President Baroness Ros Scott of Needham Market during the passage of the levelling up and regeneration bill. Our first face to face conference for some time was successfully held and our programme of on-line events has attracted 2000 delegates over the last year. It's clear that there continues to be strong support for on-line events rather than face to face or hybrid ones and they will be the focus of our activity over the next year.

SAAA - NALC chair, Keith Stevens wrote to the departing members of the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) board, thanking them for their hard work setting up the new arrangements, achieving 100% buy-in from councils and successfully concluding two rounds of procurement for external assurance/audit. New board members have been recruited to oversee its future development and an announcement will be made soon.

The coronation - I do hope you all enjoy the upcoming coronation of King Charles; our assembly has held two events recently to discuss what councils are planning and their activities should make it a very enjoyable weekend across the country.

POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Engaging with the government/Parliament - NALC's president, Baroness Scott of Needham Market, held an introductory meeting with Baroness Scott of Bybrook, Faith and Communities and Lords Minister, at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Responses to policy consultations and announcements included on the National Planning Policy Framework and the publication of headline council tax statistics. The government responded to a series of written questions submitted by Baroness Scott and also our vice president, Lord Lytton, on the Local Council Award Scheme, local elections, banking services, Martyn's Law, dependent carer's allowance, audit and working with principal councils.

Bills and legislation – The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill began its passage through the House of Lords, where NALC’s president, Baroness Scott, used her second reading debate speech to highlight the role of local councils. At Report Stage she tabled and gave speeches on a series of amendments to the Bill on some of NALC’s policy issues such as remote meetings, dependent carer’s allowance, engagement with combined authorities, access to government grant funding, remote meetings, powers to fund places of worship, review of neighbourhood governance and ethical standards.

Campaigns/big themes – Ahead of local elections in May we have continued to encourage councils and county associations to make use of our Make a Change campaign materials. We provided media training for county officers. Mumsnet featured a guest blog post and to celebrate International Women’s Day we produced a video to highlight women involved in local councils and encourage more to stand for election. As part of our banking campaign, NALC’s chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, met with Barclays to discuss banking services to local councils. The think-tank Localis published a series of essays on local government finance including an article by NALC.

Sharing good practice – Our first in-person event since 2019, Standards Matter, was held on 3 March in London and online events were on the themes of community engagement, custom and self-build, social isolation and loneliness, and community resilience.

The NALC Star Council Awards 2023 were launched at the end of April; this year’s awards will be presented at NALC’s parliamentary reception on 29 November in the House of Lords. National Networks for LGBT+ councillors, climate emergency, super councils, young councillors, women councillors and coastal communities, all held meetings.

Blog posts on the NALC website were by Breakthrough Communications on top tips for community engagement in 2023, Epilepsy Society for Purple Day on being seizure savvy, Utility Aid on the government’s energy bills scheme, Elect Her on encouraging more women to stand for election on local councils, Right to Build Task Force on custom and self-build, BHIB on risk assessing King’s Coronation events, Flitwick Town Council on celebrating LGBT History Month, Eden Project Communities on celebrating the King’s Coronation, Stonewall on being an LGBT ally in the workplace, Internal Auditors Forum with an update on their work, ACRE on Village Halls Week, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on extending its remit to local councils, and Stone Parish Council on going for Quality Gold in the Local Council Award Scheme.

Next quarter’s objectives:

- Promotion of policy objectives through the House of Lords stages of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and meetings of the All Party-Parliamentary Group on local democracy.
- Hold online events on climate change on 24 May and an in person study tour to Newport Pagnell Town Council on 27/28 June.
- Respond to DLUHC publication of council tax statistics for all local councils 2023/24.
- Attendance and participation at the Local Government Association’s annual conference on 4-6 July in Bournemouth.
- Publication of dedicated webpage on big theme of housing, planning and neighbourhood planning.

MEMBER SERVICES

Legal service - The legal team in January, February and March received 62 formal enquiries on which they advised, in addition to advising on 185 enquiries that were not logged formally. In the same period, the team also updated and reissued legal topic notes; namely legal topic note 39 (copyright), legal topic note 31 (local council powers) in February and March, which is now legal topic note 31E to take account of the different regimes in England and Wales, and legal topic note 76 (energy performance requirements). We also updated briefing L01-23 on pre-election publicity. A legal bulletin with updates for county officers was issued in February detailing changes to legislation and of advice of note we provided to councils The next bulletin update will be in early April.

Financial guidance and advisory services - The 2023 Practitioners Guide was released in March. Derek Kemp, NALC financial advisor and JPAG chair, attended a recent county officer meeting to update on the changes to the guide. A review of NALCs finance service has also now been completed with management board approving an enhanced service that will be launched in April.

HR and employment advisory services - The new employment advisory service continues to grow with 91 enquiries answered over January February and March. The most common queries related to contract terms and conditions, sickness absence and discipline & grievance issues.

Local Council Award Scheme - Panel meetings for applications in round one of 2023 took place in March, with results sent to councils by early April. A total of 21 applications were received with 10 accredited so far and 11 currently pending more information from the council. Round two for applications commences on 5th May, with panel assessments due to take place in July. To help better manage the administration of the scheme, NALC has commissioned the development of a new data management system app, which is currently under construction and expected to be implemented over the next quarter.

E-learning - Our e-learning offer has increased with a range of courses from the Civility and Respect project. This brings us up to 37 courses available on a wide range of topics. So far there have been 1,255 enrolments onto different courses with leadership skills data protection and freedom of information amongst the most popular topics.

Civility and Respect - In February the project hit a major milestone with 1,000 councils signed up to the civility and respect pledge. A new project manager has been appointed for the Civility and Respect Project and will start in mid-April.

Corporate peer challenge for town councils - In March Morecambe Town Council hosted a corporate peer challenge team made up of representatives from the Local Government Association, NALC, a town councillor, and clerk. The report will be available with the findings from the team in May.

Next quarter's objectives:

- **Good Councillors Guides** - The 'Good Councillors Guide to Employment' has been updated and will be available in April. This is one of our core best practice

guides for councillors and will be promoted with particular emphasis on encouraging new councillors to make it part of their essential induction reading. The 'Good Councillors Guide' is the next guide due a refresh which will be completed this year.

- **Website review** - Work continues behind the scenes on the development of a new NALC website. The key focus has been related to ensuring an enhanced log in experience, easy to find content and developing an engagement plan around the website development and launch.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Move out of 109 - Our focus in the last quarter was the sale and vacating of our offices at 109 Great Russell Street. The sale process was the "easy" part of the task, the emptying of the building was a mammoth task. We have arranged for the files and documents that we must keep as part of our retention criteria to be safely stored. The document storage company will manage the files and work with us to destroy files that we no longer need to retain on an annual basis. Any documents containing personal data such as old legal cases, invoices and information pertaining to conferences were confidentially destroyed with destruction certificates being issued. All unwanted old computers and laptops were collected by Cloudy IT for donations to charities. Their hard drives were data wiped and destruction certificates issued accordingly. We found a buyer for the old legal law books library which were housed on the third floor, the archive of LCRs as well as our old telephone handsets. Other items that are required for the new offices have been placed in temporary storage locally.

Governance issues - NALC governance continues to successfully operate both remotely but with a return to some face-to-face meetings. The team are currently dealing with several vacancies on committees. We have welcomed some new members to the National Assembly.

Finance work - We continue to work on debt collection and have seen a reduction in old debts.

Royal Garden Parties - We submitted a list of 100 names to attend Royal Garden Parties on both 3 and 9 May 2023.

Job Adverts - In the last quarter 32 job adverts have been advertised via the NALC website and associated social media channels.

Events - The team supported five online events between Jan and March with 390 attendees across these events. Additionally, we supported our in-person Standards Matter Conference held on 3 March 2023.

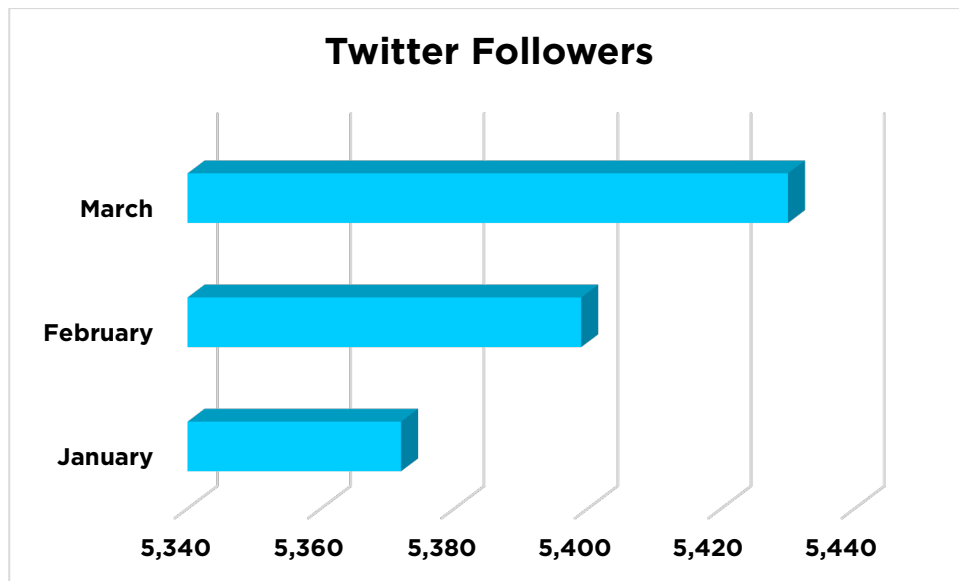
Next quarter's objectives:

- **Governance** - The governance team's main objective will be to prepare for the upcoming committee elections by working closely with an external organisation. More information will be published in due course.

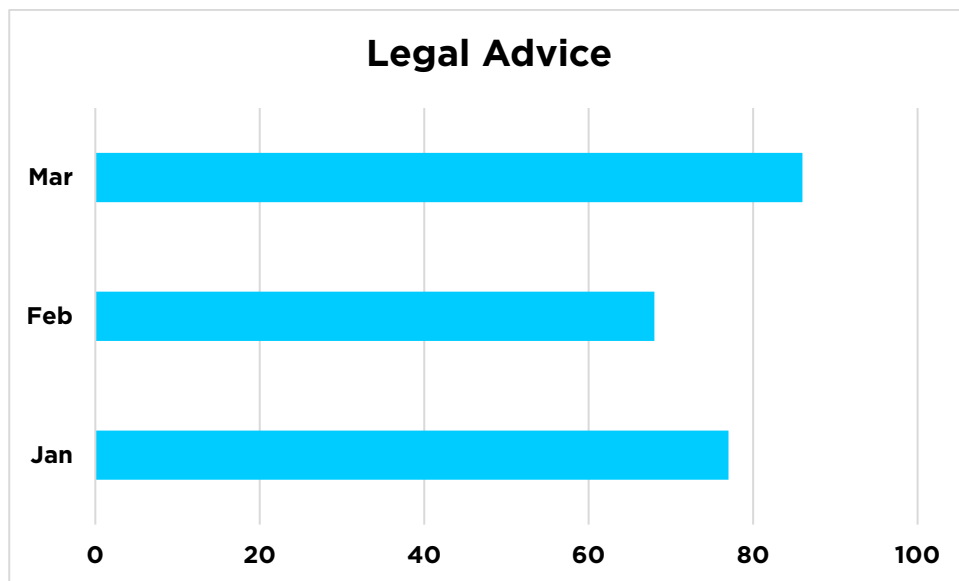
- **Moving into Bloomsbury Way** - From 2 May we will be able to access our new office space at Bloomsbury Way. Our focus in the early part of that month will be to ensure that the office accommodation is set up for NALC staff and that all staff have been issued with passes to access the building.
- **Affiliation fees** - All affiliation fee invoices for 2023/24 have been issued to county associations.
- **Events in next quarter** - We will provide support on NALC's upcoming programme of events. May - Online webinar on climate change, June: In person Study Tour hosted by Newport Pagnall Town Council, July: - Local councils explained.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

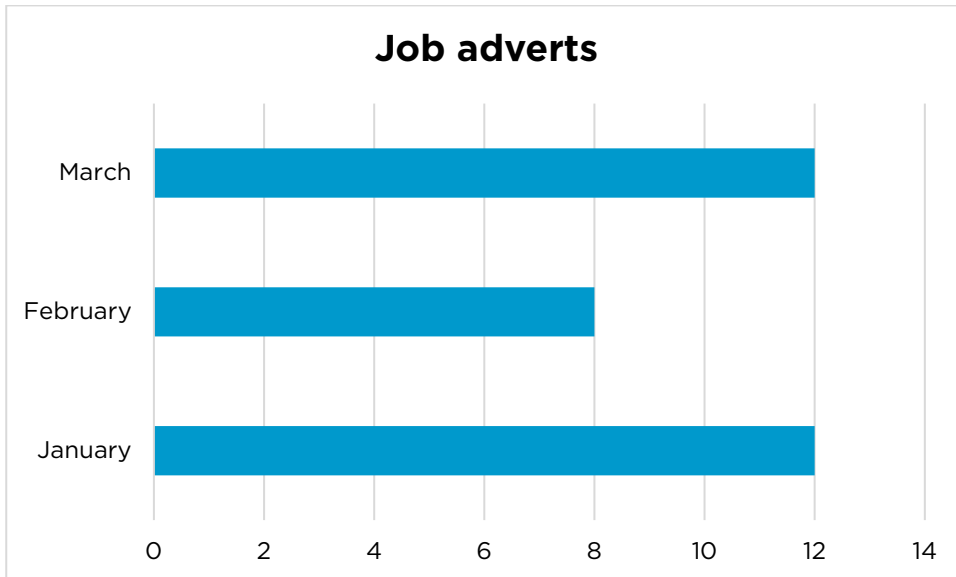
Policy and Communications



Member services



Finance and Administration



If you would like to see the full set of data, they are available on request.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details and updates on NALC’s activity, please read the chief executive’s bulletin, which is circulated every Friday. If you are not subscribed to the bulletin, you can do so at www.nalc.gov.uk/newsletter.

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