

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY | DRAFT MINUTES

13 July 2021

Via zoom

National Assembly	
Cllr Mike Drew	Avon Association of Local Councils
Cllr Elizabeth Luder	Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils
Cllr Paul Harvey	Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mike Tew	Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Lillian Burns	Cheshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Graham Ford	Cornwall Association of Local Councils
Cllr Allan Blakemore	County Durham Association of Local Councils
Cllr John Plant	Derbyshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Ken Browse	Devon Association of Local Councils
Cllr David Chalmers	Devon Association of Local Councils
Cllr Janet Wallace	Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils
Cllr Keith Stevens	East Sussex Association of Local Councils
Cllr Brian Brooks	East Riding North Lincolnshire of Local Councils
Cllr Peter Davey	Essex Association of Local Councils
Cllr Lorraine Rappé	Hampshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Bob Blezzard	Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils
Cllr Richard Parry	Kent Association of Local Councils
Cllr Colin Peacock	Lancashire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Tony Howard	Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils

Cllr Tony Hiron	Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils
Cllr Phil Harris	Norfolk Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mick Baker	Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Sue Lintern	Norfolk Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mike Scott	Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr David Francis	Northumberland Association of Local Councils
Cllr Avis Thomas	North Yorkshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Malcolm Leeding MBE	Oxfordshire Association Local Councils
Cllr David Beechey	Shropshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Jenny Lawrence	Somerset Association Local Councils
Cllr Derek Liddell	South Yorkshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mark Valladares	Suffolk Association of Local Councils
Cllr Peter Allison	West Yorkshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr John Scragg	Wiltshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Michael Chater, OBE	Vice president

Staff present:

Jonathan Owen, chief executive
Justin Griggs, head of policy &
communications
Steve Walker, head of finance and
administration
Olivia Kane, receptionist

Claire FitzGerald, administration
manager,
Jane Moore, head of member services
and solicitor
Jessica Lancod-Frost, policy officer
Anders Hansen, projects manager

Chairman welcome:

The chairman welcomed representatives to the meeting and asked assembly members to reflect on the following colleague who had recently passed away:

- Cllr David Fleming, of County Durham ALC

Apologies received

Brian Kerr OBE, Vice President
Patricia Ansell, Staffordshire ALC
John Plant, Derbyshire ALC
Jonathan Davies, Cumbria ALC

Changes in representation:

The following changes in representation were noted:

- Allan Blakemore from County Durham.
- Sue Lintern from Norfolk ALC.
- Lorraine Rappé has rejoined as Hampshire rep.

The new councillors were welcomed and each briefly introduced themselves setting out their experience and ambitions for the sector.

Cllr Liddell advised that he will be stepping down as the South Yorkshire representative shortly and that this would be his last national assembly.

Resolved: that new representative be welcomed to Assembly

Resolved: that Cllr Liddell be thanked for his service to NALC

Minutes of the previous meetings:

The Assembly confirmed that the minutes of the meeting of National Assembly held on 9 March 2021 and the minutes of the open councillor session held on 13 April 2021 were accurate.

Resolved: That the chairman be authorised to sign the draft minutes of National Assembly held on 9 March 2021 and the draft minutes of the open councillor session held on 13 April 2021 as a true record of the proceedings.

Civility and respect in public life:

Cllr Baxter provided assembly with an update of NALC's work with the SLCC, one voice wales and county officers on the formation of the Civility & Respect Working Group.

NALC welcomed Jess Norman from the LGA to outline the work that is being carried out to promote their work to promote civility and respect in public life which is relevant to parish and town councils too.

She referred to their practical guidance and support on the LGA website <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/civility-public-life> which is available for NALC councillors to use.

Jess emphasised that all councils have a duty of care to support councillors as much as we would support employees. She specifically referred to some of the great examples in the work carried out in Wales.

In Q&A the following views and comments were put forward:

- There should be trade union involvement. Jess said that this has not happened to date but trades unions will be added to the stakeholder list for future involvement
- Concern was raised about the lack of consequences for those who bully and urged that those involved in bullying are properly sanctioned. Cllr Baxter supported the call for real sanctions to be put in place. Jess confirmed that this was being considered by LGA in the context of the forthcoming response by government to the committee on standards in public life report.
- Cllr Parry asked if One Voice Wales is involved in this work. Jess was unsure if this was the case and will contact the WLGA to ensure the OVW are on stakeholder list.
- Cllr Scott asked how the LGA defines success. Jess indicated that this is not easy to establish but will use all resources available to identify what is coming through. A forthcoming survey of councillors' experience – which may be available to NALC – may provide benchmark information.
- Cllr Francis asked if the LGA has a real feel for how widespread the issue of bullying is within the sector. It was agreed that the statistics are hard to come by.
- Cllr Valadares warned that sanctions could be used as a weapon against minority groups in more politicised councils.

Resolved: That the report be received and Jess Norman be thanked for her contribution today.

NALC's big themes

The discussion item on NALC's big themes of health and wellbeing and young people was postponed due to illness of speaker.

NALC strategic direction

The chief executive gave a presentation on the strategic direction of NALC

A number of observations from councillors included Cllr Parry focussing on internal management where he advised that staff may find the return to the office to be a difficult transition as it can be very intense. Cllr Howard countered that organisations need to adopt the right model for offices. He said that zoom has succeeded and has helped enable engagement. Cllr Allison said that the opportunity for staff to work from home means that we could have a more geographically diverse workforce. He also suggested that would could do work exchanges between NALC and CALCS to help strengthen working together.

The chief executive noted that NALC projects manager Anders Hanson is Sheffield based and NALC has offered Lisa Etchell the role of Projects officer and she is based in Devon. We will be looking at agile working patterns as well as setting out the rules for face to face meetings.

Cllr Chater asked whether there was enough emphasis on joint working with other tiers of local government. The chief executive agreed it should feature more strongly but also with other agencies such as the NHS, the police etc. We want them to recognise what we do.

Finance update

Cllr Stevens gave an update on NALC finances. He said that the audit is all but complete and the end of year accounts show a surplus of £17k which is taking into account planned spending on some big projects such as Civility, IT and website projects.

Assembly in September will look at affiliation fee proposal and the full accounts.

Electoral arrangements

Assembly members were given a demonstration of the proposed online voting system for assembly elections this year.

Cllr Blezzard proposed that NALC moves to a STV system of voting however Cllr Baxter proposed that we do this in 2 stages, the first stage being making the move to electronic voting on the current electoral basis and then consider this in the future. Cllr Stevens advised that a move to STV could involve a change in constitution.

Cllr Valladares asked how NALC would monitor the diversity of candidates and agreed with the proposal to move to STV. Cllr Baxter said that she is the only

female on management board and encouraged younger people and women to stand.

It was proposed that consideration should be given to holding hustings during the election process and it was agreed to consider this at the assembly meeting in September.

Cllr Scott asked what had happened to the review of the new committee and governance structure previously proposed. The chief executive responded that finance and scrutiny committee were currently reviewing core governance documents. Assembly had received a report back from committees on their view of the operation of the new arrangements previously. It was agreed that these issues should be considered by the management board in the first instance and be picked up in the new assembly's work programme.

Resolved: That the assembly elections 2021 are held electronically under current election procedures and consider updating the constitution for the next round of assembly elections in 2023.

Monitoring and managing performance and service delivery

To note the latest corporate performance statistics and NALC activity report.

Resolved: That the activity report be received.

Committee Issues

To receive summary highlight reports from committee chairs.

Management board

The chairman advised that all issued covered by Management board had been discussed throughout the meeting and had nothing else to add.

Finance and scrutiny committee

Cllr Davey provided an update on the recent meeting of the committee

- Finance and Scrutiny Committee meetings have been moved to fall better in line with financial actual performance of the association and emerging trends.
- The final accounts and an independent Scrutiny report will be presented to National Assembly on 16 September 2021.
- The headline figures for Q1 of the 2021/2022 financial year have confirmed that we are on track in both income streams and expenditure to budget, both of which have been ratified by the heads of services.

- Bank balances on the 9 July 2021 were £898,948 against £759,373 for the same period last year however there were still 10 CALCs affiliation payments of 80% due by 30 June 2021 still outstanding accepting that there might well be a pipeline effect however CALCs were requested to check that their payment had in fact been made.
- A procedural review of Governance was well underway covering Pensions Explained, Financial regulations, The Constitution, Risk Assessment and Business recovery and Financial Treasury Management.
- On completion of the IT system becoming cloud based and the latest initiative being implemented on the website with the current providers the future requirements, including hardware, software, IT support, Website design and hosting will go out to tender to ensure that the NALCs ongoing costs in these critical areas are the most effective for our current and future needs whilst offering best value for money. The ongoing support and development of both IT and our website could well be provided by a single company experienced in both.

Policy committee

Assembly noted the report from Cllr Francis.

Larger Councils' committee

Cllr Harvey gave a summary of the recent meeting of the committee including presentations from CCLA and Blachere. Cllr Harvey also referred to the national youth campaign and NALC's support to the work being carried out to persuade younger people to stand for election moving forward.

Smaller Councils' committee

Cllr Ford referred to the summary report of the recent meeting of the committees and requested that the chairman of smaller councils has a seat on management board. A debate ensued in which members gave a range of options such as should we have a middle councils committee, whether larger and smaller councils should be run as forums or special interest groups rather than committees.

Cllr Browse suggested that this is a debate for management board to have and reminded the committee that 2 members of the committee also sit on management board.

Resolved: that the report be received

Resolved: that management board consider the report from smaller councils' committee

Next meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting of National Assembly be held on 16 September 2021 via zoom.

© NALC 2021

COUNCILLOR SUE BAXTER