

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY | DRAFT MINUTES

16 September 2021

Via zoom

National Assembly	
Cllr Sue Baxter	Chairman of the Association
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 Bill Pryce	Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish 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 Katharine Keats-Rohan	Oxfordshire Association Local Councils
Cllr David Beechey	Shropshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Jenny Lawrence	Somerset Association Local Councils
Cllr David Wright	South Yorkshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mark Valladares	Suffolk Association of Local Councils
Cllr Martin Beaton	West Sussex ALC
Cllr Peter Allison	West Yorkshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr John Scragg	Wiltshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Brian Kerr, OBE	Vice president

Staff present:

Jonathan Owen, chief executive
Justin Griggs, head of policy & communications
Steve Walker, head of finance and administration
Silvia Nicole, Finance officer
Claire FitzGerald, administration manager,
Jane Moore, head of member services and solicitor
Jessica Lancod-Frost, policy officer

Chairman welcome:

The chairman welcomed representatives to the meeting and asked assembly members to reflect on the recent passing of Cllr Stuart Hulse of Cheshire ALC. Cllr Hulse was a past vice chairman of the association.

Changes in representation:

The following changes in representation were noted:

- Cllr Peter Richmond new Gloucestershire rep replacing Cllr Mark Harris –
- Cllr Duncan Wright new South Yorkshire rep replacing Cllr Derek Liddell
- Also in attendance was Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan, Wallingford Town Council who will be shadowing Cllr Malcolm Leeding MBE. This will be Malcolm's last Assembly as he is standing down at NALC AGM.

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

Resolved: that new representative be welcomed to Assembly

Resolved: that Cllr Leeding MBE be thanked for his service to NALC

Minutes of the previous meeting:

The Assembly confirmed that the minutes of the meeting of National Assembly held on 13 July 2021 were accurate.

On Matters arising, Cllr Blezzard moved a motion on voting arrangements.

Delete everything after "AGM" in the penultimate line and replace with the following: "except that the elections planned for the Autumn of 2021 shall be held through the online platform previously demonstrated using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) voting system."

The chief executive acknowledged that Standing orders are silent on matters of voting /elections and that this item would be considered by the incoming assembly in 2022.

Cllr Ford seconded the motion.

Cllr Baxter stated that she has no issue with moving to STV in the future but wants to test the technology first and consider this in the future. The nomination papers have been issued for elections and we are geared up to vote using the existing system.

Cllr Blezzard said that assembly was misled in June and that our system is custom and practice not agreed in standing orders.

Cllr Cosser was of the view that the governance review proposal set out by the chief executive was reasonable and has good timescale.

Cllr Ford supported the amendment pointing out that comprehensive packages were available to support STV. He was concerned that a decision on whether NALC moves to STV would be delayed by 2 years if Cllr Blezzard's proposal was not accepted.

Cllr Drew strongly backed the move to STV having previously written a paper in support of such a move.

Whilst Cllr Parry stated that he is comfortable with the proposal it has been sprung onto Assembly and that it should be discussed by CALCs to seek their views. His own CALC does not have STV and it is a significant change to how we work. He would like to see a strong case outlining the pros and cons of moving to STV. As a result, he opposed the amendment.

Cllr Peacock stated that the present system is not fair. STV can now be carried out electronically. His own CALC is open to considering this system.

Cllr Valadares stated that STV is straightforward and that assembly has the right to choose the voting system. To that end he is supportive of the motion.

Cllr Baxter stated that the argument is about when and not how. Assembly members represent their CALCs and they need to feed into the larger review of our governance.

Cllr Davies supports the need for change and the motion reiterating that assembly represent their CALCs.

After hearing the views of assembly member, the amendment was put to the vote and not supported. 14 for, 18 against and 2 abstentions. 5 CALC did not vote as not present. *A full breakdown of voting is attached to the end of these minutes*

Resolved(1): That the chairman be authorised to sign the draft minutes of National Assembly held on 13 July 2021 as a true record of the proceedings.

Resolved(2): That the amendment to the motion be not carried .

Committee Issues

Management board

Cllr Baxter advised that most items from the recent meeting of the Board are covered by assembly today.

- The request from SCC for additional seats at management board will be included in the governance review.

- Meeting start times. It was agreed that each committee will determine their own start times. It was also agreed that if a meeting is scheduled for 2 hours or longer that a 15-minute break is incorporated.
- It is proposed that the NALC constitution is amended to remove the word chairman and change this to chair. Cllr Howard welcomed the move to gender neutral wording.
- Final meetings of this committee cycle should take time to reflect on outcomes and the hot topics that the incoming committees should consider.
- Cllr Stevens stated that our outgoing chair, Cllr Baxter should be appointed a working vice president, and this will be presented to AGM for approval.

Policy committee

Cllr Francis outlined that the committee has dealt with many consultations as and when they arise with many consultations on the subject of planning.

Finance and scrutiny committee

Cllr Davey noted that F&S met on 7 September. In that meeting the audited accounts were approved. The first quarter of the current financial year show that we are above budget, but we are awaiting salary increase and an expected £10k increase in NI payments.

Larger councils' committee

Cllr Harvey stated that LCC is due to meet in the next week. The committee will focus on review of the past 2 years.

Smaller councils' committee

Resolved: that the reports be received

AGM

Cllr Stevens spoke to both the 3 year draft budget and the affiliation fee proposal. He highlighted that NALC had made a surplus. This was mostly due to decreased governance and premises costs. This surplus would be transferred to reserves for IT projects and the civility project.

He highlighted the challenge of preparing a budget for the future as there is a need for fluidity in these uncertain times. We had initially considered a 3% affiliation fee increase however this was reduced to 1% to reflect the challenges

our members are struggling with. This proposed increase will just about cover the increase in NI costs.

The valuation of 109 has been reduced. This is based on sales estimate sought during the height of Covid. We are hopeful that this will increase in the future.

Cllr Wright asked for clarification on how the surplus will be spent. Cllr Stevens outlined it was set aside for systems and website projects as well as the civility project.

Resolved – that the audited annual account be received

Annual report

Assembly noted some comments regarding the use of “build back better” that is too political

Resolved – that the draft annual report be received

Affiliation fee increase

Cllr Blezzard proposed that the affiliation fee be frozen for the year.

Cllr Stevens responded to indicate that NALC has just over 13 weeks reserves. The proposed increase equates to £10k in total. Failing to apply even a small increase would have consequences on budgeting moving forward.

Cllr Ford remembered when NALC had frozen its affiliation fee in the past. This caused problems in subsequent years.

Cllr Drew opposed the propose. He felt that it is very important to invest in staff. NALC’s budget is that of a large council not a national body and that the work of NALC officers over the years has resulted in cost savings for councils. Cllrs Harvey and Peacock also opposed the motion and said that we need to invest in the future and learn from mistakes of the past.

Cllr Davies was supportive of the amendment. Many smaller councils have been badly hit by the effects of covid and yet have frozen their precepts as should the national body.

Cllr Wright would have preferred had NALC continued with the 3% increase proposal.

Cllr Parry said that it would be financially irresponsible to freeze the fee.

Cllr Blezzard responded by complimenting the input from all members. He argued that freezing the fee would send a good message to our members.

The amendment was put to the vote and was not carried.

Resolved that the amended motion be not carried

Resolved that the substantive motion be carried.

Motions to AGM

Payment schedule of affiliation fee

Finance and Scrutiny Committee proposed that Assembly recommends the following to the AGM in-order to improve the Association's cash flow at the start of the year. *"That the constitution be altered to read All County Association subscriptions to the National Association to be made in two instalments. The first payment on or before 31 May calculated at 80% of the total using the previous year's membership figure as a base with a balancing sum paid on or before the last day of September using figures supplied to the National Association by 31 August at the latest for the current year. The failure of a County Association to pay by these dates may make the County Association no longer able to access services, provided on behalf of its member councils. Withdrawal of NALC services to a County Association in these circumstances will be subject to a decision of Assembly"*

Cllr Davey spoke to this motion.

Some assembly members expressed concern that their association might not receive services from NALC in the event of late payment. It was outlined that such a decision would be very much as a last straw.

The motion was put to the vote as follows 20 for, 11 against and 3 abstentions

Resolved that the motion be received

Use of the term chair

It was proposed that a constitutional change to replace the term chairman with the gender-neutral term in line with a number of county associations.

Resolved that the motion be received

Appointment of vice-presidents

Management Board are proposing that the Assembly recommends the following to enable the appointment of an unspecified number of parliamentary vice-presidents to enhance the Association's influence. *"That the constitution be altered with the addition of a new little c under honorary officers, p10 - "That in addition NALC appoints parliamentary vice-presidents to further the sector's influence in Parliament"*

The chief executive emphasised the importance of having a good spread of working vice-presidents across all the main political parties

Resolved that the motion be received

Appointment of the auditor to the association

Cllr Wright asked whether NALC would consider changing its auditors. Cllr Stevens said that we had carried out a tendering exercise 2 years ago and Milton Avis were the best tender. NALC rotates the partner on an annual basis. NALC will tender again next year.

Resolved that the motion be received

Information exchange

In view of the time, it was agreed to roll over this item to another meeting. It was suggested that CALCs should share information with the chief executive who indicated that he would be happy to organize an informal session in October.

Finally

The chairman reminded Assembly that this is the last meeting that Cllr Malcolm Leeding MBE would be attending as he is due to stand down as Oxfordshire representative at NALC AGM. She thanked Cllr Leeding for his great support to and input to NALC over his years of service. She asked Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan to ensure that the thanks of Assembly is passed onto Cllr Leeding and it is such a great shame that he could not be in attendance today.

It is also Cllr Baxter's last assembly as chair of the association. Cllr Parry led thanks to Cllr Baxter who had been an outstanding chair.

Assembly also thanked Cllr Ken Browse who is also standing down as Devon representative after many years.

Next meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting of National Assembly be held on 8 December 2021 via zoom.

Voting on amendment

	Against	For	Abstain	Not present
Avon		1		
Bedfordshire		1		
Berkshire		1		
Buckinghamshire	1			
Cambridgeshire			1	
Cheshire		1		
Cleveland				1
Cornwall		1		
Cumbria		1		
Derbyshire				1
Devon	1			
Dorset			1	
Durham	1			
ERNLLCA	1			
Essex	1			
Gloucestershire	1			
Hampshire	1			
Herefordshire				1
Hertfordshire	1			1
IOW		1		
Kent	1			
Lancashire		1		
Leicestershire	1			
Lincolnshire		1		
Merseyside				1
Norfolk	1			
Northumberland	1			
Northamptonshire				1
Nottinghamshire		1		
Oxfordshire				
Shropshire	1			

Somerset		1		
Staffordshire		1		
Surrey	1			
Suffolk		1		
Sussex - East	1			
Sussex - West				
Warwickshire	1			
Worcestershire	1			
Wiltshire	1			
Yorkshire - North				
Yorkshire - South		1		
Yorkshire - West				