

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY | DRAFT MINUTES

Date: 12 July 2022

Time: 11.00 - 13.00

Venue: CCLA, 1 Angel Lane, EC4R 3AB.

Present:

Cllr Peter Allison West Yorkshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mike Baker Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Sue Baxter Worcestershire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Bob Blezzard Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils, Cllr Ian Cowling Devon Association of Local Councils, Cllr Peter Davey Essex Association of Local Councils (vice-chair finance), Cllr Helen Davies Suffolk Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mike Drew (vice-chair member services) Avon Association of Local Councils, Cllr Graham Ford Cornwall Association of Local Councils, Cllr John Graney Isle of Wight Association, Cllr Paul Harvey Bucks and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils, Cllr Reece Harrington Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils, Ms Charmaine Keatley (county officer of Kent Association of Local Councils, Mr Cllr Elizabeth Luder Bedfordshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Richard Parry Kent Association of Local Councils, Cllr Loraine Rappe Hampshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr John Gilli-Ross Essex Association of Local Councils, Cllr John Scragg Wiltshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mike Scott Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Keith Stevens (chair) East Sussex Association of Local Councils, Cllr Janet Wallace Dorset Association of Local Councils, Cllr Ray Wickson Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Allan Wilson Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Loretta Whetlor Somerset Association of Local Councils, Cllr Ron Simpson Leicestershire Association of Local Councils. Neil Wedge (county officer of Dorset Association of Local Councils) Ms Melinda Woof (county officer of Bucks and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils).

Remote joiners:

Cllr Patricia Ansell Staffordshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Colin Peacock Lancashire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mark Valladares Suffolk Association of Local Councils, Cllr Lillian Burns Cheshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr John Plant Derbyshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Jonathan Davies Cumbria Association of Local Councils, Cllr Duncan Wright South Yorkshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Richard Page Gloucestershire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Malcolm Leeding Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Brian Brooks East Riding North Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils, Ms Deborah White (county officer Avon Association of Local Councils), Mr Danny Moody (county officer Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils), Ms Christine Lalley (county officer

Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mike Tew Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Phillips North Yorkshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Sue Campbell Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Allan Blakemore Durham Association of Local Councils.

Apologies received:

Cllr David Francis Northumberland Association of Local Councils.

NALC staff

Jonathan Owen chief executive, Steve Walker head of finance and administration, Justin Griggs head of policy and communications, Charlotte Eisenhart head of member services, Chris Borg policy manager officer, Jane Moore legal manager, Farhana Miah executive officer, Claire FitzGerald administration manager, Beverley Brown finance and admin officer, Jessica Lancod-Frost policy officer, Rajiv Dudakia digital communications manager, Olivia Kane receptionist, Anders Hanson projects manager.

1. Chair's introductions

The chair welcomed representatives to the meeting.

Changes in representatives:

- Cllr Ian Cowling from Devon was welcomed to the assembly and briefly set out his experience and ambitions for the sector. He is finance lead at Devon Association and is hopeful with his new role at NALC will address issues such as the housing emergency in Devon and scope for lobbying opportunities in relation to financing counties and parish councils.
- Cllr Richard Page from Gloucestershire was also welcomed remotely. He was a member of Norton Parish council, a retired lawyer following a career in local government and financial services regulation.
- Cllr Helen Davies introduced herself as the new deputy from Suffolk. Working on several projects with Suffolk ALC, particularly working on guides for managing parish councils.

2. Minutes 5 April 2022

National Assembly confirmed that the minutes from 5 April 2022 were accurate.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 April be approved.

In matters arising Cllr Parry queried if there will be an informal meeting on Ukraine. The chief executive indicated that a remote meeting will be organised shortly.

3. Update on filling committee vacancies

National Assembly approved:

- Cllr Sue Lintern (Norfolk) and Cllr Mick Baker (Nottinghamshire) to Smaller Councils Committee. Cllr Mervyn Head (Lincolnshire) to be directly elected to Smaller Councils Committee.
- Cllr Janet Wallace (Dorset) and Cllr Mike Tew (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) to Policy Committee.

There is also a vacancy on Finance and Scrutiny Committee and Management Board, assembly were encouraged to put themselves forward if they were interested by the end of July.

Cllr Scott expressed concerns on filling the positions on the committees. The chair stressed that assembly members need to be more pro-active in joining the committees. The task and finish group will be looking into this further.

Resolved: That the appointments be made as set out above.

4. Discussion items

Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications introduced discussion of what county associations and local councils are doing to tackle loneliness, challenges the councils are facing and what has worked well particularly considering the recent Covid-19 lockdowns.

Cllr Wickson reported that Shropshire has a social task force who work in partnership with the county council to tackle loneliness and they regularly lobby MPs regarding the issue.

Cllr Davey reported that Essex created working groups particularly surrounding around health and well-being. They organise coffee mornings to encourage members to come out and meet new people. He stressed that the support from the county council is important which enables the councils to do such things.

Cllr Whetlor stated that councils in Somerset have set up a food bank during the pandemic to help and its usage is expected to go up during the cost-of-living crisis.

Cllr Harvey reported that councils in Milton Keynes also set up food banks and have also set up groups for over people 50's to tackle loneliness and cost of living.

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to discuss the rise cost of living at a future meeting and in the meantime assembly members were asked to work with their county officer to provide answers to the questions posed on both themes.

5. Task and finish group - governance update

The chief executive provided an update on the recent meetings of the task and finish group on governance. The first meeting discussed how to get people more involved in the work of national and county associations. The group agreed the best way to do this is to publicise the work they do more effectively. In addition, the county association to raise awareness on the work they are doing on their patch. The task and finish group members were invited to encourage their county associations to consider who they appoint to the assembly role including diversity, rotation, and succession planning. There was strong support for continuation for a mixture of face to face and remote meetings. The group also recommended for NALC to continue using electronic voting for assembly and directly elected members. There were some discussions regarding single transferable vote and the conclusion was to take this to the AGM as a constitutional proposal to move to a single transferable vote.

The chief executive reported that the second meeting focussed on the issues of Larger Council Committee and Smaller Councils Committee. The group wanted to request the view of the assembly on working up proposals for the development of two networks representing the interest of large and small councils and if there was support for creating the networks. The group had voted in favour of this by six votes to two.

The next meeting will focus on NALC's constitution and updates will be provided in due course.

Full notes and recommendations of the task and finish group can be found [here](#).

Cllr Ford noted the challenges of getting representation from outlying counties such as Cornwall which made remote meetings attractive.

Cll Blezzard queried if there is a member representing from East of England [there was not] and asked if assembly members who have an interest in governance matters are permitted to join. Cllr Harvey (chair of TFG) expressed that he would prefer to keep the group smaller in numbers as its easier to manage on zoom.

Cllr Scott queried the purpose of such navel gazing and asked for clear timescales and targets.

There was discussion of the merits of increasing the frequency of face-to-face meetings and the chair agreed that this be discussed further at a future meeting.

Cllr Parry added that if face to face assembly meetings can be longer than two hours and have more items to discuss on the agenda.

Resolved: That the report be received, and that the assembly supported the overall direction of travel proposed by the task and finish group.

6. Committee issues

Management Board: The chief executive reported on the recent meeting of the Management Board. Management Board had considered the recent survey by the Smaller Councils Committee and Cllrs David Francis and Mike Drew had been tasked with considering the recommendations in detail.

Policy Committee: Chris Borg provided an update on Policy Committee on behalf of Cllr Francis.

- The committee will be working closely on the funding task and finish group.
- The committee are responding to several consultations including DCMS.
- Policy Committee had held an additional special meeting on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.
- Working on the response to the Smaller Councils Committee report.

Larger Councils Committee: held its first hybrid meeting in April, which was a success.

- Currently revisiting the programme of study visits
- Had government officials attending remotely setting out their work to simplify the local growth funding landscape.

Smaller Councils Committee: Cllr Ford summarised the recent work of the committee. As well as working on the Smaller Councils Committee survey report, the committee is also looking into the definition of smaller councils. Cllr Ford and Cllr Burns are working on recommendations on the report to put forward to Management Board.

Finance and Scrutiny Committee: Cllr Davey reported highlights from the recent meeting:

- The members welcomed Stephen Sampson of auditors Milton Avis, the audit is well underway with most of the systems and audit work done. With no areas for concern.
- The management accounts were received and are in line with expectations, it was noted that there may be some final adjustments and it was agreed, in principle, to allocate some of the surplus to replenish the development reserves.
- It was agreed to provide a lowest cash position estimate for the next National Assembly.

- Finance and Scrutiny Committee had indicated a likely affiliation fee increase this year of 3% which had been supported by the management board.

Full minutes of the committees can be found [here](#).

Resolved: That the reports be noted.

7. Monitoring and managing performance and service delivery.

The assembly noted the quarterly report from NALC including latest membership numbers by county association area. Click [here](#) for the quarterly report.

Date and times of next meetings:

The next meeting of the National Assembly will be held on 4 October at 10.00 remotely.

Other business

In the afternoon of the assembly meeting, there was a “grand reunion” style set of presentations from partners CCLA, Blachere Illumination, SLCC and One Voice Wales. The president, Baroness Scott of Needham Market also thanked members for their work and said she would continue to support the sector in Parliament. Linda Larter and Sue Baxter updated the assembly on the civility and respect project and launched the pledge encouraging assembly members and their councils to sign up.

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