

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY | DRAFT MINUTES

Date: 4 April 2023

Time: 10:00 – 13.00

Venue: Zoom

Present:

Cllr Mike Drew, Avon Association of Local Councils, Cllr Liz Luder, Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, Cllr Paul Harvey, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils, Cllr Lillian Burns, Cheshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Allan Blakemore, County Durham Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mary Bradley, Cumbria Association of Local Councils, Cllr Ian Cowling, Devon Association of Local Councils, Cllr Janet Wallace, Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, Cllr Richard Page, Gloucestershire Association of Town and Parish Councils, Cllr Loraine Rappe, Hampshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Rob McCarthy, Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish of Local Councils, Cllr Bob Blezzard, Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils, Cllr Richard Parry, Kent Association of Local Councils, Cllr Tony Hirons, Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils, Cllr Heather Philips, North Yorkshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mick Baker, Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mike Scott, Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils, Cllr David Francis, Northumberland Association of Local Councils, Cllr Tony Howard, Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Duncan Wright, South Yorkshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Ray Wickson, Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Jenny Lawrence, Somerset Association of Local Councils, Cllr Mark Valladares, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, Cllr Rosie Weaver BEM, Warwickshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Peter Allison, West Yorkshire Association of Local Councils, Cllr Sue Baxter, Worcestershire Association of Local Councils.

In attendance:

Neil Wedge, Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils
Cllr Sarah Barker, Kent Association of Local Councils
Sarah Bristow, Norfolk Association of Local Councils
Cllr Dave Mitton, Somerset 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 servicers,
Jane Moore, senior solicitor, and legal manager,
Farhana Miah, executive officer,
Claire FitzGerald, administration manager,
Olivia Kane, receptionist and administrator,
Greg Henry, finance and administration officer,
Beverley Brown, finance and administration officer.
Jessica Lancod-Frost, policy officer

1. Chair welcome

The chair welcomed representatives to the meeting. The chair noted that Cllr Marcus Allen is the new assembly representative from Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, however he sent his apologies.

2. Apologies received:

Cllr Sue Lintern, Norfolk Association of Local Councils
Cllr Colin Peacock, Lancashire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Marcus Allen, Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr David Beechy, Shropshire Association of Local Councils

3. Minutes of previous meetings

i. National Assembly held on 6 December 2022

National Assembly confirmed that the minutes from 6 December 2022 were accurate with a few amendments to the attendee list as follows:

- Cllr Mark Valladares, Suffolk Association of Local Councils
- Cllr Janet Wallace, Dorset Association of Local Councils
- Cllr Tony Hirons, was listed however there was an error in listing the county association. The minutes should have read Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils.

It was also agreed that the papers be paginated in future for ease of reading.

Cllr Blezzard queried what the result for the poll on face-to-face meeting. The result for the poll was as follows: 23 voting yes, and one against.

ii. Informal National Assembly session on The King's Coronation on 17 January 2023

Minutes of the special informal meeting held on 17 January were approved with an amendment to the attendee list. Cllr Mark Valladares, Suffolk Association of Local Councils had not been included in the attendance list.

iii. Special meeting of National Assembly on the future of 109 held on 2 February 2023

Minutes of the special meeting of National Assembly held on 2 February 2023 were approved.

- **Resolved (1):** That minutes of meetings held on 6 December 2022 were approved.
- **Resolved (2):** That the notes from the informal councillor session held on 17 January 2023 were noted.
- **Resolved (3):** That the minutes of meeting held on 2 February 2023 were approved.

4. 109 update

The chief executive updated assembly on the sale of 109.

He confirmed that the sale of 109 Great Russell Street and work to secure alternative accommodation were proceeding well. Completion is expected to take place on 13 April. An investment strategy will be drawn up with Finance and Scrutiny Committee and Management Board. He also added that the new office lease would be for one year. He thanked colleagues at 109 for their hard work in helping to progress the move so quickly.

Cllr Scott spoke to the motion sent in by Northamptonshire ALC. He expressed concerns that there was no clearly defined plan in place for the investment strategy or for the new office for the longer term. What was the space available, meeting room availability and staff displacement costs for example?

The chief executive explained that the new office space was a popular choice amongst colleagues, plenty of meeting rooms available, accessibility friendly.

There were further discussions around funding strategies, plans, staffing. The chief executive explained that the new office space was a popular choice amongst colleagues, plenty of meeting rooms available, accessibility friendly.

The chair put the motion from Northamptonshire **forward with agreed amendments**. He asked if assembly agree with the amended motion:

- 1) To agree that National Assembly asks the Management Board to produce a draft plan setting out how the proceeds of the sale of 109 Great Russell Street will be used and what the Association's staff accommodation strategy is for 2023 – 2028, and;
- 2) To agree a draft plan is presented to the National Assembly at its meeting to be held on 11 July 2023, and;
- 3) To agree that none of the net proceeds of sale are spent until the National Assembly has signed off the plan.

Cllr Cowling expressed concerns on the proposed motion explaining that the proceeds may need to be spent due to cash flow.

The chair explained that Management Board would be responsible for accounting what the net proceeds are and if necessary, use the funds if the cash flow problems caused by the move however the funds will be transferred back into the account.

Resolved: That the assembly approve the motion, as amended, with all in favour.

5. Committee issues

Management Board:

The chair briefly spoke about Management Board away day, the focus of the away day was vision and strategy for the future. He expressed that he would like to see more input from Management Board members on different elements of the organisation, perhaps with specified, perhaps specified portfolios however this would be discussed after May Elections. Cllr Blezzard asked if there could be an amendment to the minutes which was agreed.

'Management Board asked for a special meeting in May not July'.

Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications reported plans for the Star Council Awards which would be launched would be in April and requested National Assembly members to put forward councils, clerks, councillors and county associations for consideration. In addition to this, he invited county associations to promote the awards in different social media channels such as website, twitter, facebook etc. NALC will help and support CALCs with content, advertising etc. For more information, click [here](#).

Finance and Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Stevens reported that Cllr Ford chair of finance committee had stood down and the committee agreed that Cllr Peter Davey, vice chair (finance) would act as chair pending a future appointment.

Cllr Davey reported that the committee recently met and discussed the following:

- Agreed to hold an additional meeting to review the current revenue budget 2023/24 financial budget and would be reported to assembly once work had been completed.
- Updated Pension Explained document would be circulated with the minutes.

He added that the summary report would be recirculated with the minutes.

Cllr Valladares asked if the reports could be circulated a week in advance to put questions forward to CALCs. Cllr Davey gave assurance that moving forward finance reports will be circulated in advance.

Policy Committee:

Cllr Francis provided an update on Policy Committee:

- The levelling up and regeneration bill had provided a good opportunity to put NALC policies forward and gave special thanks to head of policy and communications and the president of the association for their work on this.
- Committee has continued to receive motions from CALC's, and he urged more to submit motions.
- Received an update on the task and finish group on fair and secure funding.
- Considered a research report conducted by local council clerks and the committee were slightly disappointed with the lack of response from the local councils and the lack of involvement with NALC.

Larger Councils Committee:

Cllr Harvey provided an update on the recent meeting and highlighted key points:

- Salary scales for clerks of larger councils as the current maxima were too low.
- Linda Larter provided the committee with an update on the Civility and Respect project.
- Study Visit scheduled to take place in June in Newport Pagnell, places were still available.

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

Resolved: That the reports be noted.

6. The King's Coronation – 6 May 2023

Justin Griggs reported that since the informal meeting on The King's Coronation, NALC have been keeping the webpage updated to help keep CALCs/National Assembly members in the loop. He recommended members to visit the page and

use the advice/guidance given around the coronation. He reported that the Department for Levelling Up and Communities minister Baroness Jane Scott had highlighted in her letter the key role local councils play in these events, encouraging councils to apply for low scale grant funding, to bring communities together through the Big Lunch over the weekend. He spoke about the big help out and how to promote volunteering within the communities. For more information, please visit the webpage by clicking on the link [here](#).

There was a discussion around the timings of the event due to the impact upon local elections, some councillors expressed disappointment with the change in dates.

7. Working closely with county associations

The chief executive introduced this item by highlighting the importance of involving people in the work of their county association. This was identified by the task and finish group (governance) last year. Cllr Howard stressed the importance of having induction sessions with new colleagues which would enable them find out more about the work of the sector, and asked if NALC have induction process in place for new councillors, to which the chair and chief executive reported that there is an induction day for new members, before covid, this took place face to face but since covid its moved to remote meetings.

Notes of the breakout sessions will be attached to the minutes.

Group one:

The group highlighted the key areas NALC/County associations need to work on:

- NALC induction process
- Clarity of roles of assembly member
- Better communications between NALC/County associations with councillors
- Succession planning

Cllr Valladares stressed that to encourage diversity, it may be useful to have more than one representative from county association.

Cllr Davey explained that National Assembly do have double representation in a way of having a deputy national assembly member.

Group two:

- Strengthen CALC's which would help NALC.
- The work of the committees gets actioned and national assembly are used for discussions.

Group three:

- Discussed that the communications sent from NALC need to be filter so the relevant information gets sent through to CALCs.

Group four:

- More visibility on NALC's meetings with parliament and requested a diary of calendar.

Group five:

- Better engagement with parishes/CALCs.
- Explaining the value of CALCs to parishes.
- Strategy on communications

Detailed notes from the sessions are attached.

Cllr Blezzard asked if the good councillor guides will be updated, the chief executive reported that there will be a full review on the guides. He also updated the assembly that the good councillor guide – employment will be released in the coming weeks.

8. Date and times of next meetings:

There was a discussion on the plans for the next assembly meeting. The chief executive reported that the meeting would be a face-to-face meeting with the possibility of an overnight stay. It was stressed that the next assembly would not be a hybrid meeting.

He also added that there may also be an additional face to face meeting later in the year.

The next meeting of the National Assembly will be held on 11 July at 10.00, venue to be confirmed.

Upcoming meetings will be held on:

- 3 October 2023 via Zoom.
- 29 November 2023, venue to be confirmed.