

POLICY COMMITTEE | AGENDA

12 January 2021 — 10.00-11.30

ZOOM teleconference

Any member wishing to submit an apology for this meeting please contact NALC at NALCcommittees@nalc.gov.uk or call on 020 7637 1865.

1. Welcome and apologies [10:00]

- 1.1. To receive any apologies from the session

2. Minutes from the previous meeting [10:00- 10:05]

- 2.1. To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2020.
see appendix 2.1
- 2.2. To note the action log and raise any other matters.
see appendix 2.2

3. Motions from county associations [10:05 – 10:20]

- 3.1 To receive a motion from the Kent county association regarding protections for the travelling community.
see appendix 3.1

4. Planning White Paper – Follow-up Engagement [10:20 – 10:45]

- 4.1 To receive a short written report from the policy manager outlining NALC follow-up engagement after submission of NALC's three responses to the Planning White Paper consultations in October 2020; and a summary of planning stakeholders' headline responses to the white paper – see appendices 4.1 and 4.2.
- 4.2 To receive a verbal update from the policy manager on the written submission to the HCLG enquiry to planning.
- 4.3 To consider the Parker Report (report previously sent by e-mail to the committee for information on 4 December 2020).
- 4.4 To agree the final response to the MHCLG consultation on supporting housing delivery and public services infrastructure – see appendix 4.3.

4.5 Brief discussion – MHCLG dropping of affordable housing algorithm but increase to top 20 English urban centre housing needs figure by 20%

5. Campaigns [10:45 – 11:15]

5.1 Young people – to receive a short written update from the head of policy and communications and to agree a programme of work on the theme of young people – appendix 5.1.

5.2 Climate change – to receive a written report from the projects officer with an update on the latest work of the NALC Climate Change Task and Finish Group, including early findings from the group's survey which launched in October 2020, as well as consideration of a policy position on carbon reduction referred from the task and finish group. This will cover the upcoming programme of work– see appendices 5.2 & 5.3.

5.3 Health and wellbeing – to receive a summary of work on the theme of health and wellbeing – see appendix 5.4

5.4 Local council elections 2021 – to receive a verbal update from the projects officer on the launch of NALC's suite of materials for the local election campaign 2021 which went live in November 2020

5.5 Devolution White Paper and Comprehensive Spending Review – verbal update from the head of policy and communications on engagement with government since the previous committee meeting

5.6 LGA Model Code of Conduct Update – to receive a short written report from the policy manager on NALC's final response to the LGA on its further updated model code of conduct 2020 – appendix 5.5

6. E-Lobby Day 2021 [11:15 – 11:25]

6.1 To note the date of Lobby Day, 2 February 2021 – to receive an update of progress – appendix 6.1

7. Rural Services Network AGM & Rural Assembly [11:25 – 11:30]

7.1 To note a report from Cllr Lillian Burns who attended the Rural Services Network (RSN) AGM and Rural Assembly on 16 November 2020 – see appendix 7.1

8. Date and time of next meeting [11:30]

- 8.1 To note the next meeting of the Policy Committee will be held on 23 March 2021 by Zoom. © NALC 2021

Appendix 2.1

POLICY COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

The meeting of NALC Policy Committee took place 06 October 2020 at 10:00 a.m. by Zoom call.

Present:

Councillors Peter Allison (Yorkshire), Sue Baxter (National Chairman and Worcestershire), Lillian Burns (Cheshire), David Francis (Committee Chairman and Northumberland), Colin Peacock (Lancashire), Malcolm Leeding (Oxfordshire) and Rosie Weaver (Warwickshire and West Midlands); and Carole Burslem (County Officer Forum representative, and Buckinghamshire). Also present were Chris Borg (policy manager), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications), Jonathan Owen (chief executive) and Claire Goldfinch (policy and communications project officer.)

1. Apologies

No apologies were received for this meeting.

2. Minutes from previous committee session

2.1 Minutes from the previous meeting held 30 June 2020

Resolved: That the committee chairman is authorised to sign the minutes from the 30 June 2020 committee Zoom call.

2.2 To note the action log and raise any other matters

Resolved: The committee accepts the action log of actions since the 30 June 2020 committee Zoom call.

3. Motions from county associations

3.1 To consider a motion from Northamptonshire ALC on land management
There was a brief discussion and the committee chairman asked Lesley Sambrook Smith from the Northamptonshire county association to answer some questions regarding the impact of land management companies who escalate the charges for maintaining public open spaces etc. on new housing estates. Wider discussion revealed this to be a national problem and the government were now picking this matter up with four big developers.

Resolved: That the motion be supported.

4. Planning White Paper

4.1 To receive and agree new planning positions for adoption by the committee to support submission of NALC's responses to the three MHCLG Planning White Paper consultations.

Cllr Burns spoke to her paper summarising new planning positions it was recommended NALC adopt. The purpose of this was to update NALC's suite of planning positions to give more of a mandate to make statements to those new positions in NALC's remaining responses to the Planning White Paper. There was a wider discussion in which these new positions were endorsed.

Resolved: That the new planning positions recommended by Cllr Burns be adopted as national policy and the policy register be updated.

4.2 To receive an overarching statement from Cllr Lillian Burns to be attached to NALC's response to the main Planning White Paper consultation:

- White Paper: Planning for the Future

Resolved: That the committee thank Lillian for all of her effort in the planning consultation response; and that the overarching planning statement should be presented and endorsed at the AGM.

4.3 NALC accessing future advice from a qualified planning consultant – an update from the recent Management Board meeting – 15 September 2020.

The chief executive reported that the Management Board had agreed the principle of providing funding for support for a qualified consultant to enable NALC to lobby government effectively. This will be reallocated in the next budget of around £10,000-20,000. Management Board had agreed at its session on 15 September, 2020 to develop proposals to source planning expertise for NALC's national work, including establishing an advisory panel, with costs built into next year's budget. There was a brief debate at this matter. Though the development was accepted, further detail needed to be drawn down. A request was made for future such support to be allocated towards funding a qualified professional planner to lead and advise on NALC's national planning work.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

5. Campaigns

5.1 To receive an update on the development of NALC's campaign plan 2020-21

The policy manager updated the committee that a spreadsheet version of the campaign plan 2020-21 had been produced since the 30 June 2020 committee session. The campaign plan is updated regularly.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

5.2 Climate change - to receive a written report providing options on progressing NALC's corporate work on climate change.

The committee chairman updated the committee on his recent report for the climate change task and finish group containing key recommendations on the points NALC should lobby government on for local councils to make a bigger difference fighting climate change impact in their areas. The committee warmly endorsed the report.

The projects officer then spoke to a short report produced suggesting options as to how NALC progresses its climate change work from the final quarter of 2020 onwards. Since the Devolution White Paper was not now imminent and in any case to oversee the findings of the climate change survey it was agreed that the climate change task and finish group should be retained for now.

Resolved (1): The committee received and endorsed the committee chairman's paper on the powers of councils in enacting projects in climate change.

Resolved (2): The committee endorses the Task and Finish Group to continue their helpful work to carry out the climate change survey. The committee asks for a question to be included in the survey around the impact of COVID-19 on climate change activities by local councils.

5.3 Local council elections - to receive a verbal update on follow up developments

The project officer gave a verbal update on NALC's work for the 2021 local council elections, including the need for wide electoral change based on the suggestions from the 2019 local council elections report.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

5.4 Devolution White Paper and Comprehensive Spending Review - update on engagement with government

The head of policy and communications gave a verbal update on the state of the Devolution White Paper whose publication was now highly likely delayed. The committee noted that NALC had submitted a response to the Comprehensive Spending Review. The committee understood that the Devolution White Paper will be delayed – likely until January 2021. The head of policy and communications urged areas who are considering local government reorganisation to be prepared.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

5.5 Update from Cllr Burns – RSN Online Conference – 14 September 2020- Revitalising Rural.

In addition to her written report, which had been pre-circulated, Cllr Burns provided a short verbal update of her attendance representing NALC at the recent RSN Online Conference - Revitalising Rural – on 14 September, 2020. The committee thanked Cllr Burns for her summary of the RSN Online Conference. The committee understood that COVID-19 is affecting rural communities greatly.

Resolved: That Cllr Burns be thanked for her written report, which was noted.

6. Date and time of next meeting

6.1 To note that the next meeting of the Policy Committee will be held on 12 January 2021, by Zoom.

Any other business:

Resolved: The committee notes that the Dementia-Friendly Communities guide was received by the Prime Minister. The committee thanked all staff involved.

Appendix 2.2

Action log

Date	Activity	Item number	Action Complete (Y / N)
6 October 2020	Motions from county associations. ACTION: That the motion be supported.	3.1	Y
6 October 2020	Planning White Paper. ACTION: That the new planning positions recommended by Cllr Burns be adopted as national policy and the policy register be updated.	4.1	Y
6 October 2020	Planning White Paper. ACTION: That the overarching planning statement should be presented and endorsed at the AGM.	4.2	Y
6 October 2020	Climate change ACTION: The committee received and endorsed the committee chairman's paper on the powers of councils in enacting projects in climate change.	5.2	Y
6 October 2020	Climate change ACTION: The committee endorses the Task and Finish Group to continue their helpful work to carry out the climate change survey. The committee asks for a question to be included in the survey around the impact of COVID-19 on climate change activities by local councils.	5.2	Y
6 October 2020	RSN Online Conference ACTION: That Cllr Burns be	5.5	Y

	thanked for her written report, which was noted.		
--	---	--	--

Appendix 3.1

Motion from Kent Association of Local Councils

Subject: Existing protections for the travelling community

1. Text

“That NALC should approach Members of Parliament and Government with a request to review legislation regarding traveller activity to ensure a more balanced approach regarding the rights of residents, private landowners and their local councils and existing protections for travellers.”

2. Reasoning for the motion

The motion was agreed and debated at the 2019 KALC AGM, which was attended by 94 member councils. We support the government’s aims of tackling inequality, and improving the lives of gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and improve social cohesion. It is important that in tackling these inequalities there is a more balanced approach regarding the rights of residents, private landowners and their local councils and existing protections for travellers.

The key read here ([Planning Policy for Traveller Sites](#)) is the basis of the legislation that needs changing as this sets out how traveller needs should be assessed and this also includes the key definition ([annex 1](#)). This all argues that the definition attached may only be able to be amended at a technical level and even then there must be a question as to whether in its final form how the county council (or any Local Authority) will interpret that and when. This underscores the challenge in this area; unless, it is more to do with interpretation or more likely *guidance around that* rather than substantive changes. KALC is liaising with the Police and through them the county council and Local Authorities to try to mitigate issues.

3. Prospectus theme

Empowering communities

4. How affecting local councils

The issue is affecting many local councils in Kent and across the country, particularly in regards to unauthorised encampments and in the planning system where we would urge government to clarify the definition of traveller in the planning policy for traveller sites to help improve consistency for local areas.

With regards to the NPPF, the NPPF clearly emphasises (61) that the Traveller issue needs to be taken as part of the mainstream commitment to assessments on the supply of homes and also at the higher end of affordable homes. This brings the Travelling community within this commitment and is a key statement of expectation that applies pressure on the county council and how they develop their policy and provision here. In the case of (71) in Kent there is the concept of 5 years supply of deliverable homes which probably at a technical level brings this theme within the mainstream (i.e. coherence and consistency) for planning; but also makes it clear that Local Authorities need to think long term. This would also appear to meet wider requirements here around the special category that Travellers fall into (i.e. an identified racial group) and is driven by Human Rights legislation: a significant bulwark in this area that even post BREXIT is unlikely to change and remains a key test against the existing and proposed legislation.

5. Recommendation

That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 12 January 2021.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager T. 020 7290 0741; e. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk © NALC 2020

Appendix 4.1

NALC Engagement on Planning White Paper Submissions

1. Summary

On 6 August 2020 the government issued three major planning consultations relating to its publication of the Planning White Paper: Planning For The Future. These were:

- Changes to the current planning system;
- The Planning White Paper: Planning For The Future; &
- Transparency and Competition – land data.

NALC engaged with various planning stakeholders and MHCLG officials during the consultation period (which ended on 29 October 2020) to inform its response. It also received several responses to each of the three consultations – proving that planning is still the major issue concerning local councils. NALC's three responses were all submitted during October 2020 and can be downloaded from the members' area of the NALC website [here](#) (you will require your logins to access these documents).

2. Context

The below is a list of the organisations NALC liaised with during the consultation phase to inform its three responses:

- ACRE;
- Co-operative Community Housing Local Authority Group;
- Friends of the Earth;
- Local Government Association;
- Locality;
- Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government;
- Royal Town Planning Institute; &
- Town and Country Planning Association.

Organisations NALC has continued to engage with on planning issues since the submission of its three responses are as below:

- Affordable Housing Commission;
- Friends of the Earth; &
- Cooperative Community Housing.

The policy manager and senior communications officer drafted an article on the white paper for Public Sector Executive which will have since been published online [here](#).

3. Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, E. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049

Appendix 4.2

NALC Engagement on Planning White Paper Submissions

CPRE

- The system of development plans can be reformed to make public involvement easier and plan adoption quicker. The government's Planning White Paper proposals will however critically weaken the scope for public input, and need to be fundamentally reconsidered. It is not enough for the public to just be involved in the shaping of policies: developers and local authorities need to be held accountable to local communities for delivering promised community benefits and well-designed schemes. In any case a 30-month timescale for plan preparation is likely to be unrealistic and undeliverable, leading to continued problems with *ad hoc* development in unsuitable locations. A much stronger concept of 'sustainable development' needs to inform planning law and policy, including the proposed 'sustainability test', with clear links through to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The greatest obstacle to the government's aims of building 300,000 houses per year is the subsequent build-out of properties with permission. The planning system is already fulfilling much and possibly all of the land requirement over the next 4-5 years at least. The government should urgently implement the reforms recommended by Sir Oliver Letwin to increase building rates through more locally led development and a mix of housing types and tenures that better reflects local needs. The proposed moves to increasing transparency and available data on land holdings is a welcome but very small step in the direction of reform that is needed.
- Within its wider aspirations for housebuilding, the government should clearly commit to building 145,000 genuinely affordable houses a year. The proposed change to the threshold for delivering affordable housing from schemes of 10 units to 40 or 50, is a severely retrograde step in this regard which will have a major impact in many small and medium sized rural towns in particular. We are not reassured by government claims that it will only be temporary. Proposals for requiring First Homes in new developments are likely to be inappropriate for many rural areas with particular high gaps between average house prices and average wages.
- We welcome many of the white paper proposals on design, in particular the proposed new unit in government to promote design quality. For the proposals to be effective the government needs to do further work to uphold good design through necessary benchmarks (particularly for energy efficiency, internal space standards, and walking and cycling access) and enforcement

(through design codes that can be upheld through planning enforcement powers). Ambitious benchmarks for new development, properly enforced, will in turn enable a target for net zero in new housing to be reached in 5-10 years rather than by 2050.

- The government's proposed new formula (often referred to as an algorithm) for calculating housing needs will massively increase pressure for building on open countryside in many rural areas, and will make the building of affordable homes and the regeneration of urban brownfield sites more difficult. It will also worsen the current economic disparity between north and south in England.
- Government planning policy and supporting financial programmes (such as the New Homes Bonus) should set a clear objective of helping level up development between north and south. Within this, local authority housing requirements should be agreed through a strategic, larger than local planning process led by local authorities and based on the approach of prioritising a major increase in the delivery of affordable homes, and be more sensitive to local opportunities (such as suitable brownfield sites) and constraints (such as valued green spaces and landscapes).
- Public engagement in the system needs to build on recent improvements in the flow of information by more consistent use of machine readability and easily used search facilities. Citizen assemblies could also help improve the quality of input to planning consultations.
- The government needs to be more clearly link its programme of changes to planning to link with its 25 Year Environment Plan and measures in the Environment Bill for nature recovery areas and biodiversity net gain. In particular, current policies on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Green Belts are working well to some degree but in our view need strengthening. Links between the planning system and good land management in the countryside need to be strengthened.
- The government's proposed Infrastructure Levy is in our view unlikely to deliver an increase in genuinely affordable homes, as local authorities will generally see the provision of other infrastructure as having greater priority. More radical reforms are needed on capturing land value, so that more genuinely affordable homes can be provided.

Royal Town Planning Institute

- The proposals in the white paper assume that the key solution to the housing crisis, across the country, is to increase the number of permissions. We do not share this assumption, and warn that a narrow focus on new

housing will undermine the benefits of reform. However, we agree on the need for a 21st century planning system, and recognise that current approaches often fall short of what is needed. We wish to work with the government to achieve this.

- A key reason why the planning system is currently falling short of its ambitions is the appalling lack of investment in local planning authorities. Unless this is rectified, any new system will not succeed. We call for £500 million to be invested in planning in the next four years.
- The rapid transition to net zero carbon is high among our objectives for reform. The planning system must be clearly aligned with the legal duties of the Climate Change Act, to ensure that all new development is compatible with a zero-carbon future in terms of transport, energy and design.
- We welcome the government's focus on local plans. We support the concepts of Growth and Protected areas (with reservations) but consider that the concept of "Renewal" areas is too simplistic. For too long, essential cross-boundary cooperation on planning matters has been problematic. We propose Green Growth Boards to support cross boundary cooperation for housing numbers and coordinate all the essential services necessary to support growth within an area, including healthcare, public health, transport, utilities and environmental recovery.
- Concentrating public engagement on local plan-making would require a complete behavioural change to be embraced by all who are involved – or should be involved – in planning. We propose a national public awareness campaign and increased resources for local community engagement.
- We support the government's renewed interest in the design of buildings and places. This needs to be seen in its widest aspect, including by ensuring places are well located and supported with infrastructure. For this reason we call for the proposed chief officer for design and place-making to be a Chartered Town Planner.
- The white paper proposes a new national levy to replace the current system of developer contributions. Despite the appeal of a simplified tax, we are concerned that this could fail to raise more revenue, undermine the levelling up agenda, and hold back development on more sustainable sites. We instead call on the government to substantially increase public subsidy for affordable housing, including social rent. This would speed up planning, increase the supply of affordable housing, and allow the Levy to focus on infrastructure.
- The reform of planning is taking place in a fast moving world with many other considerations at play, not least the Covid-19 virus. The government must set out how planning reform is aligned with post-Brexit environmental

reform, transport decarbonisation, the Industrial Strategy and local government reorganisation.

Locality

- We believe that there is a need for a level of reform of the planning system to help make it more efficient and effective. However, we do not believe the government's proposals are the right approach. The planning system will always need to have a level of complexity, as it involves mediating between a range of competing stakeholders, including the community.
- The proposals, in the name of simplification, will reduce democratic accountability in the system by limiting the degree to which the public shape planning outcomes, largely confining it to the plan making stage. We believe that the public should be afforded the ability to truly influence planning by having the opportunity to comment on site specific proposals and through making neighbourhood plans that have sufficient scope to shape growth and bring forward development the community wants and needs.
- An underlying premise throughout many of the proposals is that the planning system is the root cause of the housing crisis. However, we believe this is a misdiagnosis and that this is not the case. Therefore, these reforms will do little in the way of solving the housing crisis and they have the potential to lead to uncertainty and a greater sense of the unknown, resulting in fewer homes being built.
- Instead of the reforms proposed, we believe that increased funding for local authorities, better utilisation of existing tools (e.g. permission in principle, neighbourhood development orders (NDOs) and neighbourhood plans could help make the planning system less complex and improve consistency in decision making, without compromising democratic accountability.
- We believe that the scope of neighbourhood plans should be retained and they must be able to continue to shape and direct growth.
- We support the proposals to move away from documents to data, with a greater emphasis on digitalisation. However, this must be finely balanced to ensure that those without access to electronic devices and the internet, as well as those less technologically savvy, are not frozen out of planning.

Local Government Association

- The Planning for the Future White Paper proposes a fundamental review of the existing planning system, requiring changes to primary and secondary legislation. We share the government's aspirations for an efficient, well-resourced planning system that supports local involvement in designing, planning and creating great places for current and future generations. To succeed in meeting these challenges the planning system needs to be transparent, fit for purpose, and accessible to all.
- Local government is ready to work with the government to achieve these objectives. However, the current proposals lack the detail that is needed for full debate and comment. This lack of detail means that there are wide-ranging concerns about how the proposals will work in practice. Whilst we recognise the government's aspiration to improve the current system, without addressing many of the detailed issues, there is a significant risk that proposed changes could have a detrimental effect on the planning system. We have the opportunity to take the time needed to make improvements to the planning system. Conversely, if we get this wrong, the impacts will last generations, and some will be irreversible. We want to work together with the government to get any changes to the planning system right.
- The evidence demonstrates that with nine in 10 planning applications approved by councils, and more than a million homes given planning permission in the last decade not yet built, planning is not the problem. There is also land for more than one million homes already allocated in Local Plans which developers have not yet brought forward to planning application stage. The white paper provides no evidence that the planning system is responsible for holding up the build-out of developments.
- As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic we need stability and certainty in planning, supported by the appropriate resourcing. Only a locally-led planning system in which councils and the communities they represent have a say over the way places develop will ensure the delivery of high-quality affordable homes with the necessary infrastructure to create sustainable, resilient places for current and future generations. Of particular concern is how to ensure that there is full community involvement in planning, and that there is a strong focus not just on housing numbers and speed of delivery, but on developing sustainable development.

- The focus of the white paper proposals, in contrast, appears to be on housebuilding and speed. There is little consideration given to the many roles planning and local planning authorities undertake together with their communities to facilitate, create, revitalise, and make great places. There is also no detail about how planning for other local priorities, for example employment or infrastructure provision, will align with housing delivery. We recognise the need to increase delivery of more types and tenures of homes where they are needed, but there are other areas of focus which the white paper is all but silent on including: connectivity; accessibility; health and wellbeing; access to green spaces; access to schools and jobs; and climate resilience.
- The pandemic has highlighted stark inequalities within our society. This is especially so in health outcomes due in part to poor quality housing and a lack of access to services and green space. Research commissioned by the government prior to the pandemic revealed that when a locally-led planning approach is removed allowing for nationally prescribed permitted development rights, the outcome has been poorer quality homes and places.
- Communities are spending more time in their own neighbourhoods and at home and understand their needs now better than ever. They have clear, strong ambitions for their local recovery, development and long-term prosperity. Contrary to the white paper's suggestion, public trust in councils is at an all-time high. During the pandemic, under challenging circumstances, local authorities have shown their agility and adaptability, continuing to engage with and support their communities. This reinforces how vital it is that councils and the communities represent are empowered to shape how their areas develop.
- Local democratic oversight and community engagement are critical factors in ensuring trust and transparency in planning decisions and all aspects of the planning system. The narrative throughout the white paper is about increasing public engagement in the planning process. However, the proposals appear to limit rather than enhance engagement. Genuine public engagement will leave a community with an agreed understanding about how, where, and what type of increased capacity will meet their future needs. We are concerned that as drafted the proposals will lead to a loss of

local democracy, with councillors and communities being cut out of the process and a reduced ability to have a say on individual planning applications. There is a high risk that communities will not easily engage in the new way proposed in the white paper. In addition, local planning authorities may not have the resources to carry out the meaningful community engagement critical to achieving good planning outcomes with this new approach.

- A wholesale overhaul of the existing system and change to a new system will create uncertainty and take many years to deliver and implement across all of Whitehall and the planning sector. Constant changes to national planning policy over successive government administrations have undermined councils' critical role in place-making. Austerity measures have further cut vital resources for council staff and capacity necessary to lead on and carry out this work. We need to ensure any reforms build stability and certainty into the system, are supported by the necessary resources, and give communities the ability to plan for their local areas.
- Any discussion about changes to the planning system need to take a joined up, whole of government approach if it is to deliver on its aspirations. This means recognising and accounting for changes to other relevant legislation such as the Environment Bill and the forthcoming Devolution White Paper. In the absence of any clear national strategy for long-term recovery it is unclear how these proposals will fit into a wider approach for supporting England as we move forward.
- We support the shift to a more digitised planning system that makes the planning system more accessible and efficient. Councils will need the appropriate resourcing to lead on this step-change and issues of digital exclusion will need to be addressed to ensure all residents can engage in the planning process. The planning process and timeframes need to allow the time and resources required to undertake a mix of genuine forms of engagement where the digital approach is either not the best, or not a possible option. Councils should have the flexibility to determine the most appropriate way of engaging with the public that provide easier and more cost-effective ways of finding out about for example planning applications and planning decisions.

- The international examples on which the proposals in the white paper are based do not demonstrate how they would work in practice when applied to the English planning system. The strategic planning approaches and frameworks that underpin these other systems have neither been discussed nor considered in any real depth to give any confidence that they provide a better approach.
- Proposals such as the new Growth/Renewal/Protect areas are still very unclear, and a shift from a discretionary to rule-based system lacks robust justification. To work with these as drafted would require early engagement with members of the public. However, genuinely constructive public engagement will take longer than the proposed timeframes for completing Local Plans. We acknowledge that the Local Plan system does however need to be simplified and tightened up to reduce the scope for appeals. But without the detail the white paper provides little evidence that the proposed changes will support the ambition for a more efficient, simplified and democratic system that will achieve better planning outcomes.
- As we move into economic recovery, developers also need to have the confidence to invest. A programme of radical planning reforms likely to roll out over many years will likely lead to uncertainty and delays to investment.
- It is crucial that if we are to build more homes to higher standards that there are incentives (and penalties) to ensure developers and landowners build out their permissions and allocations to the high standards we all aspire for. We are disappointed that the white paper does not include measures to incentivise developers to bring allocated sites forward in a timely manner or build-out homes when planning permission has been granted. Councils need the tools to encourage/oblige developers to build out sites with permission in a swift and timely manner.
- As an absolute minimum, any replacement for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 development contributions should aim to capture at least the same amount of value as the existing system at an individual local authority level, rather than a national figure. However, if the government is serious about improving the existing land value capture mechanisms, any new model should strive to deliver a significant uplift in the amount of value, compared to the current system, to provide greater investment to fund the required infrastructure and affordable homes that

areas need. It is crucial that local government is involved in the design of any new system for securing developer contributions.

- Local government plays a vital role in leading the way to address climate change, reduce carbon emissions, and create the sustainable places we need. Many councils have ambitious climate targets and plans in place to achieve net zero carbon before the Government's 2050 target. However, the white paper misses the opportunity to propose the improvements and strategic interventions needed to support our shift to a carbon neutral future.
- Planning fees do not cover the true cost of processing applications. Taxpayers currently subsidise the cost at a rate of nearly £180 million a year. Councils need the ability to recover the costs of processing applications through locally-set fees. Planning departments need greater resourcing. Between 2010-11 and 2017-18 there was a 37.9 per cent fall in net current expenditure on planning functions and planning departments. This significantly reduces their capacity to ensure the delivery of new housing through the planning process and enable the new supply of housing and appropriate infrastructure.
- In addition, analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that COVID-19 has put local government under significant fiscal pressure with councils potentially needing another £2 billion this year to meet all the pressures and non-tax income losses, with the potential to rise to £3.1 billion. This excludes further funding needed to cover local tax losses and one-off costs incurred to respond to the pandemic. The IFS's upper estimates suggest a potential funding gap as high as £9.8 billion by 2023/24.
- Whilst the White Paper identifies a skills strategy for local authorities, there is no detail regarding how this will be resourced. There is considerable concern from councils about their already stretched capacity. Councils will need the necessary resources to upskill officers to undertake the transition process locally and then implement the new planning regime over many years. Planning affects other areas of council business, and any changes to the system will have impacts well beyond planning departments and across all council operations as a whole.

- There are opportunities to improve the current planning system, and local government is best equipped and prepared to work with the government on any changes to the planning system to ensure that it achieves shared aspirations.

Contact officer:

Jessica Lancod-frost, policy officer e. jessica.lancod-frost@nalc.gov.uk T. 020 7290 0319

Appendix 4.3

12 JANUARY 2021

PR1 -21| SUPPORTING HOUSING DELIVERY AND PUBLIC SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

I am writing in response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) consultation on 'Supporting Housing Delivery and Public Service Infrastructure'. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is the nationally recognised membership and support organisation representing the interests of around 10,000 parish and town councils and many parish meetings in England, 70% of which are situated in rural areas. Local (town and parish) councils are the backbone of our democracy and closest to local people, providing our neighbourhoods, villages, towns and small cities with a democratic voice and structure for action, contributing in excess of £2 billion of community investment to supporting and improving local communities and delivering neighbourhood level services.

Executive summary

NALC shares with the government its desire to support the economic future of town centres and wants to see their regeneration. It does not concur with the government that a key way of reviving town centres and high streets is to remove from elected local representatives the right to determine planning decisions in order to speed up decision making and delivery. NALC has observed a number of problems with the extensions to permitted development rights that have already been granted and it has adopted a formal position of opposing any further extensions. We have also already made the case, through our responses to the Planning White Paper and the Changes to the Current Planning System document, that over-simplifying the planning system will merely lead to poorer planning outcomes. There is also the potential for the proposed expanded permitted development rights to override neighbourhood plans and supplementary planning documents. This is not acceptable.

The current proposals class together a range of commercial, business and service premises and allow conversion to residential use with little oversight and in double-quick time. And MHCLG are considering allowing this to happen in conservation areas. Whilst NALC can very much support bringing more housing into town centres, it cannot support this happening in a virtually unregulated way

or in conservation areas. We would urge the MHCLG to call for master plans for all town centres/high streets to ensure regeneration is properly planned.

This consultation is also proposing that schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and prisons should be allowed significant extensions (upwards as well as in their footprint) without planning permission. As with the other proposals, we can see significant potential negative impacts on existing nearby dwellings, on the quality of life and on the environment.

NALC has declared that it believes there is a climate emergency – as has the government itself. We do not get a sense from the planning reforms that are being proposed that the government has factored climate change, harmful emissions or air pollution into its proposals and we are very concerned that compulsory environmental appraisals do not appear to feature. We urge the government to pause and re-think its current proposals.

Detailed response to consultation

Introduction

In its introduction to this consultation, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) expresses its desire to support the economic future of high streets and town centres, to provide greater planning certainty and flexibility and to delivering school and hospital capacity faster than currently happens.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) can certainly endorse the government's desired outcomes but not its proposed *modus operandi*. NALC has a policy position of not wanting to see any extension of permitted development rights.

In our response to the Planning White Paper (PWP), 'Planning for the Future' and the 'Changes to the Current Planning System' document we expressed alarm and concern on behalf of Town and Parish Councils at the proposals to over-simplify the planning system. The proposals in this consultation are again another *carte blanche* over-simplification.

Every place is different and the circumstances surrounding it are different. This is why it is important to have a finessed planning system which takes these differences into account. What may be the perfect solution for one place could be disastrous for another and have all sorts of implications on local character, people's lives, vistas, infrastructure demands, the ability of land to absorb water and air quality. All these issues and more are currently taken into account when

planning applications come forward. Decisions are made about whether or not to grant planning permission based on the professional planning expertise of local authority officers, often also on specialist reports relating to the particular site and on the local knowledge of elected members of the local authority – who have the benefit of comments from Local Councils and communities. Removing the right of local authorities to make decisions on planning applications and that of Local Councils to comment on them constitutes a further loss of democratic input (over and above those suggested in the PWP). The previous extension of permitted development rights is already causing problems.

The proposal now is to make it easy for the vast range of commercial, business and service premises which find themselves within the new all-encompassing use class E to achieve a change to residential use (use class C3) through permitted development rights. We contend such a move would result in unplanned town centres that would lack cohesion and appeal.

NALC supports 'smart growth' and the regeneration of urban centres and high streets. We can see that there is much scope for bringing housing into failing town centres, but cannot support this happening in an unplanned way. We can also see that it would probably not be the right answer for many high streets in villages. As a minimum, local authorities should be required to draw up master plans for each urban centre and high street that consider what parts, if any, could be appropriately recategorised for residential or other use. Without such plans and controlled planning permissions, there would be haphazard redevelopments that would see housing trapped between commercial enterprises in an inappropriate manner. Neither the occupants of the housing nor the commercial premises would be content with such an arrangement and it would be impossible to have distinct themed areas.

Supporting housing delivery

Q1 Do you agree that there should be no size limit on the buildings that could benefit from the new permitted development right to change use from commercial, business and service (Class E) to residential (C3)? Please give reasons.

- A. NALC does not agree that there should be no limit on the size of the buildings that could have permitted development rights applied to them. If the government is to meet its climate change targets and reduce air pollution, carbon and greenhouse gas emissions, it must require that

environmental impact assessments are carried out on all developments/
changes of use of any significant size.

Nor do we agree with the blanket statement at the beginning of paragraph no. 17, which opens with: *“Building on the delivery success of the permitted development right for the change of use from office to residential”*. The government itself admits that there have been numerous problems with any number of conversions from offices to residential use which have resulted in housing units that are too small and which do not have sufficient light. This point is tackled in paragraphs 11 and 13 of this consultation which trails the arrival of nationally described space standards.

Q.2.1 Do you agree that the right should not apply in areas of outstanding natural beauty, the Broads, National Parks, areas specified by the Secretary for the purposes of section 41(3) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and World Heritage Sites? Please give reasons.

A. NALC agrees that the right should not apply to areas with special designations. In addition to the exclusion of listed buildings and other designated heritage assets excluded from this right we propose that non-designated heritage assets should also be excluded. It should not apply anywhere. Every use conversion should be judged on its own merits. The priority should be making well-evidenced, sound planning decisions – not quick ones or, even worse, allowing virtually automated endorsements.

Q.2.2 Do you agree that the right should apply in conservation areas? Please give your reasons.

A. NALC does not agree that the right should apply in conservation areas. Whilst we accept that there may be some buildings in conservation areas that are appropriate for conversion the application of the right to these areas in our view devalues the whole concept of a conservation area. The designation of a conservation area implies special architectural or historic interest and any change should consider the impact upon the whole area, including on car parking and air quality. The NPPF makes clear that local authorities have a duty to ensure that an area designated as a conservation area has appropriate value and also makes clear that changes of this type should be supported where appropriate. The removal of the protection of conservation area status by granting this right risks destroying the special architectural or historic interest that they are intended to protect.

Q.2.3 Do you agree that, in conservation areas only, the right should allow for prior approval of the impact of the loss of ground floor use to residential? Please give reasons.

A. NALC does not agree with the proposal to introduce blanket rules and regulations in respect of planning, whether this be in conservation areas or anywhere else. In its responses to the Planning White Paper, 'Planning for the Future' and to the 'Changes to the Current Planning System' document, NALC argued that every location and every planning application is different and must be treated individually. We have concerns about existing permitted development rights and major reservations about proposals to extend them. This approach does not constitute good planning.

Q3.1 Do you agree that, in managing the impact of the proposal, the matters set out in paragraph 21 of the consultation document should be considered in a prior approval? Please give reasons.

A. Yes. While we do not agree with the proposals to extend permitted development rights it is vital that, as a minimum, local communities should have the opportunity to put forward views on the limited list in paragraph 21.

Q3.2 Are there any other planning matters that should be considered? Please specify.

A. Yes. The list is nowhere near exhaustive enough. It does not encompass air quality, climate change, visual impacts or, in urban areas, the need for green spaces. Whilst, in out of town commercial and retail areas, the proximity of educational, medical and leisure facilities could be an issue. In addition, policies in any Neighbourhood Plans and/or Supplementary Planning Documents must be taken into account.

Also, although paragraph 21 under 'Matters for local consideration through prior approval' does mention transport, it does so in respect of access. It does not reference it in terms of the impacts that extra traffic congestion could have.

Q4.1 Do you agree that the proposed new permitted development right to change use from Commercial, Business and Service (Class E) to residential should attract a fee per dwelling house? Please give reasons.

Q4.2 If you agree there should be a fee per dwelling house, should this be set at £96 per dwelling house? Please give reasons.

A. If this proposal goes go ahead, and NALC sincerely hopes it does not, there should be a fee per dwelling house, a proportion of which should go to any Town or Parish Council in whose area the conversions take place. But a pan-national fee would be inappropriate. The rate should reflect the area and the CIL in place.

Q.5 Do you have any other comments on the proposed right for the change of use from Commercial, Business and Service use class to residential? Please specify.

A. This is a flawed concept that will result in poorer outcomes and which could have deleterious impacts. It is wrong to try to simplify the planning system in this way.

NALC has no problem supporting the concept of 'Smart Growth'¹ and initiatives that introduce housing into failing town centres – but this must happen in a properly planned manner, following agreed master plans for each centre. Simply extending permitted development rights in the way proposed will result in urban centres that are a hotch potch of residential and commercial/business use in a way that will bring conflict and not result in the most attractive outcomes. Also, residential develop-ments could spring up in totally unsuitable out of town areas and possibly also in village high streets which need revitalising with different types of initiatives.

A benefit identified by this consultation for the proposals tabled is a reduced workload for planning departments. This should not be the desired end result. The desired end result should be well planned places to live, work shop and relax. These places should be safe and sustainable with sufficient green spaces and good air quality. If this means increasing the capacity of planning departments, then so be it.

Q7.1 Do you agree that the right for schools, colleges, universities and hospitals be amended to allow for development which is not greater than 25%

¹ Smart Growth is a holistic approach to planning that emphasises compact and accessible urban communities and which treats a range of spatial, transport and community planning and regeneration challenges in the round. It seeks ways of avoiding urban sprawl and also looks for ways to re-build the sense of community.

of the footprint, or up to 250 square metres of the current buildings on the site at the time the legislation is brought into force, whichever is the greater? Please give your reasons.

Q7.2 Do you agree that the right be amended to allow the height limit to be raised from 5 metres to 6? Please give your reasons.

Q7.3 Is there any evidence to support an increase above 6 metres. Please specify.

- A. NALC does not agree. Residential areas immediately adjoin many schools, colleges, universities and hospitals. It would be wholly inappropriate to grant such permitted development rights. Quality of life has to be a factor taken into consideration here, including (where height is concerned), the overlooking of private properties and their gardens. The same applies to environmental issues.

Schools, colleges, universities and hospitals all generate a lot of traffic (which, in turn, have climate change and air quality implications). In addition, more buildings on any given site means less opportunities for run-off. Any proposals to extend them must be examined on a case-by-case basis to determine what impacts will result from the proposals. NALC's policy position is that it does not support an extension of permitted development rights. We want to see a robust planning system and a democratic one where elected representatives of principal authorities and of Local Councils have a say in what is appropriate where.

Q7.4 Do you agree that prisons should benefit from the same right to expand or add additional buildings? Please specify.

- A. Only some prisons are in isolated locations. Many are adjacent to urban/residential development. Those residences which already abut prisons have an overpowering view of very high, solid walls, often topped with barbed wire. It would be insufferable for either the walls or the prisons to suddenly be extended in height, removing even more light and presenting an even more overbearing presence. The decision to agree whether or not to increase the height of prisons must be made on an individual basis and with all factors taken into consideration – such as increased traffic if capacity is increased.

Q9.1 Do you think that the proposed amendments to the right in relation to schools, colleges and universities, and hospitals could impact on businesses, communities, or local planning authorities? If so please give your reasons.

- A. The major impact that the proposed amendment to the right in relation to educational institutions and hospitals is likely to be to changes to the traffic volumes and traffic flows. These as a minimum should be matters for prior approval.

Q11 Do you agree that the new public service application process, as set out in paragraphs 43 and 44 of the consultation document, should only apply to major development (which are not EIA developments)? Please give your reasons.

- A. Local authorities should be responsible for determining all planning applications relating not only to public buildings such as schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and prisons, but also to private dwellings. New infrastructure always has some consequences and it, in turn, requires new infrastructure itself to function.

On the matter of environmental impact assessments, these are an essential component of good planning – and they ought to include a detailed examination of potential climate change impacts, air quality and carbon and other emissions.

Q12 Do you agree the modified process should apply to hospitals, schools, further education colleges, prisons, young offenders' institutions and other criminal justice accommodation? If not, give your reasons as well as any suggested alternatives.

- A. NALC does not agree at all with “the modified process” being tabled. It would be undemocratic and not in the best interests of the affected neighbourhoods. It is inappropriate and dangerous to remove from LAs the right to decide on all planning applications – but particularly those of some scale. Paragraph 34 speaks of allowing permitted development rights for “additional buildings to no more than 25% of the gross floorspace of the original building with a maximum of 100 square metres, or 250 square metres in the case of schools”. Para. 35 speaks of extending facilities by up the same amount. Such areas are substantial. Some may have limited impacts, especially if the locations are relatively remote, but many would have significant implications. These cannot be dismissed arbitrarily with

promises of faster decision-making and faster delivery times. And, whilst there is a promise in paragraph 35 that government departments would *“take account of environmental advice available to them”* it does not require that environmental appraisals are carried out.

Q13 Do you agree the determination period for applications falling within the scope of the modified process should be reduced to 10 weeks? Please give reasons.

Q14 Do you agree the minimum consultation/publicity period should be reduced to 14 days? Please give your reasons.

A. NALC is opposed to the extension of permitted development rights per se, opposed to the specific proposals in this consultation and opposed to the suggestions that determination should be rushed through and publicity reduced to a minimum. The modus operandi envisaged is severely defective and should be dropped.

Q17.1 Do you have any comments on the matters set out in this consultation document including post-permission matters, guidance & planning fees? Please specify

Q22 Do you have any other comments about the consolidation and simplification of existing permitted development rights? Please give your reasons.

A hallmark of the UK's planning system has always been its thoroughness and attention to detail. The Planning White Paper, the Changes to the Current Planning System document and these proposals to further extend permitted development rights all seek to remove the high levels of individual scrutiny which has existed hitherto, the need for detailed environmental reports and the statutory right of principal authorities and Local Councils to have a proper say in planning decision-making. NALC rejects these moves which will lead to a much poorer planning system and defective outcomes. We sincerely hope that the government draws back from its current moves to seriously weaken the planning system and remove democratic input. We would also make the point that many of the changes currently being suggested do not equate with the government's declared climate change agenda, nor with its localism agenda, nor with its health agenda. The proposals being consulted on here have the potential to cut across neighbourhood plans and supplementary planning documents which have been

drawn up and supported locally. This is not acceptable when local communities have come together and expended much effort and time on such important planning documents. Additionally, we would point out that a factor not mentioned anywhere in the latest proposals is the need to ensure that everyone has access to green spaces. The huge significance of this has been highlighted during the coronavirus lockdowns. It must not be forgotten when any changes to the planning system are being considered..

Contact officer:

Chris Borg, policy manager e. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049

Appendix 5.1

Young people campaign theme

1. Summary

2. This report summarises progress on the themes of climate change and health and wellbeing, set by the Policy Committee as NALC's three big campaign/project themes, and includes initial proposals for our next theme of young people.

2. Context

3. In 2019, health and wellbeing was the focus of much of our work, aimed at raising awareness of the role of local councils in the health and well-being agenda and improving people's quality of life, this comprised:

- developing a [dedicated webpage](#)
- a case studies [publication](#)
- NALC/LGA Reaching Out [guide](#) to helping principal and local councils tackle loneliness
- NALC/University of Plymouth [guide](#) to Dementia Friendly Communities
- [speech](#) by former loneliness minister Tracey Crouch to NALC spring conference
- Making Communities Healthier [workshop](#) at NALC annual conference
- NALC [health and wellbeing week](#) of online events
- [attending and exhibiting](#) at Healthwatch annual conference
- [LCR interview](#) with Duncan Selbie, former chief executive, Public Health England
- continuing relationship with the Alzheimer's Society and new links with Crohn's and Colitis and the Epilepsy Society including a [joint fringe event at the Conservative Party conference](#)
- [NALC became a Dementia Friendly organisation](#) with training for all staff
- articles in LCR magazine

4. Climate change has been our theme for 2020, aimed at raising the profile of the role of local councils in building environmentally friendly and sustainable

communities, encouraging more local councils to take action, and pressing for powers and funding to help local councils do even more:

- developing a [dedicated webpage](#)
- a case studies [publication](#)
- set up a task and finish group under the auspices of the Policy Committee
- NALC online events on Putting trees at the heart of your community and Rebuilding sustainable communities
- Parliamentary briefing on Environment Bill sent to all MPs and remote briefing held for members of the House of Lords
- survey on barriers to local councils implementing climate friendly actions
- Continuing relationship with The Woodland Trust on the Tree Charter, new links with Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, and new partnership with Salix to promote grants and loans for local councils
- NALC speech at Tree Charter Day festival
- articles in [Air Quality News](#), The Clerk and LCR magazines

5. Building on the successful approach taken for our work on health and wellbeing and climate change, the proposed outputs of our work on young people are set out below:

- dedicated webpage
- a case studies publication
- NALC event/s
- articles and media coverage
- speak at other events
- lobby for powers and funding
- links built with relevant national bodies
- promote young councillors through our Make a Change campaign and encourage more young people to stand
- set up a young councillors network.

6. Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Contact officer: Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications E.
Justin.Griggs@nalc.gov.uk T. 020 7290 0317

Appendix 5.2

Update on Climate Change Task and Finish Group Outputs at NALC

1. Summary

Since the committee last met, the Task and Finish Group has had a number of outputs, from increasing the amount of information on biodiversity on the climate change webpage, to assisting NALC in answering questions from Lord Salisbury, to supporting the survey on climate change and submitting a motion to the policy committee to adopt.

2. Context

The Climate Change Survey key headlines:

- Closes on 29 January 2021.
- 135 responses so far.
- 40% of councils have no climate emergency declaration planned or made.
- 37% of councils have declared a climate emergency.
- 66% of councils have planned tree and shrub planters.
- 60% of councils have planned some rewilding.
- 40% of councils responses have put in Electric Vehicle charging points.
- 68% of councils need support with locating and applying to grants.
- 60% of councils need support with knowledge, skills and training.
- 20% of councils faced barriers in a lack of power to act or to influence decisions made at higher levels.

3. Recommendation

NALC recommends that the committee notes the report.

Contact officer: Claire Goldfinch, E. claire.goldfinch@nalc.gov.uk T. 020 7290 0314

Appendix 5.3

POLICY PROPOSITION FOR NALC's CLIMATE CHANGE TASK & FINISH GROUP TO PUT BEFORE THE NALC POLICY COMMITTEE

Further to NALC's adoption of new policy positions, prompted by the Planning White Paper, NALC's Climate Change Task and Finish Group would like the Policy Committee to consider expanding upon the first of its new policies. Currently it says:

"NALC has signed up to the proposition that there is a climate emergency and will therefore, as a general principle, support moves and policies which help to mitigate it. For instance, NALC supports the need for Local Plans and large developments to be subject to environmental appraisals and it supports energy efficient homes and more trees".

The climate change T & F group would like to suggest that this is amended and enhanced as follows:

"NALC has signed up to the proposition that there is a climate emergency and will therefore, as a general principle, support moves and policies which help to mitigate it. For instance, NALC supports the need for Local Plans and large developments to be subject to environmental appraisals and it supports the principle of biodiversity net gain, energy efficient homes, pro-forestation and the planting of more native trees and more native hedgerows.

NALC believes that a sound and genuinely sustainable planning system is fundamental to minimising carbon and greenhouse gas emissions. Any new planning system should have climate change as its first legal priority and policy priority and should include explicit references to implementing the carbon reduction budgets required by the 2008 Climate Act.

The UK government has stated that the planning system should support efforts to combat climate change but, as of December 2020, this has only partially been spelt out, e.g. in some proposed measures in the Environment Bill. The Planning White Paper of 2020 was non-committal on this issue and yet the need for this to happen is urgent as the 2018 IPCC report made clear that emissions must fall to net zero by 2050. However, the UK is already not on track to meet its own carbon budget commitments and it has a long way to go on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality.

The government appears to be determined to reform the planning system. NALC urges it to ensure that climate change is at its heart by demanding very high environmental standards in all aspects of: development/infrastructure provision, the extraction of natural resources, the preservation of carbon sinks, energy supply, transport and the handling of waste – all factors which impinge upon everyday life and which affect the health of the nation and the health of the planet”.

Contacts: Cllr Lillian Burns, vice chair, Policy Committee

E. brllln@aol.com

Appendix 5.4

Update on NALC Health and Wellbeing Campaign 2020-21

1. Summary

Health and wellbeing has been a campaign priority for NALC over 2020. Over the course of the year NALC has undertaken:

- A dedicated webpage giving advice and guidance.
- A case study document which highlights good practice in the sector.
- A joint guide on loneliness with the LGA.
- An online event series on Health and wellbeing.
- A written guide written in collaboration with the University of Plymouth, Dementia-Friendly Communities Guide.
- Links with key stakeholder such as the Epilepsy Society, Crohn's and Colitis.

2. Context

[Dementia Friendly Communities Guide](#) –

- Launched 30 October 2020
- Supported by [Prime Minister Boris Johnson MP](#)

[Prime Minister's Challenge Group on Rural Dementia](#)

- NALC has been asked to secretariat the group.
- The last secretariat was the Alzheimer's Society.
- This will give NALC excellent links to other key stakeholders.

3. Recommendation

To note the work that NALC has undertaken over the past year.

Contact officer: Claire Goldfinch, E. claire.goldfinch@nalc.gov.uk T. 020 7290 0314

Appendix 5.5

Updated LGA Model Code of Conduct

1. Summary

The LGA confirmed to NALC at the end of October 2020 that it had completed an updated draft of its Code of Conduct. The LGA at that point confirmed that it was inviting final comments on the updated draft code ahead of it being adopted by its Executive Board on 3 December 2020.

2. Context

NALC accordingly re-convened the county officer working group on the code of conduct which had met earlier in the summer to help frame – from a practitioner perspective – the NALC response to the first draft code of conduct which NALC had submitted in August 2020.

The group met by Zoom call in early November and agreed that:

- The LGA appeared to have taken on board many of the points from NALC's initial response;
- There still needed to be a general glossary at the end of the document to define sector specific terminology (e.g. "co-option");
- We included a line in there also about sanctions (though as has been said this was not the inflection of the main code);
- We asked for sign lines to be inserted at the end of the document to ensure that councillors literally signed up to the code; &
- We asked for confirmation as to the timescales and next steps regarding LGA (co)-production of guidance, resources and outputs.

The Committee chairman fed in his views briefly on a draft of the response and NALC officers have included the main points from the Committee chairman's correspondence to them in the final response on that basis. The committee will be kept updated.

3. Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, E. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049

Appendix 6.1

Lobby Day – 2 February 2021

1. Summary

Management Board and National Assembly recently confirmed (in the Autumn of 2020) that NALC officers should proceed and organise an online Lobby Day of parliamentarians on 2 February 2021. This is a short written update on that basis.

2. Context

Accordingly NALC officers have held internal meetings in November and December 2020 to scope and start wheels in motion for E-Lobby Day 2021. The following actions have been taken so far:

- Two mailings to county officers asking them to save the date (2 February 2021 and highlighting updated resources, web page and news story.
- Update to resources and main Lobby Day web page [here](#). Produced and published a news story [here](#).
- The Policy Officer has commenced a series of systematic regional daily calls to all county associations (beginning on 9 December 2020) which will continue until Lobby Day itself – to encourage colleagues to arrange online meetings with their parliamentarians on 2 February 2021.

Various other actions are planned for January 2021. The purpose of Lobby Day in 2021 remains identical and unchanged from all previous Lobby Days organised since June 2015 – i.e. to engage with parliamentarians to promote national campaigns and local lobbying concerns – and to raise the parliamentary profile of local councils.

For this reason all Committee members are asked to be active advocates for Lobby Day 2021 and to encourage their county officers to arrange online meetings for them on 2 February 2021. More supporting materials and information on national campaigns will be available in due course.

3. Recommendation

To note the report and for committee members to encourage their county associations to organise online meetings with MPs for Lobby Day 2021.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, E. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049

Appendix 7.1

REPORT ON RSN AGM & RURAL ASSEMBLY MEETING, NOV. 16TH, 2020

Cllr Lillian Burns, vice chair, Policy Committee

The 2020 Rural Services Network (RSN) AGM and Rural Assembly meeting took place on-line on November 16th, during a second period of major national lockdown due to Covid-19. The virtual event was 'attended' by 55 people and chaired by Cllr Cecilia Motley (from Shropshire Council) who was re-elected unopposed as chair at the start of the AGM. The first Vice Chair, Cllr Robert Heseltine (from North Yorkshire County Council), was also re-elected unopposed, as were the other vice chairs. Cllr Motley reported that the work of the RSN had continued apace, despite the lockdowns.

Following approval of the minutes of the last AGM, held on December 2nd 2019, the minutes of two RSN executive meetings were noted.

Deputy chief executive, Kerry Booth, spoke about the changes in service delivery to RSN members. Since the beginning of the first lockdown in March, meetings and seminars had all gone on-line and there had been a much greater level of engagement by members. It had increased by between 200% and 300% and many more officers had taken part. Next year all seminars were going to be held on-line. There would not be different regional events. Any member could attend any event and the total number would increase from seven to nine.

Kerry reported that, during the lockdowns, the RSN had been part of a DEFRA rural stakeholder forum with Graham Biggs, the chief executive, taking part in the meetings (currently held fortnightly). The primary purpose of the meetings had been to assess the economic impacts of the pandemic on rural councils. The RSN had also been working with planning officers on its response to the Planning White Paper. Starting the following week, the RSN was going to introduce a regular newsletter and also one-to-one video calls with all members. Also, the RSN was looking to the local authority members to appoint deputies.

The AGM agreed the subscription increase recommended. This was an inflation increase of 2.75% for 2021/22 in addition to the phased increase agreed in 2018/19. The budget was also approved.

On the matter of the Planning White Paper (PWP) and the associated consultation document 'Changes to the Current Planning System', (the RSN's submission was circulated with the papers), Cllr Motley remarked that the RSN had received "very

strong representations". Graham Biggs said that, apart from the proposals in the 'Changes to the Current Planning System', which were particularly detrimental to rural areas (notably, the algorithm), there was the issue in the PWP of developer contributions to the pool of affordable home being made less onerous. (Instead of having to provide affordable homes on sites of 10 or more homes, the proposal was to raise the bar to 50 homes). The RSN had held a seminar on the subject on September 9th which had helped to fine tune the RSN response. Also, Graham had attended a virtual roundtable meeting with the secretary of state, Robert Jenrick, during which he (Graham) had expressed surprise that a white paper rather than a green one had been issued and also about the lack of detail. In addition, the Rt. Hon. Philip Dunne, MP, the chair of the Rural Services APPG, had written to the MHCLG expressing some concern.

Philip Dunne, who took over the chairmanship of the APPG a year ago, joined the meeting. He said there were a dozen or so active members of the all-party APPG, but it was not enough. They received tremendous support from the RSN and they tried to focus on a few key issues. They had held a session on rural transport in the spring, which was a bit limited, and they were trying to get another going on the PWP. They had had some impact on rural connectivity and had held a session with Matt Warman, Minister for Digital Infrastructure at the Department for Digital, Culture & Sport when he (Philip Dunne) had told the minister that he had zero confidence in the new digital network being delivery on time (i.e. by 2025).

The APPG had also met with the Rt. Hon. Steve Barclay, chief secretary to the Treasury, regarding the spending review. There was due to be an announcement about that at the end of November. It was expected that there would be a relatively small number of projects which would receive funding. The APPG had focused on broadband and connectivity for their meeting.

It was disappointing that there had not been a spending review for three years. It was not possible to plan properly if there was no clarity around funding. Philip Dunne was now looking to get a meeting with Robert Jenrick about the proposed changes to the planning system. The algorithm which set the distribution of housing was particularly perplexing.

During questions, Philip Dunne also touched on his role as chair of the Environmental and Audit Committee which, he said in response to a question, was looking at – amongst other things – the issue of tree planting. It was essential to ensure that the right species of trees were planted in the right places, he said. He also spoke about his private members' bill to impose a duty on water companies to ensure untreated sewage is not discharged into rivers and inland waterways

and about the 'End Sewage Pollution Campaign', recommending that people visit the www.sas.org.uk (Surfers Against Sewage) website.

Kerry Booth gave a report on the RSN's very successful full week's conference on line. [A report on this has already been presented to the NALC Policy Committee]. A total of 394 people had 'attended' during the week, consisting of 72% officers and 28% elected members. Attendance had been free, which was a huge boon to people, and there had been webinars in the mornings and seminar sessions in the afternoons. There had been 17 speakers including some who it would probably not have been possible to get to attend in person. This was one of the advantages of holding virtual events. There had only been a little difficulty getting people to attend the Friday sessions and therefore it was thought that next year's virtual conference would probably be a four-day event.

Graham Biggs made the final presentation about the publication and campaign 'Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision'. Last year the RSN had articulated why a rural strategy was needed. Now the RSN was moving the campaign forward. The vision document, officially due to be launched in February, (<https://www.rsonline.org.uk/revitalising-rural>), had 16 chapters on subjects from sustainable farming to the availability of affordable housing (the average house price was £44,000 higher in rural areas than in urban areas) and from managing an older population to decarbonising rural communities. Each chapter ended with a series of policy 'asks'. The RSN was already engaging with member organisations and MPs about the RSN's vision. They now needed to hear about case studies to back up the chapters, which were relatively high level.

He also mentioned that, in recent weeks, the RSN had worked with the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) on a report which showed that it made sense to invest in affordable housing.

Under 'any other business' Graham mentioned that he had just received notification of a House of Commons inquiry into digital technology which was looking at physical and mental health quality of working life. The RSN had been invited to present evidence.

There was one question under AOB – about planning for virtual meetings for the whole of next year. Graham pointed out that there were huge financial savings on the one hand and also vastly increased engagement on the other. He said the budget which had been agreed in the AGM planned for virtual meetings for all of 2021.

Contacts: Cllr Lillian Burns, vice chair, Policy Committee E. brllln@aol.com