

POLICY COMMITTEE | AGENDA

5 October 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 by the chairman [10:00]

2. Apologies for absence [10:00]

2.1. To receive any apologies for the session

3. Minutes of previous meeting – 29 June 2021 [10:00-10:05]

3.1. To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021.

see appendix 3.1

3.2. To note the action log and raise any other matters.

see appendix 3.2

4. Motions from county associations [10:05-10:35]

4.1. To receive a motion from the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils regarding standards (item to be attended by John Crossling, WALC, to speak to the item) - see appendix 4.1 (10 minutes)

4.2 To receive a motion from the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils regarding livestreaming council meetings (item to be attended by Cllr Eli Heathfield, c/o GAPTC, to speak to this item) - see appendix 4.2 (10 minutes)

4.3 To receive a motion from the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils regarding parish websites (item to be attended by Cllr Amanda Davis c/o GAPTC, to speak to this item) - see appendix 4.3 (10 minutes)

5. Consultations update [10:35-10:50]

5.1. To receive a verbal update and short written report from the policy manager with a status update on responses to the following consultations:

- House of Lords inquiry into the demand for new housing.
- Cabinet Office National Resilience Strategy consultation.
- MHCLG consultation on implementation of Redmond Review.
- DEFRA consultation on Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

see appendix 5.1

6. Campaigns [10:50-11:25]

6.1 Updates on current campaigns [15 minutes]:

- Banks.
- Local council elections surveys 2021 and to agree next steps.
- Climate change – to receive a short written report on the transition of the Task and Finish Group into a national network, and the Environment Bill - see appendix 6.1.
- Young People – to receive a short verbal update on the web page and case study document for young people.

6.2 Campaign priorities [20 minutes]

To discuss and review the last two years of campaign work under the current committee; and to agree campaign priorities for 2022-23.

7. Review of NALC Prospectus [11:25-11:30]

7.1 To receive a short verbal update from the head of policy and communications on the ongoing update of the NALC prospectus.

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

8.1. To note the next meeting of the Policy Committee will be held on a date in January 2021 (to be confirmed) via Zoom.

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Appendix 3.1

POLICY COMMITTEE | MINUTES

29 June 2021 –10:00-11:30

ZOOM teleconference

Present:

Cllr David Francis (committee chairman and Northumberland), Cllr Lillian Burns (Cheshire), Cllr Sue Baxter (NALC chairman and Worcestershire), Cllr Peter Allison (Yorkshire), Cllr Colin Peacock (Lancashire), Cllr Malcolm Leeding, MBE (Oxfordshire), Cllr Rosie Weaver BEM (Warwickshire and West Midlands), Cllr Tony Hirons (Leicestershire and Rutland), Cllr Ray Wickson (Shropshire Association of Local Councils) for part, Cllr Geoff Harper (Berkshire Association of Local Councils) for part, and Cllr Phil Barnett (Berkshire Association of Local Councils) for part.

Staff present: Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications) and Chris Borg (policy manager).

1. Welcome by the chairman

The committee chairman welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1. To receive any apologies from the session

Resolved: No apologies were received for this session.

3. Minutes of previous meeting – 30 March 2021

3.1. To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2021.

Resolved: The committee approved the draft minutes.

3.2. To note the action log and raise any other matters.

There was a short discussion about further lobbying on remote meetings following NALC's submission to the call for evidence. The NALC chair relayed her discussion with Luke Hall MP who reiterated a change to primary legislation was needed and this would take time. The head of policy and communications added there was a meeting next week with other stakeholders such as the LGA,

where lobbying would be considered. It was noted that in certain situations where local councillors were unable to physically attend parish council meetings due to ill health or otherwise and they were approaching the end of the six month rule, they could seek approval for a leave of absence. This issue had also been raised by the Smaller Councils Committee alongside a request for NALC to issue guidance to make councils aware of this.

Resolved: The committee noted the action log; agreed to await the outcome from the upcoming NALC meeting with the LGA on next steps on remote meetings; and requested guidance be issued on seeking of absence for councillors.

4. Motions from county associations

4.1. To receive a motion from Shropshire Association of Local Councils regarding fireworks protection.

Cllr Ray Wickson from the Shropshire Association of Local Councils spoke to a motion asking NALC to lobby to ban Chinese lanterns and for the government to regulate more tightly the use of fireworks. There was a discussion during which it was agreed to support a ban on the sale and use of Chinese lanterns. However, it was not considered likely that the government would legislate to make tighter regulations around general firework use, as this was not a national priority for the government; and the police already had powers to enforce unauthorised and antisocial use of fireworks.

Resolved: That NALC supports a ban on the sale and use of Chinese lanterns, and will liaise with the NFU and the LGA to take this forward. It was agreed not to push for further legislation regarding the sale and use of fireworks.

4.2. To receive a motion from Berkshire Association of Local Councils on floods caused by sewage systems on new builds

Cllrs Geoff Harper and Phil Barnett from the Berkshire Association of Local Councils spoke to a motion asking NALC to lobby government to make it mandatory for the adoption of Surface Water Urban Development Systems. There was a general debate during which it was agreed that the motion was unclear precisely as to what BALC was requesting. It seemed as though developers were taking advantage of residents in new builds by charging very high fees to build sub-standard drainage systems which often led to flooding.

Resolved: That the committee not formally adopt this motion at this time. Further work be undertaken including looking into the EFRA Select Committee Parliamentary Scrutiny report in 2017.

5. Consultation next steps

5.1. The policy manager provided a brief verbal update that NALC submissions had recently been made to government on remote meetings (MHCLG), Rural broadband (DCMS) and Electronic communications infrastructure (MHCLG). The first consultation on remote meetings had already been covered in an earlier item. It was agreed that we should await the government responses in the late summer/early autumn to the latter two consultations before making any further moves.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6. Campaigns

6.1. Toilet tax

There were short updates provided by NALC officers on the latest developments with the toilet tax removal and the implementation process following recent Royal Assent for the relevant bill.

Resolved (1): That the verbal updates be noted and that NALC monitor the situation with local councils receiving their rebates from billing authorities.

6.2. Banks

The policy manager provided a short verbal update on the campaign to improve banking services for local councils.

Resolved (2): That the NALC report on banking services be circulated to the committee in due course.

6.3 Local council elections 2021

The policy manager provided a short update regarding three surveys which were being finalized by NALC officers – for councils, councillors and county associations on the local council elections 2021.

Resolved (3): That the three elections surveys to councils, councillors and county associations be issued with appropriate communications and that an update be provided at the next meeting of the committee.

6.4 Climate Change

NALC officers provided short updates on the climate change campaign. The head of policy and communications provided a written grid on the suggested transition from the task and finish group into a new national network for local councils which would provide a benefit of membership. Members welcomed the work which had been undertaken by the Task and Finish group, supported by Claire Goldfinch, and emphasised the importance of continued facilitation to enable a new national network on climate change to function effectively.

Resolved (4): That the verbal updates and grid on the transition of the climate change task and finish group into a new national network be noted and agreed.

6.5 Young people

The policy manager provided a short update on the new web page being developed for the youth campaign. The head of policy and communications spoke to an update on the case study document which was being developed. It was also agreed the need to offer to local councils basic guidance on child protection issues as part of our youth campaign.

Resolved (5): That the updates on the youth campaign be noted.

6.6 DEFRA Annual Rural Proofing Report

The policy manager summarized a report NALC had been asked to circulate to the committee to obtain headline views on – the DEFRA Annual Rural Proofing Report 2020. The link had been circulated in the papers. Initial feedback was not enthusiastic. The committee did agree to encourage the Smaller Councils Committee to contribute to its response. Committee members were asked to send any further views back to the policy manager by 17:00 on 9 July.

Resolved (6): That the verbal update be noted and that committee members send their written views to the policy manager by 17:00 on 9 July 2021.

6.7 Queen's Speech and the Planning Bill

NALC officers provided a short update on the Queen's Speech and the impending Planning Bill. The committee repeated its recent stance that it thought NALC should be communicating its most recent planning positions to MPs and peers ahead of summer recess. In addition to the lobbying note, which had already been drafted, the committee agreed it would compile a second briefing on its vision for an improved planning system.

Resolved (7): That the verbal updates be noted and that the short planning note prepared by Cllr Burns be branded and issued to parliamentarians ahead of summer recess 2021.

7. NALC prospectus

The head of policy and communications provided a short verbal update that the NALC prospectus needed to be updated per the recent request from Management Board. It had last been updated in 2017 so it was high time for a refresh. Certain views were offered on a shorter title and individual campaigns which needed to be referenced but it was agreed that the committee should send requested changes in writing to the head of policy and communications.

Resolved: That committee members read the prospectus and send any changes requested in writing to the head of policy and communications.

8. Date and time of next meeting

8.1. To note the next meeting of the Policy Committee will be held on 5 October 2021 via Zoom.

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Appendix 3.2

Action log

Date	Activity	Item number	Action Complete (Y / N)
29 June 2021	SALC Motion - Fireworks. ACTION: That NALC supports a ban on the sale and use of Chinese lanterns, and will liaise with the NFU and the LGA to take this forward. It was agreed not to push for further legislation regarding the sale and use of fireworks.	4.1	Y
29 June 2021	BALC motion on sewage system standards. ACTION: Further work be undertaken including looking into the EFRA Select Committee Parliamentary Scrutiny report in 2017.	4.2	Y
29 June 2021	Banks. ACTION: That the NALC report on banking services be circulated to the committee in due course.	6.2	Y
29 June 2021	Elections surveys ACTION: That the three elections surveys to councils, councilors and county associations be issued with appropriate communications.	6.3	Y
29 June 2021	Queens Speech and Planning Bill ACTION: That the verbal updates be noted and that the short planning note prepared by Cllr Burns be branded and issued to parliamentarians ahead of summer recess 2021.	6.7	Y

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Appendix 4.1

Motion from Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils

Subject: Monitoring Officers

1. Text

“The proposal is that NALC lobby Government for a change in legislation to remove the need for the Monitoring Officer to have to conduct the investigation of alleged breaches.”

2. Reasoning for the motion

There is a lack of consistency about how claims of breaches of code of conduct are handled locally and nationally.

3. Prospectus theme

Empower communities

4. How affecting local councils

WALC has examples of legitimate claims by member councils being rejected by monitoring officers due to the nature of the written guidance of that principal authority. For example Warwick district Council require that the both parties in the dispute are interviewed in order to ascertain the true nature of the situation and give equal weight to accusation and defence. In Stratford District Council, the accusation is only accepted in writing and the accused is the only party interviewed who of course claim their innocence resulting in most claims being rejected.

5. Recommendation

That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 5 October 2021.

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Appendix 4.2

Motion from Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils

Subject: Livestreaming council meetings

1. Text

“GAPTC asks NALC to lobby government to offer funding for councils to provide livestreaming to their residents.”

2. Reasoning for the motion

The withdrawal of the power to hold virtual meetings leaves residents unable to attend meetings in person without the means to see their councils in action. Therefore they cannot participate, unlike in virtual meetings.

3. Prospectus theme

Empower Communities

4. How affecting local councils

Conversations with clerks suggest that in what may be a permanent absence of virtual or hybrid meetings where residents could participate, livestreaming would be an alternative.

5. Recommendation

That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 5 October 2021.

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Appendix 4.3

Motion from Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils

Subject: Parish websites

1. Text

“GAPTC asks NALC to lobby the government to recognise parish and town councils on its website.”

2. Reasoning for the motion

The government’s website page ‘www.gov.uk/find-local-council’ only includes principal authorities. GAPTC’s membership at its AGM considers this to be neglect of the sector, contributing as it does to significant community benefits.

3. Prospectus theme

Empower Communities

4. How affecting local councils

The lack of recognition affects parishes and towns across the country. While it is appreciated the work that would be involved, parish and town councils should not be marginalised by the government.

5. Recommendation

That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 5 October 2021.

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Appendix 5.1

Consultations update – next steps

1. Summary

NALC is currently responding to three consultations as below between September and November 2021:

- House of Lords inquiry into the demand for new housing.
- Cabinet Office National Resilience Strategy consultation.
- MHCLG consultation on implementation of Redmond Review.
- DEFRA consultation on Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

This is a short report to confirm some suggested next steps on lobbying on these three areas.

2. Context

Some brief context for each of the four consultations is shown below with suggested next steps on lobbying:

(a) House of Lords inquiry into the demand for new housing

- Purpose – to gather evidence on how current social, economic and environmental trends affect the demand for housing in England;
- NALC argued: that the government should build much more affordable and social housing and prioritise building on brownfield sites.
- Suggested next steps: ongoing dialogue with the House of Lords Built Environment Committee and local government stakeholders, provide ongoing updates and advice to member councils.

(b) Cabinet Office National Resilience Strategy consultation

- Purpose – CO wanted to garner views on local community input to the national resilience effort and gather examples of local strategies.
- NALC argued: that local councils have a hugely important role to play in the national resilience effort as evidenced by the COVID-19 response and many have good examples of their own resilience strategies.

- Suggested next steps – ongoing dialogue with CO and continue to take soundings from member councils on how they can best make an impact in the national resilience effort. See news story [here](#).

© MHCLG consultation on implementation of Redmond Review

- Purpose – for MHCLG to gauge views on implementation of some technical aspects of Redmond Review.
- NALC argued – that main review recommendations were sound; that councils producing variance statements with the AGAR was fine and that the £6.5m limited assurance threshold should increase in future.
- Suggested next steps – track MHCLG response to consultation and continue to liaise with SAAA, NAO and SLCC on next steps. See news story [here](#).

(d) DEFRA consultation on Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

- Purpose – for DEFRA to confirm how best to implement its Local Nature Strategies aspect of the Environment Bill.
- NALC is arguing – that local councils should form part of all the LNRS partnerships when strategies are being framed and for them to be consulted.
- Suggested next steps – track progress with the Environment Bill, and liaise with DEFRA and peers on its implementation.

3. Recommendation

That the written report be noted.

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