

POLICY COMMITTEE | AGENDA

25 January 2022-10:00-Noon

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 & apologies [10:00 a.m. – 10:05 a.m.]

- 1.1 Welcome to the session (committee chair).
- 1.2 To receive any apologies (committee chair)

2. Minutes of previous meeting – 13 December 2021 [10:05-10:10]

2.1. To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021.

see appendix 2.1

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

see appendix 2.2

3. Introductions, committee campaign & work priorities 2022 [10:05 - 10:25]

3.1 Each committee member and officer to introduce himself or herself and explain briefly what they would like the committee to achieve in 2022.

3.2 To receive ideas from committee members as to how best to implement the agreed 2022 campaign priorities of planning, housing, climate change and youth - see appendix 3.1

3.3 Verbal update from the head of policy and communications on the recommendation to co-opt Shelley Parker, SLCC external affairs and policy development manager to the committee for 2022-23.

4. Motions from county associations [10:25- 10:55 – 10 minutes per motion]

4.1 To receive a motion from the Hampshire Association of Local Councils regarding increasing the number of councillors through community governance reviews [to receive an update from Cllr Brian Foster, c/o HALC] – see appendix 4.1.

4.2 To receive a motion from the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils on building controls [no representative nominated by LRALC to be present at the meeting] – see appendix 4.2.

4.3 To receive a motion from the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils regarding managing the urban gull population [Simon Fisher c/o WALC to field questions on this motion] – see appendix 4.3.

5. Consultations update [10:55-11:00]

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:

- Environmental Permitting Regulations.
- Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022-23.
- OFCOM review of postal regulation.

6. Campaigns [11:00-11:15]

6.1 Updates on current campaigns [15 minutes]:

- Local council elections survey report.
- Climate change – climate change survey report 2021.
- Young People – youth web page and case study document.

7. Policy register – essential updates 2022 [11:15 – 11:45]

7.1 To consider a short paper from the committee vice chair on some essential updates required in 2022 to the full policy register.

8. NALC Prospectus [11:45-Noon]

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

9. Date and time of next meeting [Noon]

8.1. To note the next meeting of the Policy Committee will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday 15 March 2022, likely via Zoom (TBC). © NALC 2022

Appendix 2.1

POLICY COMMITTEE | MINUTES

13 December 2021 –10:30 a.m.-12:06 p.m. via Zoom

Present:

Cllr David Francis (Northumberland) (committee chairman), Cllr Lillian Burns (Cheshire), Cllr Peter Allison (Yorkshire), Cllr Colin Peacock (Lancashire) and Cllr David Chalmers (Devon).

Staff present: Jonathan Owen (chief executive), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications), Chris Borg (policy manager) and Nick Howell (campaigns intern).

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Keith Stevens (NALC chair).

2. Election of committee chair and vice chair 2022-23

Resolved (1): That Cllr David Francis be re-elected as committee chair for 2022/23.

Resolved (2): That Cllr Lillian Burns be re-elected as committee vice chair for 2022/23.

3. Introductions

Returning and new committee members (re)-introduced themselves, including Cllr Chalmers. The campaigns intern Nick Howell also introduced himself. In the absence of the two new members at the start of the meeting, NALC would need to consider an additional opportunity for their introduction in the New Year.

Resolved: For NALC to be asked to review its process for new committee members introducing themselves in the new Year 2022.

4. Appointments to outside bodies

Cllr Lillian Burns indicated her intention to stand down as NALC's representative on the Rural Services Network. It was noted that a wider exercise was underway to develop a list of appointments to outside bodies and proposals would be brought forward in the New Year.

Resolved: That the Committee consider any necessary appointments to outside bodies at the next meeting.

5. Committee terms of reference

The chair invited comments of the committee's terms of reference:

- The preamble sentence was from a previous tidying up exercise and would be deleted;
- National Assembly would be undertaking a governance review which would provide an opportunity to consider issues raised such as councillors serving on multiple committees;
- Consideration should be given to speeding up the policy development process through consultations, giving earlier notice and more time to respond and increasing the number of responses; &
- It was suggested that the overall terms of reference document for all committees and the Assembly should include some reference to making co-options (which are permitted via the constitution).

Resolved: The terms of reference were noted and the first line would be deleted.

6. Filling vacant positions

The chair reported that all seats had been filled in the election and while there were no vacant positions, the committee could still make additional co-options. He proposed Cllr Sue Baxter, NALC vice president, in order to retain her local and national experience as well as involvement with the Local Government Association.

The head of policy and communications reported that the Society of Local Councils Clerks (SLCC) had identified external affairs among its priorities and was seeking greater involvement in NALC's lobbying. He asked the committee to consider co-opting the SLCC's external affairs officer to provide practitioner expertise, support to campaigns including mobilization and increase consultation responses.

Resolved (1): That Cllr Sue Baxter be co-opted to the committee for 2022/23.

Resolved (2): That a proposal to co-opt the SLCC's external affairs officer be considered at the next meeting and recommended to National Assembly as required.

7. Work programme 2022/23

The head of policy and communications outlined ideas for a draft work programme to take forward the committee's terms of reference. Several points were made during discussion:

- enabling members of the committee to message each other during meetings using Zoom chat;
- bringing in additional external expertise to provide evidence and information to inform the committee's work;
- there had previously been a range of views on how the allocated budget for planning support should be used and further work was needed to scope this out;
- potential reform of Local Enterprise Partnerships and developing proposals for alternative structures;
- devolution and working with other organisations to expand the sector in urban areas;
- the importance of close working and involvement of county officers, greater use of fortnightly meetings between county and national officers and proactivity by the County Officer Forum representative;
- ensuring there are effective practices in place to identify consultations and announcements and gather input from the committee in parallel with responses from councils; &
- agreeing the need to strengthen the involvement of the County Officers' Forum in NALC's policy work.

Resolved: That the Committee be invited to provide feedback on the ideas for the draft work programme 2022/23 and further proposals considered at the next meeting.

8. Overview of the work of the committee

Resolved (1): That the e-mail addresses of the committee be circulated.

Resolved (2): That the next meeting on 15 March 2022 be brought forward to 25 January 2022 and future meeting dates adjusted accordingly.

9. Date and time of next meeting

9.1. 25 January 2022 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

© NALC 2022

Appendix 2.2

Action log

Date	Activity	Item number	Action Complete (Y / N)
13 December 2021	NALC outside bodies representation 2022. ACTION: That the Committee consider any necessary appointments to outside bodies at the next meeting.	4	Y
13 December 2021	Committee terms of reference. ACTION: The terms of reference were noted and the first line would be deleted.	5	Y
13 December 2021	Committee vacancies ACTION: That Cllr Sue Baxter be co-opted to the committee for 2022/23.	6.1	Y
13 December 2021	Overview of the work of the committee ACTION: That the e-mail addresses of the committee be circulated.	8.1	Y
5 October 2021	Overview of the work of the committee ACTION: That the next meeting on 15 March 2022 be brought forward to 25 January 2022 and future meeting dates adjusted accordingly.	8.2	Y

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager, t: 020 7290 0741 | e: chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk © NALC 2022

Appendix 3.1

Ideas on Policy Committee TOR and work programme objectives

1. Setting NALC's strategic policy objectives

- a) To guide the Association in the formulation and review of its national policy objectives as it relates to all member town and parish councils.
- b) To advise the assembly and AGM on the content of NALC's manifesto and the main campaigns that should be pursued by the Association in line with the objectives and resources identified in the Association's strategic plan.
- c) To consider, adopt, amend or reject proposals for developing national policy for parish councils in England based on policy resolutions (and surveys undertaken) from county associations and where appropriate to refer such matters to the assembly/AGM for further consideration and action.

Objectives:

- Promote the NALC manifesto and win support from stakeholders and others
- Develop campaigns for each manifesto pillar that are creative, persuasive and impactful
- Continuation of big themes on health and well-being, climate change and young people
- New big themes on housing/planning/neighbourhood planning, culture/sport, community/cultural assets and transport

2. Detailed policy consideration/ implementation

- a) To maintain and review NALC's policy register, including developing proposals for legislative and other change to meet NALC's policy objectives.
- b) To ensure that the Association prepares and submits within the appropriate time limits full written representations on government consultation documents and other papers issued on government and local government policy and proposed legislative changes.
- c) To contribute and agree where appropriate, the content of NALC's responses to Government and other consultations.

- d) To support and provide strategic oversight to NALC's role as parish selector for proposals rejected under the Sustainable Communities Act (SCA).

Objectives:

- Ensure there is an efficient and effective process for developing responses
- Respond to consultations, reports and announcements from the government and others
- Increase responses by county associations and councils
- Publicise our responses widely including through the media and to stakeholders
- Update the policy register with adopted policy motions
- Work with county associations to encourage councils to submit an SCA proposal on their adopted policy motions
- Increase grant funding from DLUHC for NALC's role as SCA selector
- Provide a register of SCA proposals on the NALC website

3. Overseeing NALC's public affairs work

- a) To recommend to the assembly/AGM NALC's overall major public affairs campaign streams.
- b) To review progress and monitor the delivery of the campaigns including allocating resources as identified in NALC's budget.
- c) To co-ordinate the assembly's annual Parliamentary Lobby Day.

Objectives:

- Hold a Lobby Day including Parliamentary Reception with increased engagement with Parliamentarians especially Peers and ministers/shadow ministers
- Show leadership by Committee members meeting at least 50% of MPs from their county areas on Lobby Day
- Maintain a media database
- Improve relations with press relations including press roundtable and secure more media coverage
- Provide support to county associations on advocacy and communications such as media training

4. Ways of working

- a) To facilitate collaborative working between member county associations (and their respective regional federations) on policy issues and encourage the submission of motions, evidence and commentaries on government and other consultations.

b) To work smartly by e-mail/telecom to enable quick turnaround of policy positions and consultation responses.

Objectives:

- Facilitate 3 online meetings a year and 1 physical meeting
- Facilitate ad hoc online meetings as necessary
- Maintain and share contact details between Committee members
- Make use of MS Teams
- Engage proactively with stakeholders on policy issues and consultations
- Engage with regional groupings and attend their meetings

Contact officer: Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications; T. 07894 937 885; e. Justin.Griggs@nalc.gov.uk .

© NALC 2022

Appendix 4.1

Motion from Hampshire Association of Local Councils

Subject: Increasing the number of local council seats through community governance reviews

1. Text

“Increasing Councillors through Community Governance Reviews.”

2. Reasoning for the motion

HALC have been lobbied by some of our member councils to see if anything can be done to simplify the lengthy process of increasing the number of elected parish councillors.

3. Prospectus theme

Empower communities

4. How affecting local councils

Some parish and town councils that have a large workload would like to ease the pressure on existing councillors by looking to increase the number of councillors to spread the workload more effectively. However, as you will be aware, the number of councillors for each parish can only be increased by requesting a Community Governance Review from the district council. This statutory process is longwinded and cumbersome and will often discourage the council from moving forward with the request, meaning the strain they may find themselves under is not resolved. This in turn impacts the willingness of existing councillors. At a time when local government is trying to encourage and engage new councillors to come on board, member councils believe it is problematic for the process to be so complicated.

5. Recommendation

That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 25 January 2022.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager T. 07714 771049; e. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk © NALC 2022

Appendix 4.2

Motion from Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils

Subject: Building controls

1. Text

“Barrowden Parish Council notes that at present local authority Development Control departments have no remit to consider building regulations aspects of planning applications and Building Control bodies have no remit to monitor adherence to conditions imposed in planning permissions. The Council therefore proposes that adequate liaison between the two functions is facilitated by making Building Control a local authority function or, if not, that Building Control bodies are required to notify planning authorities if they believe that building may be proceeding in breach of the approved plans and planning conditions. It further proposes that mechanisms be put in place to make Building Control bodies accessible to the public.”

2. Reasoning for the motion

Under current Regulations there is no requirement for Building Control Inspectors to advise Development Control of any deviation from approved plans. This results in residents who may become concerned about the size of a development contacting the Enforcement Officer in Development Control of the local Planning Authority seeking confirmation that the dwelling is being built to the approved plans with the resultant cost and time required to investigate. We trust that the Grenfell Inquiry will also consider the first point above.

3. Prospectus theme

Empower Communities

4. How affecting local councils

The most significant recent example of where early involvement of Building Control would have obviated the unnecessary time and effort of investigations by the Planning Authority is in the village of Ketton. A developer obtained planning permission to build a new dwelling in a conservation area amongst listed buildings. As the building was reaching completion, with the roof trusses being fitted, local residents suspected that the building had been built higher than they expected. The Enforcement Officer visited the site to find that in addition to the foundations being higher than the datum level expected from the plans, the finished roof would be 1.6m higher than planned. In addition, internal floor levels had been adjusted accordingly and the windows had been altered in the design and location. A subsequent retrospective planning application was refused.

5. Recommendation

That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 25 January 2022.

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

© NALC 2022

Appendix 4.3

Motion from Wiltshire Association of Local Councils

Subject: Urban gull population

1. Text

“To request that NALC lobbies Natural England to rethink its licensing criteria for urban gull management.”

2. Reasoning for the motion

To support the motion from Devizes Town Council in clarifying the change in interpretation to the Wildlife and Country Act 1981 by Natural England.

3. Prospectus theme

Empower Communities

4. How affecting local councils

For the most part, Councils with a gull problem have already done all they can in stopping gulls from getting access to food waste within towns, and stopping people from feeding the gulls. It doesn't get rid of the gulls because there are always plenty of other food sources outside towns. Experience suggests that, once gulls have been used to getting waste food within towns, if that waste becomes less accessible, the gulls then become bolder about taking food from people's hands or mouths, or raiding café tables. In parts of Cornwall, they have been known to go directly into shops and take packets of food (there are videos of such incidents online). In one Scottish city, a gull would perch high up inside the railway station and then swoop down and take a packet of sandwiches from the food & drinks trolley when it was wheeled down the platform.

5. Recommendation

That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 25 January 2022.

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

© NALC 2022

Appendix 7.1

Essential updates to the full policy register – 2022

1. References to government departments whose names have changed

Change all references to MHCLG to DLUHC and all references (in full) to the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government or to the Department for Communities & Local Government (as on page 14) to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The reference on page 14 to the Department of Energy and Climate Change needs to have added to it, in brackets, the following: (now the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy).

2. Amendments required

5. Local Government finance, audit and risk

There is no longer a need for the business rates exemption item on public toilets item which appears on page 54 as this battle has been won.

Similarly, there is no need for the policy on data protection officers on page 55 to remain in the register because this matter has also been settled.

On the other hand, perhaps we should have a policy on NALC lobbying for better customer service from high street banks and easier systems for local councils to use? (Ref: <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/1821-nalc-pushes-for-better-customer-service-from-high-street-banks>).

6. Devo, Local Government and Standards

There is a policy on remote meetings (on page 66) which is *“To lobby the government to extend indefinitely the power to hold virtual meetings after the expiration of the current regulations in May 2021”*.

This policy clearly needs to be re-worded and re-adopted.

We would also like to suggest a small but important change to the wording of the policy about the creation of new councils on page 67. Instead of simply: *To promote and support the creation of new local councils*”, a change to *“To promote and support the creation of new local councils and the simplification of the process to establish new local councils”*.

Finally, in view of the very strong stance that NALC has taken on the government's proposals regarding burials, should we not have a new policy which covers this matter?

3.Recommendation:

That the committee agrees these minor changes and that officers are asked to update the full policy register accordingly.

Contact person: Cllr Lillian Burns, committee vice chair E. brllln@aol.com

© NALC 2022