

## **POLICY COMMITTEE | MINUTES**

25 January 2022 -10:00-Noon

ZOOM teleconference

### **Present:**

Cllr David Francis (committee chair and Northumberland), Cllr Lillian Burns (Cheshire), Cllr Sue Baxter (Worcestershire, appointed), Cllr Peter Allison (Yorkshire), Cllr Colin Peacock (Lancashire), Cllr David Chalmers (Devon), and Cllr Keith Stevens (NALC chair, ex officio).

**Guests in attendance:** Cllr Brian Foster (c/o Hampshire Association of Local Councils) for part, Cllr Gordon Brown (c/o Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils) for part, Simon Fisher (c/o Wiltshire Association of Local Councils) and Cllr Laura Mayes (Wiltshire Council) for part.

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

### **1. Welcome and apologies**

1.1 The committee chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and congratulated Cllr Keith Stevens on becoming NALC chair.

1.2 Cllr Chalmers submitted an apology for lateness

**Resolved:** That the apology for lateness be noted.

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting – 13 December 2021**

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

**Resolved:** The committee approved the draft minutes.

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

**Resolved (1):** The committee noted the action log.

**Resolved (2):** That NALC be asked to write to Cllr Tony Hirons for his input to the committee in recent years.

### **3. Introductions, committee campaign & work priorities**

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.

The committee chair explained that everyone had had the chance to introduce themselves at the 13 December 2021 session. Cllr Chalmers introduced himself again under this item as a new member of the committee.

**Resolved:** That the verbal updates be noted.

#### **4. Motions from county associations**

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]

Cllr Foster from HALC provided an update as to why 7 local councils in Hampshire were seeking a simplification of the procedure for conducting Community Governance Reviews to effect an increase to the number of seats on a local council. It was noted that no such requests had recently been put to district councils in this area. Experience from elsewhere showed that such reviews could be simple and efficient, and initiated by the CGR authority without the need for a petition. However, it had been felt for some time that, in other respects the 2010 CGR guidance was in need of updating, something NALC has written to DLUHC about before.

**Resolved:** That the motion not be supported at this time; that HALC members be encouraged to raise the matter directly with East Hampshire District Council.

4.2 To receive a motion from the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils on building controls [c/o Cllr Gordon Brown, LRALC representative] 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."

Cllr Brown confirmed that this matter had been first submitted as an SCA proposal to government, then re-submitted without response as an SCA proposal to government. The problem that developers were not building to approved plans and drawings. Residents were having to pick up on non

compliance by builders and developers with plans and call enforcement teams in from planning authorities themselves - an unacceptable situation. This was also an issue for listed buildings.

Members were happy to support the substance of this motion, but felt that it would not be productive to pursue at this time the removal of the private sector from building control.

**Resolved:** That the motion be adopted, subject to the deletion of the reference to making Building Control exclusively a local authority function.

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, assisted by Cllr Laura Mayes, Wiltshire Council]

Simon Fisher explained that a change in interpretation of some recent hunting regulation had had the unintended effect of amending the interpretation of licensing applications to manage certain breeds of urban gulls. Over the last two years this had had the calamitous effect of town council applications for licences to manage urban gull populations being rejected, urban gull numbers exploding and the lives of thousands of residents being blighted. NALC committed to explore the extent of this issue around the rest of the country.

**Resolved:** That the motion be adopted, that the extent of the problem throughout the country be explored further, that the matter be referred to the Coastal Communities National Network for discussion and that the Wiltshire lobbying note be circulated to the committee in due course.

## 5. Committee campaign & work priorities

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

The head of policy and communications presented an updated committee work programme for 2022. A discussion followed. Cllr Burns noted that much was expected of the committee, pushing the envelope on its terms of reference. However the work programme was more of an indication of the work that NALC officers would be undertaking in 2022, with committee input.

**Resolved:** That the work programme be noted and that committee members consider how they can input to the main NALC campaign themes for 2022, this year.

5.2 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.

The committee chair re-introduced an item from the December 2021 session suggesting that Shelley Parker, the SLCC External Affairs and Policy Development Manager should be co-opted to the committee. There was no opposition to this idea but a better approach was felt to be that Ms Parker should be invited to attend the next session in the first instance. The committee agreed that NALC is keen to forge a closer working relationship with SLCC and the clerks' network on external policy issues and that, as a first step it would invite Shelley Parker to attend and participate in its next meeting.

**Resolved:** That Shelley Parker be invited to attend the 15 March 2022 committee session.

## 6. Consultations update

6.1. 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.

The policy manager provided a brief update that responses to the Environmental Permitting Regulations and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022-23 consultations had been submitted. The only live current consultation from the list provided was the OFCOM review of postal regulation.

**Resolved:** That the verbal update be noted and the matter of creating a list of live consultations on the NALC site be discussed with NALC officers.

## 7. Campaigns

7.1 Updates on current campaigns:

- Local council elections survey report.
- Climate change – climate change survey report 2021.

- Young People – youth web page and case study document.

The campaigns intern confirmed that the climate change case studies document had been launched in October 2021; that the youth web page and case study document had been launched in November 2021; and that the elections 2021 survey report had been launched the same week.

**Resolved:** That the verbal update be noted.

## **8. Updates to policy register**

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

Cllr Burns confirmed that a few essential changes were required to the policy register. There was a brief discussion. The minor changes were agreed, noting that the full register was 76 pages long.

**Resolved:** That the essential changes highlighted be made to the policy register.

## **9. NALC Prospectus**

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

The head of policy communications provided a short verbal update on the development of the prospectus. There was a short discussion. It was agreed that the prospectus should make reference to a desired extension of the General Power of Competence to all local Councils, without specifying detail.

**Resolved (1):** That the verbal update be noted.

**Resolved (2):** That the committee further consider how best to fill the vacancy caused by Cllr Tony Hiron's resignation, taking account of the need to achieve a diversity of representation.

## **10. Date and time of next meeting**

10.1. 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