

POLICY COMMITTEE | MINUTES

15 March 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 Chris Turner (c/o Kent Association of Local Councils) for part, Cllr John Cornell (c/o Cheshire Association of Local Councils) and Shelley Parker (SLCC).

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

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 The committee chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

1.2 An apology was received from Cllr Jonathan Davies for the meeting.

1.3 Welcome to and short update from Shelley Parker, SLCC external affairs and policy development manager on current SLCC lobbying priorities.

There was a short introduction from Shelley Parker (external affairs and policy development manager) who was welcomed by the committee chair. Shelley is a new starter at the SLCC with significant senior experience at the Foreign Office, as a civil servant and more recently as clerk to Marlborough Town Council (Wiltshire). SLCC's current lobbying priorities are currently business rates retention and direct funding.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted and Shelley Parker thanked for her update.

2. Minutes of previous meeting – 25 January 2022

2.1. To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021. The committee chair provided an update on some wording Cllr Burns had proposed to item 5.1 from the 25 January 2022 committee minutes and had been agreed by the committee chair. The committee agreed the alternative wording.

Resolved: That the alternative wording to item 5.1 from the minutes of 25 January 2022 committee session be agreed and those minutes be amended with immediate effect.

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

The committee chair asked the committee if there were any changes needed to the action log compiled since the previous committee session on 25 January 2022. There were none.

Resolved: That the action log be approved.

2.3 To receive a verbal update on replacing Cllr Tony Hirons on the committee following his resignation in early February 2022.

The policy manager provided a short update on the potential process for filling the vacancy on the committee created by the resignation of Cllr Tony Hirons from the committee and National Assembly. The matter would be referred back to relevant officers for update and the committee kept updated.

Resolved: That the committee note that Management Board would be considering the progress and process of filling various vacancies.

3. Campaign & work priorities 2022

3.1 To receive an update on the committee's work programme 2022.

The committee agreed that there needed to be a one hour committee work programme session during the next fortnight to draw down on the committee's work priorities for 2022.

Resolved: That the committee meet during the next fortnight for a short focused online meeting of up to one hour to draw down and agree handling of the committee work programme for 2022.

3.2 To receive feedback from the informal National Assembly discussion on the Levelling Up White Paper (16 February 2022)

The head of policy and communications provided a short verbal update on outcomes from the National Assembly session on levelling up on 16 February. The re-emphasis on regions was noted. In the Yorkshire and the Humber region this factored in two county associations – YLCA and ERNLLCA. There was a need to tighten up the association's approach to asset transfer. In Devon DALC had a seat at the Team Devon table. In Cumbria the unitary process was complex. Regionally it was desirable for county associations to strengthen their regional representation ahead of any meetings organized with regional levelling up directors.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted and that the committee emphasises its strong support to pursue opportunities for the local council sector via the levelling-up white paper.

3.3 Building capacity and capability

(a) Local council elections 2022

The campaigns intern provided a brief verbal update on the Make a Change campaign ahead of the local council elections on 5 May 2022. Three councillor videos were being produced, materials consolidated on the NALC website, a Jackie Weaver video would be branded and promoted and a communications pack produced.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

(b) To consider joining up the different strands of the campaign to secure the Dependants' Carers' Allowance for local councillors (e.g. dormant SCA proposal, Women's Network discussion and part of remote meetings campaign) and agreeing next steps

The policy manager provided a short verbal update on the need to join together the campaign to apply the Dependants' Carers' Allowance to the local council sector with relevant outcomes from the Women's national network.

Resolved: That the committee emphasise its support for the ongoing DCA campaign; that NALC write again to the relevant DLUHC minister asking for a final response to the Weymouth Town Council SCA proposal on DCA and that through this process NALC officers re-engage with Weymouth Town Council.

3.4 Climate change – inception session of Climate Emergency Network, 15 February 2022 (5 minutes)

The campaigns intern provided a short verbal update on outcomes from the recent Climate Emergency Network session on 15 February 2022. The network had agreed that sharing good practice and communicating low-cost solutions to climate change which local councils could take were the main aims of the network.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

3.5 Young People

The campaigns intern provided a final short update on the youth campaign. There had been a recent meeting of the youth national network. NALC had recently uploaded materials from the British Youth Council to its website. The Young Councillor of the Year category of the Star Council Awards 2022 had been promoted.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

3.6 Fair and secure funding campaign – update from the head of policy and communications regarding the timing and methodology for undertaking a sector survey for evidencing the need for direct funding of local councils

The head of policy and communications provided a short written summary establishing parameters for the creation of a funding task and finish group to be led by the policy manager which would meet soon to develop a survey to create an evidence base for direct funding for local councils. The specification was agreed to.

Resolved: That a funding task and finish group be created to establish an evidence base for direct funding of local councils based on the specification shared by the head of policy and communications.

4. Motions from county associations

4.1 To receive a motion from the Kent Association of Local Councils regarding the need for increased regulation of Air BnB and timeshare properties in parished areas [to receive an update from Cllr Chris Turner, c/o KALC].

Cllr Chris Turner spoke to a motion from the Kent Association of Local Councils regarding the need for increased regulation of Air BnB and timeshare properties

in parished areas. There was a general discussion and strong support for the thrust of the position as many coastal town councils had previously reported to NALC that unregulated timeshares and AirBnBs had caused them and their residents myriad problems over the years.

Resolved: That the motion be supported and that NALC officers engage with relevant officers at the LGA to confirm its own position regarding timeshare regulation.

4.2 To receive a motion from the Cheshire Association of Local Councils regarding the need for local councils to be able to use planning imagery as evidence in their objections to planning applications

Cllr John Cornell representing the Cheshire Association of Local Councils spoke to a motion regarding the need for local councils to be able to use planning imagery as evidence in their objections to planning applications. Whilst planning inspections were often discussed before planning committee meetings, factual objections could be made. However it was noted by the committee that any weakness with the current system was not strong enough to warrant a wholesale change of planning rules. Also the impracticability of introducing an opportunity for all objectors and supporters of a planning application to be able to make illustrated presentations at planning committee meetings was noted. We encourage ChALC to sound-out other CALCs re current practices.

Resolved: That the motion be not adopted, but that the Cheshire county association feel free to lobby locally for greater flexibility from its planning authorities in the use by local councils of supporting evidence when planning objections are being made; and that the Cheshire county association be encouraged to gauge current practices with other county associations.

5. Consultations update

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

- OFCOM review of postal regulation.
- Landscapes Review.

The policy manager provided a brief update that a response to the OFCOM review of postal regulation consultation had been submitted. He also confirmed that the Landscapes Review DEFRA consultation was still live and

that the committee would have the chance to comment on a response in due course.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

6. NALC Prospectus

6.1 To receive a short verbal update on publication of the NALC prospectus.

The head of policy and communications confirmed that the NALC prospectus as updated had been inserted to a slide-deck.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

6.2 Freehold transfer.

Cllr Allison provided a short verbal update that he considered the committee should adopt a simple new policy that there should be a presumption in favour of freehold transfers, which thereby enable a local (ie parish or town) council to invest in that asset, in the knowledge both that its value may increase and also that it has a greater degree of control over how that asset is used. There was a short discussion about this matter during which it was confirmed that this policy issue should be included in the NALC finance survey to be overseen by the new funding task and finish group.

Resolved: That the new policy on freehold transfer be adopted; and that questions on the freehold transfer matter should be included in the finance survey to be led by the new funding task and finish group and that Cllr Allison should join that group.

7. Date and time of next meeting

7.1. To note the next meeting of the Policy Committee will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday 21 June 2022 at the NALC offices, 109 Great Russell Street, WC1B 3LD and via Zoom. © NALC 2022