

POLICY COMMITTEE | AGENDA

Date and time: 28 March 2023 10.00 - 13.00

Location: Zoom

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

(Please note there will be a ten-minute comfort break at 11.20)

1. Welcome and apologies (10.00)

2. Motions from county associations (10.00 - 10.50)

2.1 Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC)- Financial Services Compensation Scheme (to be attended by Jake Atkinson, county officer, LRALC) – appendix 2.1

2.2 Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils – Minimum threshold for the Smaller Authorities’ Transparency Code (to be attended by Jake Atkinson, county officer, LRALC) – appendix 2.2

3. Minutes of previous meetings (10.50 - 11.05)

3.1 To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2023 – appendix 3.1

3.2 To receive the notes from the informal meeting held on 3 February 2023 – appendix 3.2

3.3 To note the process and timescales for filling any vacancies on the committee.

4. Local government finance (11.05 - 11.20)

4.1 Final local government finance settlement 2023-24.

4.2 Fair and secure funding campaign – verbal update from the Funding Task and Finish Group

(Comfort break 11.20 - 11.30)

5. Mandatory training for councillors (11.30 - 11.40)

5.1 To receive an update on the review of NALC’s policy on mandatory training for councillors – appendix 5.1

6. NALC campaigns (11.40 – 12.05)

6.1 Unadopted roads – to consider adopting a policy on local council amenities – appendix 6.1

6.2 Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill – to consider progress of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the promotion of local councils and NALC policy objectives – appendix 6.2

7. Responses to consultations (12.05 – 12.15)

7.1 To note the response to the government’s consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. Survey of clerks on the future of local councils 2023 (12.15 – 13.00)

8.1 To consider the results of a survey of local council clerks and culminating report the [Future of Local Councils](#) published by the Society of Local Clerks – appendix 8.1

8. Date and time of next meeting (13.00)

The next meeting of the Policy Committee will be held virtually on 20 June 2023.

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Appendix 2.1

Motion from Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils: Financial Services Compensation Scheme

1. Motion text

2. The Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils asks the NALC to lobby for an increase in the maximum threshold of the definition of “small local authorities” from 500,000 Euros to trigger protections for local (parish and town) councils under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

3. As the cost of living increases, and local councils get more involved in the levelling up agenda and supporting local communities, it seems unfair that even relatively small local councils, who do not have a finance team to proactively manage council funds and reserves, are increasingly at risk of not being covered by the FSCS.

4. An increase in the defined threshold would open up protection of FSCS to potentially many more local councils in the future.

5. Reasoning for the motion

6. As local councils expand the role they play in local communities, including the use of grant funding, the financial risk an increasing number of them face due to the lack of FSCS coverage is becoming more of an issue.

7. The request to send this to NALC policy committee initially came from Broughton Astley Parish Council, but there are a number of councils in the Leicestershire area who are excluded from coverage due to their turnover.

8. NALC manifesto theme

9. Flexible and diverse funding.

10. How affecting local councils

11. The expansion of the FSCS scheme was welcome (<https://www.leicestershireandrutlandalc.gov.uk/news/2015/07/update-is-your-money-as-safe-as-you-think-it-is-it-may-be-now>) but there seems no logic as to why some local councils are covered, and some are not, when all have far less resources in terms of finance staff than principal authorities.

12. LRALC would suggest that all local councils are covered, or a threshold of £1 million is introduced, and that there is active lobbying of the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and the Bank of England.

5. Recommendation

5.1 That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 28 March 2023.

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Appendix 2.2

Motion from Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils: Minimum threshold for the Smaller Authorities' Transparency Code

1. Motion text

2. To lobby government to increase the threshold for the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities from the current £25,000 level from 1 April 2023 to £30,000 and to uplift the limit by the Consumer Price Index each year thereafter.

3. Reasoning for the motion

4. The current limit has seen a decreasing number of smaller local councils fall within its remit, especially with the current cost of living crisis.

5. When the level was set around 2014, it seemed a sensible amount. However, as many local councils have found, expenditure can now rapidly reach £25,000, not only with increased recurrent expenses but above all with items of capital expenditure, this at a time when upper-tier authorities have been devolving more and more responsibilities and costs to local councils.

6. This means more and more councils are having to pay for audit, and the necessary level of scrutiny for smaller councils is covering less and less authorities, reducing the ability of parishioners to scrutinise their local council's finances and operation.

7. NALC Manifesto theme

8. Flexible and diverse funding.

9. How affecting local councils

10. This is a national issue. Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments should have figures on the specific level of councils who declare exemption as they are sub-£25,000. (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/2/notes/division/5/2/4>)

11. LRALC have taken a litmus test of all county associations and this motion is widely supported by them and is seen as high priority. County associations are therefore likely to actively support such a campaign and so it is necessary to involve them from the outset if this motion is adopted.

12. Recommendation

13. That Policy Committee reach a decision after consideration of this motion at its session on 28 March 2023.

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Appendix 3.1

POLICY COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 24 January 2023 at 10.00 taking place via Zoom.

Present:

Councillors David Francis (committee chair and Northumberland), Lillian Burns (committee vice chair and Cheshire), (Lancashire), Richard Page (Gloucestershire), Colin Peacock (Lancashire), Janet Wallace (Dorset), and Keith Stevens (NALC chair, for part), Charlene Slade, county officer from the Essex county association and Shelley Parker, policy and external affairs manager, SLCC.

Guests in attendance: Cllr Stephen Gilling, Spennymoor Town Council (for part) and Steve Ragg, county officer at the County Durham Association of Local Councils (for part).

Staff present: Jonathan Owen (chief executive, for part), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications), Chris Borg (policy manager), Fflur Jones (campaigns intern), and Jessica Lancod-frost policy officer (for part).

1. Apologies

The committee chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

Resolved: That the apologies be noted from Cllr Peter Allison.

2. Motions from county associations

2.1 County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) on extraordinary parish council meetings.

Cllr Stephen Gilling, Spennymoor Town Council (for part) and Steve Ragg, county officer at the County Durham Association of Local Councils proposed a motion on making it harder (unless there was a very good reason) for extraordinary parish council meetings to be called.

The specific request was for NALC to lobby government to make the number of councillors necessary to call such meetings more proportionate to the size of the council.

During discussion, several points were raised:

- The current loophole caused stress on several local councils to officers as it was being exploited for political reasons.
- Often a minority of councillors for in-substantive reasons were calling for extraordinary parish council meetings which were not required and were inconclusive.
- The same parties requesting such a meeting often do not attend those meetings.
- There was broad sympathy and support for the local councils in Durham where this has happened.

Resolved: That the motion be adopted and that NALC would seek a change to the legislation and that it would also seek via the Local Government Association the experience of principal authorities, who are subject to a comparable provision in the relevant Act.

2.2 Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) on energy efficiency in listed buildings

There was no representative from the Dorset county association to propose this motion. However the committee discussed and considered the motion which was asking for NALC to lobby central government for changes to the National Planning Policy Framework to reduce the conflict and contradiction between conservation's adherence to less effective standards and building regulation's requirements to improved environmental and energy efficient insulation methods.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Balance was needed between protecting heritage and making listed buildings energy efficient.
- Listed buildings still had to be made fit to inhabit for the current century whilst also being protected.
- It was necessary to avoid extremes of position here – where listed buildings could reasonably be made more energy efficient without altering their character, they should be.

Resolved: That the motion be not supported but that NALC would take into account the need for an appropriate balance between the environmental performance and the heritage conservation of protected buildings when it considers its response to the government's consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Minutes previous meetings

3.1 To approve the draft minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 be noted.

3.2 To approve the notes from the informal meeting held on 9 November 2022

Resolved: That the notes from the informal meeting held on 9 November 2022 be noted.

3.3 Matters arising

The policy manager confirmed that the helpful report from the committee vice chair on the Devon rural single track road speed limits motion had been sent to the Devon county association who had confirmed their thanks and appreciation for it.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

4. Local government finance

4.1 Provisional local government finance settlement 2023-24.

The policy manager confirmed that the NALC response to the government's Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023-24 technical consultation had been submitted the previous week. NALC had welcomed the exemption of local councils for the forthcoming financial year from referendum principles on excessive council tax increases, but argued for either a permanent or multi-year exemption which would provide certainty for local councils when setting budgets and managing their finances moving forward.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

4.2 Fair and secure funding campaign – verbal update from Funding Task and Finish Group.

The policy manager provided a short verbal update on the work of the funding task and finish group. The group had last met in December and had agreed the findings of its own desktop research conducted between September and November 2022. The conclusion was as suspected that local councils could apply for only a minority of central government funding sources, were ineligible to apply for most and needed to be able in principle if they chose to apply for such funds on the same basis as principal authorities.

The policy manager was currently creating a template for the group's full business case on the above basis. The business case would be shared with the group ahead of its final meeting in March 2023. The business would then be presented to the committee to agree next steps at its own March session.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

5. Mandatory training for councillors

The policy manager provided a summary of a written report on training. There had been a request from the recent session of the Smaller Councils Committee for the committee to review its position from 2010 that training should be strongly encouraged across the local council sector, but not made mandatory.

There was then a short discussion during which it was confirmed that the reason the committee in 2010 had not adopted a position on mandatory training was because there was concern this may have been a deterrent for some candidates to stand for election. However the committee fully endorsed the concept of training, agreeing it was vital for clerks and councillors across the sector, especially new councillors. However, the committee did not want to adopt a position on mandatory training as it considered that there was no way of enforcing such a requirement in reality in the sector – but endorsed the principle that all training should be strongly encouraged.

It was agreed that it should be a requirement for those councils that have signed the civility pledge to have in place an effective programme of training. There was a need for new councillors to receive induction training on a wider range of issues relating to conduct, planning, finance and powers, as well as the specifics of their own council. The opportunity to develop the availability and delivery of training further was also agreed to, through the use of video calls and other online technology. NALC would pursue this with county associations and other stakeholders this year and, if appropriate, a motion for debate would be included in the AGM.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted, that NALC strongly encourage training for clerks and councillors (especially new councillors) across the sector, that NALC officers engage with other committees and external stakeholders to promote training across 2023 and that a suitable motion or policy on training be submitted for consideration at the NALC 2023 AGM if appropriate.

There was then a ten minute comfort break.

6. NALC campaigns

6.1 Unadopted roads – to consider adopting a policy on unadopted roads following the recent House of Commons Adjournment Debate on unadopted roads and new build infrastructure led by Andrew Selous MP

The policy manager spoke to a briefing framed by the policy officer which had been sent to Andrew Selous an MP in Bedfordshire in December 2022 ahead of an adjournment debate on unadopted roads and infrastructure in the Commons at that point.

It was agreed that officers should recommend adoption of an informal policy on land management companies and local councils at the next formal session of the committee and that this policy should be circulated electronically to the committee for comment in the meantime. Committee members would work to prepare a policy along the lines suggested, for adoption at the March meeting.

Resolved: That the committee should consider an informal policy on the provision of amenities including green spaces being the responsibility of local councils in the first instance (and not land management companies), with legal provisions to this effect inbuilt to the planning system, at its next formal session.

6.2 Report of the Commission on the UK's Future

The head of policy and communications provided a verbal update that the Labour Party had recently published Gordon Brown's Report of the Commission on the UK's Future. NALC had briefly welcomed the report via a short news story.

There was a short discussion during which recommendations 2, 14 and 15 were welcomed and it was agreed that NALC should further engage with Labour on the themes of local leadership, planning, onward devolution, the return of regionalism and stronger standards.

Resolved: That the committee welcome the report and endorse further NALC engagement with Labour on the themes of local leadership, planning, onward devolution, the return of regionalism and stronger standards contained in the report, which most affect local councils.

6.3. Levelling Up White Paper and Bill – update on the progress of Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper and Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

The head of policy and communications provided a short verbal update on the Lords second reading briefing of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which had taken place on 17 January. NALC had held a well-attended briefing on the bill for peers on 11 January. As a result, several peers including Baroness Pinnock, Lord

Lytton and Baroness Scott (NALC President) had made several of NALC's points in the chamber at second reading. Committee stage in the Lords will be on 20 February 2023 at which Baroness Scott and others will be lodging various amendments to the bill predicated on NALC's briefing positions.

Resolved: That the report be noted, and that the pro-active stance which NALC staff and various peers had been taking to influence the debates on the bill in the Lords, be welcomed.

7. Responses to consultations

7.1 To note the response to the House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee Inquiry into Levelling Up Funding

The policy manager confirmed that NALC had responded to the November 2022 House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee Inquiry into Levelling Up Funding. NALC has made various points that local councils should be able to apply for all levelling up and central government funds on the same basis as principal authorities which was currently not the case.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

7.2 Vacancy on the committee

The policy manager confirmed the committee vacancy created by the resignation of Cllr Jonathan Davies late in 2022 would be filled from a wider NALC trawl to fill other committee vacancies.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

7.3 Physical committee meeting in 2023-24 financial year

The policy manager confirmed to the committee that if it wished, it could hold one physical formal session in London during the 2023-24 financial year, but that NALC would likely be leaving 109 Great Russell Street by the end of the current financial year so if this option was pursued other meeting venues such as CCLA would have to be sourced. There was a general discussion during which the point was made that there would be no hybrid committee meetings held by NALC again and the last time the committee had been offered the chance of holding a physical session at the NALC offices, no members had attended in person, in part due to a national rail strike.

Resolved: That the committee hold no physical formal meetings during 2023 but that this position be reviewed later in 2023 if the incoming committee wishes to hold a physical session during the first quarter of 2024.

8. Date and time of next meeting

The next formal meeting of the Policy Committee will be held virtually on 28 March 2023 but it will meet online informally also on 3 February 2023 to consider its response to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation.

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Appendix 3.2

Note of special Policy Committee session on 3 February 2023 – National Planning Policy Framework

A short note of the session is as below – all suggested answers to consultation questions NALC will be responding to have been logged by NALC and will be inserted to the first response to be drafted and circulated for comment next week:

Introductions and welcome to session

The committee chair introduced the session with input from the policy manager. A short precis of the background to the NPPF DLUHC consultation was provided. Andrew Towlerton, SLCC planning advisor was present as was Owen Edwards from the Better Planning Coalition. Owen Edwards provided a headline summary of the work of the Better Planning Coalition which NALC had just become the 33rd member to join. Andrew Towlerton said that the SLCC was making its own response to the consultation but was likely to agree with most of the NALC positions in its response and was happy to support NALC during this process.

Resolved: That Owen Edwards and Andrew Towlerton be thanked for their excellent input to the special committee session.

Presentation on NPPF consultation from DLUHC planning policy official and takes questions

David Roberts from DLUHC then gave a short presentation on the NPPF consultation, its policy intent and covering the main areas of short and long term change which the updates to the NPPF would cover. Short term changes will kick in later in 2023. There will be further consultations later in 2023 and beyond. David's excellent presentation was requested for onward circulation to the committee on receipt at NALC.

Questions were then asked to David regarding DLUHC policy intent, Neighbourhood Development Management Policies and leaseholds. The committee chair then thanked David Roberts for his excellent presentation and for his time.

Resolved: That David Roberts from DLUHC be thanked for his excellent presentation on the NPPF update consultation and that a request be made for NALC officers to circulate the presentation to the committee in due course.

Structured discussion on NPPF consultation document – agree answers to main questions we have an interest in:

Detailed answers agreed by the committee to the consultation have been logged separately by NALC but the committee chair then systematically reviewed the questions the policy manager was recommending response to as below and it was

agreed by the committee that NALC should seek to respond to the below questions factoring in response answers to questions the committee vice chair considered we needed to provide, as well as NALC's opposition to NDMPs, lobbying for further strengthening of neighbourhood plans and positing in the response of all of the NALC overarching policy positions as attached:

Chapter 3 - Providing certainty through local and neighbourhood plans (1-5);

Chapter 4 - Planning for housing (6-21);

Chapter 5 - A planning system for communities (22-32);

Chapter 6 - Asking for beauty (33-36);

Chapter 7 - Protecting the environment and tackling climate change (37 - 40);

Chapter 9 - Preparing for the new system of plan-making (45-48); &

Chapter 10 - National Development Management Policies (49-52).

Resolved: That the policy manager provide an update to the county association fortnightly call on 8 February 2023 on main NALC response lines, draft a response based on feedback from the special Policy Committee session, the note of the committee vice chair and existing NALC positions and circulate that response to the committee for comment the following week.

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Appendix 5.1

Mandatory training for councillors

1. Summary

2. The Civility and Respect Project and the NALC Smaller Councils Committee have raised a request for NALC to review its formal position on training.
3. Accordingly, this was considered by the NALC Policy Committee on 24 January 2023 and it was decided that whilst its initial view was to retain a position formally of strongly encouraging training in the local (parish and town) council sector, it thought that position should be reviewed across some committees and networks during the first half of 2023 and externally as needed.
4. Several meetings of NALC committees and National Networks during the first quarter of 2023 have taken part in the review using the below questions as a framework to help guide discussion:
 - Should training for councillors be mandatory?
 - If yes, why (reasons/examples) and how can this be achieved; and what issues need to be addressed (e.g. enforcement, monitoring and sanctions)
 - If no, how can training be more strongly encouraged/supported?; and what issues need to be addressed.
5. The below is headline feedback from meetings where this been considered so far and a summary of issues raised will be given at the meeting:
 - a. Women's Network, 31 January - yes, training should be compulsory;
 - b. Climate Emergency Network, 14 February - yes, training should be compulsory;
 - c. Smaller Councils Committee, 21 February - no, training should not be compulsory;
 - d. Super Councils Network, 23 February- yes, training should be compulsory.

6. Recommendation

7. That the update be noted.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager, chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk

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Appendix 6.1

Draft NALC policy on local council amenity provision

1. Summary

2. At end November 2022, NALC was approached by Andrew Selous, MP asking NALC for a briefing on unadopted roads and new build infrastructure for an Adjournment Debate in the Commons he had secured for 2 December 2022.

3. NALC invited feedback from the Super Councils Network on their experience to inform the development of a briefing. Some previous material on unadopted roads, Legal Topic Note 77 and a policy position on new build infrastructure were also included in a short briefing.

4. This was reported to the meeting of Policy Committee on 24 January 2023 where it was agreed to undertake further work on this issue and prepare a policy on land management companies and local councils for consideration at the next meeting. This draft policy was also circulated electronically to the committee for comment in the meantime.

5. Based on wording from Trowbridge Town Council and suggested at the 24 January 2023 committee meeting by the committee chair, the committee is invited to adopt the below policy position on local council amenity provision:

Local (parish and town) councils (where they exist) should be given the option, in the first instance, of taking on the provision of amenities for new developments, including green spaces, before land management companies. Legal provision to this effect should be built into the planning system.

6. Evidence and a rationale as to why the committee should adopt this position is set out below as NALC does not already have a specific position on this on the policy register:

- Unadopted roads for instance can create resentment amongst residents, many of whom will express their displeasure at what they see as a situation where they pay their council tax like everyone else but do not feel that they benefit from a fundamental service in the form of local road maintenance.
- Resident led management companies are not necessarily set up to deal with the significant costs that need to be covered in maintaining unadopted roads. East Grinstead Town Council have told us that this leads to them receiving calls about roadside facilities like street lighting and grit bins.
- Unadopted roads are subject to surface drainage issues, leading to a higher risk of flooding and mortgage suppliers can withdraw funds from prospective house buyers if a road is not adopted.

- Trowbridge Town Council have raised concerns about Wiltshire Council's policy that all new developments should transfer open spaces to land management companies. At one of the first estates in Wiltshire to be covered by this policy, the Castle Mead Estate, the 600 homes are charged an amount similar to the council tax Band D charge raised by the town council. In effect this means that the residents of Castle Mead will be paying twice as much for the same range of services once the town council take over all greenspace management from Wiltshire Council on 1 April 2023 in most other parts of the town.
- NALC has called for all new build houses and business to be provided with in built infrastructure to enable connection to fibre-optic broadband.
- This is in the context of a preference of freehold over leasehold ownership for local councils and the provision of a 'dowry' to meet the costs of maintenance/upkeep in the shorter term (this is one of our standard policies regarding service-delegation/devolution).

7. Recommendation

8. Whilst NALC currently has the existing position on land management companies "NALC lobbies government for the regulation of land management companies in relation to management charges and shared facilities", the committee is invited to consider adopting the policy worded in section 7 above.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager, chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk.

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Appendix 6.2

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

1. Purpose of the report

2. This paper sets out the progress of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill through the House of Lords Committee Stage.

3. Background

4. The Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper was published on 2 February 2022. On 11 May 2022, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill was introduced into Parliament in the House of Commons for its First Reading, completing Third Reading on 13 December 2022.
5. Ahead of House of Commons Second Reading on 8 June, NALC published a parliamentary briefing setting out key issues and implications for local councils as well as several concerns.
6. The Bill began its passage in the House of Lords with its First Reading on 19 December 2022 and prior to Second Reading NALC's parliamentary briefing was sent to over a hundred Peers.
7. NALC's president, Baroness Scott of Needham Market, and vice president, the Earl of Lytton spoke at Second Reading to highlight NALC's key issues. Other speakers who spoke about local councils included Baroness Thornhill, Lord Stunell, Bishop of Bristol, Lord Lucas, Baroness McIntosh of Pickering, Liberal Democrat spokesperson Baroness Pinnock, Labour shadow minister Baroness Hayman of Ullock, and the minister Baroness Scott of Bybrook.

8. House of Lords Committee Stage to date

9. Committee stage involves detailed line by line examination of the separate parts of a bill, and the House of Lords convention is that votes do not usually take place, and amendments are debated before being withdrawn.
10. Baroness Scott of Needham Market tabled several amendments at Committee Stage regarding carer's dependents allowance, financial assistance to places of worship, funding, general power of competence, infrastructure levy, overview and scrutiny of combined authorities, remote meetings, review of neighbourhood governance and standards.

11. The session on 13 March included Baroness Scott's amendment to involve local councils in the overview and scrutiny committees of combined authorities and received cross-party support. In response, the government minister, Earl Howe, stated that while this could be appropriate, it should be determined locally and not made mandatory.
12. The 15 March session featured seven amendments covering the suspension of councillors, carer's dependents allowance, review of neighbourhood governance, power to pay grants to local councils, financial assistance to places of worship and the general power of competence.
13. Again, these proposals received significant support from across the House, including from the Earl of Lytton, Baroness McIntosh of Pickering, Lord Blunkett, Baroness Scott of Bybrook, Baroness Taylor of Stevenage and Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Baroness Harris of Richmond and Lord Stunell.
14. In response, the government ministers confirmed the review of neighbourhood governance would take place in the coming financial year and noted the intention of clarifying powers of local councils to fund church buildings and there another amendment later in Committee Stage.
15. However, the government did not agree with the other proposals, stating:
 - the government's position on standards remained the same and local authorities have options to issue sanctions;
 - extending the carer's allowance would result in unknown but likely significant costs and pressures;
 - the government would be publishing its response to the call for evidence on remote meetings in due course which would set out its intentions;
 - on the power for ministers to be able to pay grant to local councils, it would be disproportionately bureaucratic for government to give funding to all councils directly and they can with other local authorities and their partners in an area for funds;
 - councils vary in their ability and capacity to take on the enhanced roles and responsibilities with the general power of competence and existing conditions sensible.
16. We are liaising with Baroness Scott and other Peers about pressing some of these issues further at Report Stage of the Bill.

17. The 13 March session is available to watch or read on Hansard, likewise the 15 March recording and transcript of sessions one and two.
18. Planning reforms contained in the Bill are scheduled to be considered in Committee from week commencing 20 March, including Baroness Scott's amendment on the infrastructure levy. A verbal update will be made at the meeting.
- 19. Recommendation**
20. The Policy Committee is invited to consider progress of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the promotion of local councils and NALC policy objectives.

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Appendix 8.

Survey of clerks on the future of local councils

1. Summary

2. A survey of local council clerks was conducted in 2001 by the Society of Local Council Clerks, working with De Montfort University, and was based on the Aston Survey of 1992.
3. NALC was extremely disappointed to not be involved in the project, especially as NALC and county associations were central to the original Aston report.
4. The survey received 590 responses from local council clerks, a much smaller sample than the original Aston survey which was conducted in less digitally capable times.
5. A draft of the Future of Local Councils report was provided to NALC ahead of its launch on 25 January, while feedback was provided to the SLCC and De Montfort University, this did not feature in the final report.
6. The report adds to existing research by NALC and others and made a series of recommendations which support existing work underway and NALC's Manifesto for building stronger communities across England:
 - National associations across the sector should work in collaboration with national government to deliver a public information campaign on the role of local councils, targeting in particular support to widen the pool of those individuals willing to stand for election as a councillor.
 - The government should offer financial support to local councils to support and ensure the holding of elections for local councillors.
 - In keeping with the Civility and Respect Project, supported by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales (OVW), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations, further training should be provided to local councils on the Seven Principles of Public Life. Importantly, complaints over behaviour should be advanced by the chair of the council or the council as a whole, thereby giving valuable and necessary support in such circumstances to the role and responsibilities of clerks. Monitoring officers in principal authorities require further capacity if they are to be in a position to support local councils in addressing standards issues.
 - Training budgets across the sector should be increased to support the building of organisational capacity within local councils. All local councils

should dedicate resources to training and skills development for councillors and for their workforce.

- Local councils should review their engagement of, and communication with, young people and different communities, evaluating the need in their area for youth councils and community forums as part of an investment in neighbourhood planning processes. As part of this review, they should evaluate their use of social media as a tool to connect and engage with communities.
- National associations should come together to establish a career path that encourages a diverse graduate entry into the profession of clerks. This career path should offer attractive contractual terms and conditions that align with other tiers of local government and public sector organisations. Mentoring schemes and leadership development programmes should target equality across the profession, particularly the equal advancement of women into the posts of clerks in larger councils.
- Supporting the work of the Local Government Association (LGA) and others, local councils and principal authorities should negotiate frameworks for collaboration between the different tiers of local government. These frameworks should be accompanied by the publication of statements of collaborative intent that establish a duty to consult local councils and/or the putting into place of local council forums between principal authorities and parish and town councils.
- Collaboration between local councils should be facilitated. The government should make funding available for the generation of 'good practice' guidance and collaborative projects between local councils.
- The 2011 Localism Act gave local councils a range of new powers. Local councils should re- evaluate their use of these powers, while central government should consider the attribution of such powers to all local councils as part of a national review of the legislation governing the sector.
- Parts of England and Wales remain unparished. Such inequalities of democratic representation risk accelerating as devolution deals bring into being new tiers and arrangements for local government across different regions and counties. To counter such risks, government should launch a national consultation on the future roles and responsibilities of local councils as part of a strategic review of the organisation of local government.

7. **Recommendation**

8. The Policy Committee is invited to consider the report and its recommendations and provide feedback to help inform NALC's engagement with SLCC on the report.

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