

POLICY COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 23 January 2024 at 10.00 via Zoom.

Attendees: Councillors Peter Allison (committee chair and West Yorkshire), Iain Hamilton (Merseyside), Nevil Hudson (Kent), Richard Page (committee vice chair and Gloucestershire), and Keith Stevens (NALC chair and East Sussex); Charlene Slade (county officer, Essex Association of Local Councils); and Shelley Parker, policy and external affairs manager, Society of Local Council Clerks; Jonathan Owen, chief executive, Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications and Chris Borg, policy manager.

1. Welcome and apologies

The committee chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of year, adding no apologies had been received as all members of the committee were in attendance.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

Resolved: The draft notes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023 were noted.

Resolved: The draft minutes from the meeting held on 17 October 2023 were noted.

3. Motions from county associations

(i) Yorkshire Local Councils Associations on the fire and rescue service.

Resolved: The committee supported the motion of *“The YLCA Joint Annual Meeting has resolved that NALC lobby HM Government for: the Fire and Rescue Service to be designated a statutory consultee for the purpose of development of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) sites of one megawatt or greater; that it be mandatory that applicants of a BESS site of one megawatt or greater must consult with the Fire and Rescue Service before submitting a planning application; that local planning authorities must consider guidance produced by the National Fire Chief’s Council when determining applications; and that the local planning authority must consult with local fire and rescue services before issuing decisions on BESS applications as described above.”*

Resolved: NALC engage with the Rural Coalition partners on this issue.

(ii) Yorkshire Local Councils Associations on pre-application consultations

Resolved: The committee supported the motion of *“That the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations and the National Association of Local Councils lobby HM Government to seek a change in national planning policy that would make it mandatory on local planning authorities that they must engage with affected local councils regarding formal pre-application discussions involving major developments.”*

(iii) Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils Association on the energy efficiency of listed buildings

Resolved: The committee supported the motion of *“That NALC lobby central government for changes to planning policy guidance to improve the consistency with regard to requirements for improved environmental and energy efficient insulation methods and material between Conservation’s adherence to less effective standards and Building Regulation’s standards, whilst respecting the value of listed buildings”.*

A comfort break was held between 11:00 and 11:05.

4. Work plan 2024-25

The committee considered a report on the committee’s work plan to deliver the National Assembly work programme/priorities for 2024/25. Points raised during discussion included considering NALC’s definition of a young person, prioritizing planning ahead of and beyond the General Election including growing NALC’s capacity and expertise, provision of advice and guidance on commissioning support services on hidden disabilities, and developing timescales for the work plan.

Resolved: That the draft work programme be updated to reflect the discussion and recommended to the Management Board.

5. Co-options and additional expertise

Resolved (1): Shelley Parker, policy and external affairs manager, Society of Local Council Clerks is co-opted to the committee for 2024/25.

Resolved (2): Charlene Slade, chief executive officer at the Essex Association of Local Councils is co-opted to the committee for 2024-5, subject to renewal by the County Officer Forum in July 2024.

6. External speaker – Locality Neighbourhood Planning team

Samantha Banks, neighbourhood planning programme manager at Locality, gave a presentation covering neighbourhood planning, the government funded neighbourhood planning support programme including grant and technical

support, toolkits and resources available, the advice service, quarterly newsletter and closer working with NALC.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted and slides circulated to the committee.

Resolved: NALC write to the government urging it to continue to provide funding for the neighbourhood planning support programme into the longer term.

7. Items for information

The Committee noted NALC had responded had made submissions to the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) consultation on next steps and metrics, Competition and Markets Authority housebuilding market study, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology consultation on very hard to reach areas rural broadband, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities inquiry on OFLOG and government's consultation on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024-5.

8. Date and time of next meeting

8.1. In person from 11:00 to 15:00 on Tuesday 23 April 2024 at the Bloomsbury Building, 10 Bloomsbury Way, Holborn, London WC1A 2SL.

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