

POLICY COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Policy Committee held on 23 April 2024 at 11.00 in meeting room 9 at the Bloomsbury Building, 10 Bloomsbury Way, Holborn, London WC1A 2SL.

Attendees: Councillors Peter Allison (committee chair and West Yorkshire), Iain Hamilton (Merseyside), Neville 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); Jonathan Owen, chief executive, Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications and Chris Borg, policy manager; and Rhiannon Evans, head of communications and public affairs at Mumsnet (for part).

DECISION ITEMS

1. Welcome and apologies

The committee chair welcomed everyone to the committee's in person meeting for the year. He reported that Shelley Parker, policy and external affairs manager, Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) was retiring and proposed the continuation of a co-optee when a successor was appointed.

Resolved: Apologies were noted from Shelley Parker, SLCC and that she be thanked her for work supporting the committee in recent years.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

Resolved: That the draft minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024 be noted.

3. Motions from county associations

3.1 No motions were received from county associations for consideration and the policy manager provided an update on changes to the submission process including a new online form. During discussion several points were made including the need for a mechanism to provide supplementary evidence, communicating and promoting the process to local councils and county associations, and providing updates on progress on motions supported.

Resolved: That NALC promote and publicise the policy motions process to local councils and county associations including through a session at the next meeting of National Assembly, that the online form include an email address for

supplementary evidence to motions, and develop a league table of policy motions submitted by county associations.

4. Briefing on the committee's role as parish selector under Sustainable Communities Act 2007

The policy manager delivered a training session on the committee's role as parish selector (the appeal body) under the Sustainable Communities Act (Act) 2007 (as amended 2010) (SCA) including its functions and responsibilities. Issues raised by the committee included community groups, promoting the SCA to local councils and county associations to encourage more use, and liaising with the Local Government Association.

Resolved: (1) That NALC undertake a programme of publicity and promotion of the SCA.

Resolved (2): That NALC engages with the Local Government Association on their promotion of the SCA and resubmission process.

5. Committee work plan 2024-5 update

5.1 The policy manager provided an update on the committee's work plan 2024-25, reporting this had been considered by the Management Board and endorsed by National Assembly. During discussions a number of points were raised including the need to define the scope of the community safety theme and include councillor safety and building NALC's capacity to create new councils by securing funding.

Resolved (1): That the updated work plan be noted and NALC's positions on community safety be circulated to the committee along with the committee chair's note on creating new local councils in metropolitan district areas.

5.2 The committee chair proposed strengthening the link with NALC's National Network: Climate Emergency through a member of the committee to feed in NALC climate change positions and to report back on meeting outcomes.

Resolved: That Cllr Neville Hudson be the committee's representative on NALC's National Network: Climate Emergency

5.3 Securing planning expertise to NALC and the committee had been identified as a priority in the committee work plan and a discussion took place to help define this support more clearly. Key requirements identified were advice to NALC on planning consultations, writing briefings and guidance, and updating planning publications. The committee noted the additional support would not offer a planning advisory service for county associations and local councils or undertake an advocacy role.

Resolved: That the committee chair generate a short paper and liaise with NALC officers on next steps to secure future external planning expertise.

5.4 The committee considered and endorsed a paper by the committee chair on refinements to the neighbourhood planning regulations to update the National Planning Policy Framework and/or the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.

Resolved: That NALC adopt as policy the two policy positions contained in the committee chair's paper on neighbourhood plans and the green belt and right to challenge planning decisions inconsistent with a neighbourhood plan.

Lunch was held between 13:15 and 13:45.

DISCUSSION ITEM

6. External speaker - Mumsnet

6.1 The committee received a presentation from Rhiannon Evans, head of communications and public affairs at Mumsnet on their campaign for organisations including local government to publish their parental leave policies including on their website. Issues raised by the committee included NALC and county associations showing leadership by publishing their own policies and use of a kitemark or logo.

Resolved (1): That NALC support the campaign and work with Mumsnet to encourage local councils to publish their parental leave policy.

Resolved (2): That NALC and county associations be encouraged to publish their parental leave policy.

INFORMATION ITEMS

7. Items for information

7.1 The committee noted that nine policy consultations were submitted in the first quarter of 2024.

Resolved: That the submissions be noted and hyperlinks to responses be included in future agenda papers.

8. Date and time of next meeting

8.1. By Zoom from 10:00 to Noon on Tuesday 16 July 2024 (Zoom will be kept open until around 12:10 as needed).