

## **SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | AGENDA**

9 February 2021

11:00-12:00

Please find joining details below:

Zoom teleconference:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94085091745?pwd=aXB0dIBmbUxlcHhTdFU1WjAweFQwdz09>

Meeting ID: 940 8509 1745

Passcode: 575064

To submit an apology for this meeting please email [committees@nalc.gov.uk](mailto:committees@nalc.gov.uk) or call 020 7637 1865.

### **1. Apologies and welcome**

- 1.1. To note any apologies.
- 1.2. To welcome new committee members and for them to introduce themselves.

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting**

- 2.1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 and to note any matters arising and other items not covered elsewhere on the agenda. Appendices 2.1 – 2.2
- 2.2. To note the actions completed since the meeting held on 24 November 2020, in the action log

### **3. Committee chairman**

- 3.1. To receive a report from the committee chairman. Appendix 3.1

#### **4. Member services update**

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| 4.1. The head of member services to attend to discuss the implications of remote meetings legislation and possible election postponement | Verbally at the meeting |
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#### **5. Strategic plan – young people**

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| 5.1. For committee members to share the work their councils are doing to support and engage with young people locally, including any external organisations they work with. | Appendix 5.1 and verbally at the meeting |
| 5.2. To consider the resources NALC could provide to support smaller councils in their work with young people.  |  |

#### **6. Star Council Awards**

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| 6.1. To receive an update on NALC's Star Council Awards.   | Verbally at the meeting |
| 6.2. To discuss what can be done to encourage smaller councils to apply to NALC's Star Council Awards. |                         |

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

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| 7.1. To note that the next meeting of the Smaller Councils' Committee will be held on 22 June 2021 by Zoom telecom. |
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## **AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS’ COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2020**

### **Appendix 2.1 – Draft minutes of meeting 24 November 2020**

Meeting of the NALC Smaller Councils’ Committee held by Zoom teleconference on 24 November 2020.

#### **Present:**

Councillors: Cllr Lillian Burns, Cllr Graham Ford (committee chairman), Cllr Malcolm Leeding MBE; directly elected members: Cllr Josephine Parish (committee vice-chairman), Mr Stephen Rickitt, Ms Lydia Smithson.

#### **Also in attendance:**

Also present were Charlotte Eisenhart (head of member services), Claire Goldfinch (project officer – policy and communications), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications), Jessica Lancod-Frost (policy officer), and Jonathan Owen (chief executive).

#### **1. Apologies**

No apologies for absence were received.

#### **2. Minutes of previous meeting and action log**

The committee was asked to agree minutes of the previous meeting. Members confirmed that they were a full and complete record of the meeting.

The committee chairman gave thanks to Cllr Gordon Thurston for his contributions to the committee and wider work of NALC.

The committee chairman talked through the action log and asked what future thought might be given to the place and importance allocated to e-learning.

**Resolved (1):** That the committee chairman be authorised to sign minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2020.

**Resolved (2):** That Cllr Gordon Thurston’s contribution to the committee and wider work of NALC be noted.

**Resolved (3):** That e-learning be given strong and enthusiastic promotion and development.

### **3. Committee chairman's report**

The committee chairman talked through a report he had written and asked members if they would support his recommendation of holding additional meetings outside the committee cycle.

Committee members offered their views as follows:

- Cllr Josephine Parish: further meetings would be useful to discuss local issues, e.g. Dorset's county association is currently looking at reforming its constitution, should there be a NALC model county association constitution which could include a Smaller Councils Committee to give smaller councils a greater voice? The thought was that greater representation would aid in tackling the recognised issue of the lack of capacity of smaller councils
- Cllr Lillian Burns: as a volunteer, always happy to put time into a project if it's an area of personal interest
- Lydia Smithson: it would be useful to have more detailed discussions outside the more formal committee meetings
- Steven Rickitt: happy for an additional session by Zoom. Would like the committee to consider the following issues: practical help on climate change for small rural parishes, how we can encourage small councils to come together on an ad hoc way to deliver services and use of electronic communications for meetings
- Cllr Malcolm Leeding: wrote a paper about factors affecting people who stand on local councils, would want that resurrected. Others areas to cover would be: planning, highways, village halls and relationships with county councils. In Oxfordshire seven local councils are working together to fight the proposals in the Planning White Paper.

The chief executive called for committee members to reach out to smaller councils across the country. Zoom offered the perfect opportunity to hold networking events to reach out to members of other smaller councils.

The chief executive also informed the committee that the purpose of the climate change task and finish group was to make sure the voice of smaller councils was heard. It was disappointing that NALC had failed to achieve this.

The discussion then continued as follows:

- The hope was that coming out of the climate change task and finish group there would be a motion for policy committee, building on what was already in the policy register
- The climate change task and finish group has been doing amazing work so far and spanned across every area of local council, including smaller ones
- There was an issue with engagement with some local councils due to climate change deniers sitting on them
- Even if councils have an action plan and have declared a climate emergency, some fail to recognise the emergency and don't take action
- Could NALC get county associations to declare a climate emergency so they give extra support to smaller councils?

The head of policy and communications made a number of points in response:

- Colleagues were already delivering the goods through the climate change task and finish group and officer work e.g. engaging with parliament and promoting the work of local councils, however this was ongoing
- Some of the challenges identified above could be considered through the climate change task and finish group
- County associations could be connected through the weekly county officer Zoom
- Using remote technology helped enormously with engagement through other committees and events
- NALC needed to make this a small group network. What other things should it be focusing on?
- NALC still valued feedback from smaller councils on its work e.g. make a change campaign, e-learning e.c.t.

Cllr Josephine Parish clarified that while it would be great to have a couple of networking events it would also be useful for the committee to have informal Zoom meetings.

The chief executive emphasised that NALC could not resource regular Zoom meetings for the committee but that committee members were welcome to organise something themselves.

Stephen Rickitt confirmed that he was happy to organise additional Zoom meetings for the committee.

**Resolved (1):** That the committee chairman's report be noted

**Resolved (2):** That the committee self organises any additional Zoom meetings members wish to hold

**Resolved (3):** That the first committee meeting of next year be a thinking meeting, with future meetings extended to be a smaller councils network with open invitation to smaller councils and on specific themes

**Resolved (4):** That the work of the climate change task and finish group be commended and the involvement of county associations and engagement of councils and councillors on the climate emergency be given further consideration

#### **4. Member services**

The head of member services introduced an item on the coronavirus webpage. With coronavirus and associated restrictions continuing, she wanted to check that the guidance included on the webpage was the right tone and type, especially for smaller councils.

The head of member services also asked committee members if the remote meetings guidance was user friendly for smaller councils. If feedback indicated that the guidance needed updating that could be taken on board.

The committee chairman requested the committee support the approach and advice given by NALC and commended the emphasis on maximum use of virtual meetings.

**Resolved (1):** That the update from the head of member services be noted

**Resolved (2):** That committee members provide any feedback they have on either the coronavirus guidance or remote meeting guidance by email to the head of member services

**Resolved (3):** That the committee supports the approach and advice given by NALC

#### **5. Election resources**

The project officer (policy and communications) provided an overview of NALC's Make A Change elections campaign and associated resources. Most of the resources had been launched and committee members were encouraged to view them on the [NALC website](#).

The next stage of the campaign would see a series of videos released demonstrating that community heroes could make a change in their community by becoming a local councillor. NALC would then use these videos to promote the May 2021 elections.

NALC had engaged with a range of stakeholders and promoted the campaign to the media. This included working with the Local Government Association (LGA) on their Be a Councillor Campaign. NALC was also hoping to work with the LGA's political groups and was in discussions around holding a joint elections themed event in the new year.

The senior communications officer asked committee members for feedback and if there were any other resources they needed. Comments raised in response included:

- The committee chairman hoped the committee would strongly commend the report and resources
- Stephen Rickitt noted that a clerk had complained about the stereotypes in some of the images and asked if anyone else had received any similar feedback. The resources were good otherwise
- The information looked good and it was great NALC was working with the LGA
- Cllr Josephine Parish informed the committee that there wouldn't be any elections in her area (Dorset) this time so any issues there would be around cooption. Could this be discussed at one of the informal committee meetings?
- An article on local responses to the pandemic and whether localism should continue had been published in The Guardian and was well worth a read

The head of policy and communications thanked committee members for their helpful feedback and gave a shout out to colleagues who had worked on the campaign.

The head of policy and communications also urged the committee chairman to ensure the resources reached both smaller councils and those who wouldn't usually be engaged with their council.

The project officer (policy and communications) clarified that the images in the resources had been put together to cover all bases, however she was happy to take into account any feedback by email.

**Resolved (1):** That the update on the elections campaign and associated resources be noted

**Resolved (2):** That committee members view and promote the Make A Change election resources

## **6. Young people**

The committee chairman introduced this item by stressing the importance of encouraging young people to get involved with local councils.

The head of member services asked committee members to cast their net wider and look at other ways local councils could support young people e.g. through managing playgrounds. NALC would be holding an event on the Future of Play which members were encouraged to book onto and share with others.

Committee members were asked to share the work their council is doing for young people and suggest resources NALC could provide to support this work by email.

**Resolved (1):** That committee members share the work their councils are doing to support young people locally and suggest resources NALC could provide to support this work by email.

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

Tuesday 9 February 2021 at 11.00am, by Zoom teleconference.



## AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021

### Appendix 2.2 – Smaller Councils' Committee Action Log

#### Smaller Councils Committee

24 November 2020	Minutes of previous meeting and action log  <b>ACTION: That e-learning be given strong and enthusiastic promotion and development</b>	2	Y
24 November 2020	Committee chairman's report  <b>ACTION: That the committee chairman's report be noted.</b>	3	Y
24 November 2020	Committee chairman's report  <b>ACTION: That the committee self organises any additional Zoom meetings members wish to hold</b>	3	Y
24 November 2020	Committee chairman's report  <b>ACTION: That the first committee meeting of next year be a thinking meeting, with future meetings extended to be a smaller councils network with open invitation to smaller councils and on specific themes</b>	3	Y
24 November 2020	Committee chairman's report  <b>ACTION: That the work of the climate change task and finish group be commended and the involvement of county associations and engagement of councils and councillors on the</b>	3	Y

	<b>climate emergency be given further consideration</b>		
24 November 2020	Member services <b>ACTION: That the update from the head of member services be noted</b>	4	Y
24 November 2020	Member services <b>ACTION: That committee members provide any feedback they have on either the coronavirus guidance or remote meeting guidance by email to the head of member services</b>	4	Y
24 November 2020	Member services <b>ACTION: That the committee supports the approach and advice given by NALC</b>	4	Y
24 November 2020	Election resources <b>ACTION: That the update on the elections campaign and associated resources be noted</b>	5	Y
24 November 2020	Election resources <b>ACTION: That committee members view and promote the Make A Change election resources</b>	5	Y
24 November 2020	Young people <b>ACTION: That committee members share the work their councils are doing to support young people locally and suggest resources NALC could provide to support this work by email</b>	6	N

## **AGENDA ITEM 3 – SMALLER COUNCILS’ COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021**

### **Appendix 3.1 – Report from the committee chairman**

#### **Introduction**

The time available next Tuesday 9 February is limited and core topics could well be fairly demanding in their reporting and scrutiny. Therefore, I am sharing ahead of the encounter some thinking to reduce the pressure and also to extend the courtesy of giving time for committee members to prepare their thoughts and reflections on what now follows.

Accordingly - because of the limited time and the encouraging pilot last cycle - I have made some recommendations which are there for the committee as a whole to follow, amend or reject.

I should make it clear that it is my personal view that this Committee should do and serve - not exist/meet simply to receive reports and note events in other parts of the dedicated work by the leadership teams in an always demanding situation even before the intervention and limitations of Covid-19. This is simply going through motions and a waste of resources.

#### **First**

A welcome to the two replacement National Assembly members of this Committee: Mike Scott (Nottinghamshire) and Bob Blezzard (Isle of Wight). Bob is of course, is sort-of 're-tread' in that he sort-of started last November before the muddle over valid nominations emerged.

Now that that unfortunate situation is past, I will ask both of them briefly to introduce themselves in the hope of making a new, new start when our February meeting commences.

I am hoping to have a telephone chat with Mike ahead of this meeting to bring him up to date on the initiatives that we started in November to address as to the future working of this Committee – Bob was part of our preliminary effort last time around.

## **Second**

There is a fairly full bread-and butter agenda of formal business prepared by Jessica with the help of others from the 109 team and I discussed this in an extended and frank telephone conversation with the chief executive last week. Jessica has dug out the notes of the reports from Kent and Avon county associations to the last National Assembly on initiatives made within the topic of Youth Engagement and Josey has prepared a short paper from her part of Dorset. Thanks to both of them please read and I intend to deal with them on an around-the-table questions arising basis, probably with a concluding resolution to commend them and for general distribution in a case study publication (to go on a Young People webpage on the NALC website) and possibly in LCR.

Arising from the formal agenda and my conversations up the line recently, I wish now to share with everyone some of the background, as I see it, to our future operation and endeavours.

## **Broad NALC context**

Some of the issues from the No 109 'formal agenda' are hardly slight.

They are worthy of proper attention and respect, arising from the general concerns of the sector as a whole and thus covering matters impacting also to various extents on larger and smaller local councils and including the "super councils" network.

That leads me to one main topic which I hope "we" can start to bear in mind and shape our thinking and actions.

## **Background**

Since the horrors of a couple of decades ago, one of my main personal goals has been and remains the cohesion of local councils within the total local government service which is a part of English (and Cornish !) governance. So, I am always alert for anything / proposal/ pressure that might dilute local government to the convenience and whim of "Whitehall".

Those pressures (together I dare say, with provisional 'contingency planning') have long been apparent since Lord Redcliffe Maud's time and worry me. It is one of the bigger tendencies and issues circulating within current (small 'p' politics)

and it is a main driver to me to get our part of it (smaller local councils) into better shape.

Some of our committee members have been very conscientiously communicating with me since the last meetings (especially the pilot informal debate) on some areas that probably “we” ought to be examining and developing for our part of the sector.

I intend to press and develop this aspect and am very grateful for the very practical and grounded observations made to me by committee members recently. I do not pretend to have all details fully identified and evaluated but am increasingly persuaded that the general outline idea of a series of informal virtual debates is a practical and constructive starting point to at the least “airing” and testing of issues that are of immediate concern to the elected element of smaller local councils.

One proviso – to my mind – is that they need to be focussed.

An illustration might be that “planning” as a topic is probably too broad but, however, the differing protocols per county might be both informative and constructive – especially with the ever-re-arranging of principal councils beyond and within counties with various sorts of “unitary isation”.

Another example: Lydia has brought forward a very pertinent topic.

Yet another example - without any way confusing the excellent work being done by Lilian and Josey on the Policy Committee with climate change, it might be very illuminating to hear of different ‘experiences’ with actually sparking either local council. Members or wider communities into engaging with the issue. Associated with this, how we help the propagating and use of the NALC report.

Some of you might – accurately – discern that I am following through the reflections I made last time round of the shared experience initiative by this committee a few years ago. That point of that was to try to deflate the tendency to patronise and sometimes to manipulate smaller local councils by ‘their betters’ (of too many varieties). Rather this is the time to affirm them, encourage them and assist them (members and staff) - to take their place, play their part and enable our communities to be what they can become.

Equally, in the immediate term, it is clear that any initiative might be hindered by perceived threats to some of the activities and services of NALC or some county

associations and/or result in too oversize “conferences” beyond current competencies and experience. It is not clear at time of writing how much might be available from “109”.

Therefore, this may well be the time to activate the suggestion that there should be a smaller councils champion on the NALC Management Board. Both of the new National Assembly members serve there and, until the next biennial meeting, perhaps this committee should nominate one of them to blaze this trail?

### **Recommendations**

This report be received and noted.

That there be a further informal meeting of members only to identify the nature and scope of topics that this committee can promote to the general interest and assistance of smaller local councils.

That a member of the committee be recommended to the NALC Management Board to fill for the time being the role of Smaller Councils’ Champion.

Thank you for your time and attention. I try to be generally available.

Telephone: 07747 346 481 e-mail: [gdm.ford@gmail.com](mailto:gdm.ford@gmail.com)

Graham F

## **AGENDA ITEM 5 – SMALLER COUNCILS’ COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 23 JUNE 2020**

### **Appendix 5.1 – Strategic plan – young people case studies**

#### **Corfe Castle Parish Council, Dorset**

Corfe Castle Parish Council is involved with the Corfe Castle Sports Trust and also finances the Corfe Castle Youth Club. Corfe Castle Primary school was actively involved with our tree giveaway days last year with a tree themed day at school. Corfe Castle Charities (which the parish council is a trustee of) has funding opportunities for vulnerable young people.

#### **Sevenoaks Town Council, Kent**

Sevenoaks Town Council has been involved in youth provision and set up a Youth Town Council which has been a success. The town council also has a youth café open and which provides different services such as counselling. During the pandemic, in order to engage with youth, the council set up zoom meetings for young people and summer social distance music events. In addition to this they had set up theatre groups for young people who had an interest in the arts.

#### **Yate Town Council, Avon**

Yate Town Council has regular meetings with the youth council. The council has also extended their work on engaging with youth via a dedicated facility providing different services such as hot drinks, computer usage and engaging with young people about any concerns or interest they may have.