

SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Smaller Councils Committee held by Zoom teleconference on 20 December 2021 at 11.00.

Present:

National Assembly members: Cllr Lillian Burns, Cllr Graham Ford (committee chair); directly elected members: Cllr Josephine Parish (committee vice-chair), Cllr Martyn Thorpe and Ian Harrison.

Staff present:

Jessica Lancod-Frost (policy officer), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications) and Jonathan Owen (chief executive).

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Bob Blezzard.

2. Introductions

Committee members and officers introduced themselves. Attendees summarised their backgrounds and provided a surprising fact about themselves.

3. Election of committee chair and vice-chair 2022/23

No nominations had been received and Cllr Ford indicated he would be happy to continue as chair on a temporary basis.

Resolved (1): That Cllr Graham Ford be elected temporary chair.

Resolved (2): That Cllr Josephine Parish be elected as committee vice-chair for 2022-23.

4. Committee terms of reference

The chair invited comments on the committee's terms of reference:

- The number of directly elected committee members should be increased from up to three to up to five.

- There was also a typing error in line b and county association should be plural.
- It was noted Policy Committee would take the lead on rural issues, but the Smaller Councils Committee would be kept up to date and asked for input where appropriate.
- Communication and engagement with smaller councils was important and needs to be improved.
- Engagement with smaller councils on the climate emergency is also critical
- Several national networks had been established and the committee should consider a similar network for smaller councils and reducing meetings of the committee.
- The definition of a smaller council should be considered in the governance review.
- The inconsistency of county association communication with smaller councils was highlighted and area committees should have a standing item on smaller council issues.
- Part of the committee's job is to encourage smaller councils to put proper policies in place to improve governance

Resolved: That the terms of reference be noted, the typing error corrected and other suggestions reported to the Management Board and considered as part of the governance review.

5. Filling vacant positions

The chief executive set out the process for filling vacancies on committees comprising an expression of interest in the New Year to which unsuccessful candidates could also put themselves forward.

The committee chair and vice-chair were asked to give some thought to the skills, interests and geographical spread the committee might seek from new members. This would be considered by the Management Board alongside proposed changes to the committee's terms of reference and work priorities.

Resolved (1): That the process for filling vacant positions be noted and expressions of interest considered at the next meeting.

Resolved (2): That the committee chair and vice-chair consider the skills, interests and geographical spread the committee might seek from new members.

6. Work programme for 2022/23

The committee chair informed the committee of a paper he had written comprising topics suggested by the previous committee and suggestions from the head of policy and communications, these included:

- practice regarding planning consultations
- carbon literacy
- identifying future membership needs for advice/guidance and providing feedback/input on NALC services
- practical issues arising from limited capacity
- sharing good practice
- supporting NALC campaigns/big themes and helping develop the evidence base including through surveys
- improving good governance and increasing take-up of the Local Council Award Scheme and CiLCA

During discussion a number of comments and further suggestions were made, including:

- Cllr Lillian Burns said she was keen to write a report on the Levelling Up White Paper and a report with a working title of 'You can do anything' to provide encouragement to smaller councils including expanding examples from NALC's Points of Light publication
- The committee should avoid duplicating the work of other committees but instead ensure linkages were in place, for example responding to the Levelling Up White Paper was a Policy Committee responsibility
- The committee should advise on the language that would resonate with smaller councils

Resolved: That the ideas for the draft work programme be noted and further proposals considered at the next meeting.

7. Any other business

The committee vice-chair raised engagement by councils with the committee elections. The chief executive advised that this had been lower than expected and this should be considered in the governance review.

8. Date and time of next meeting

2 March 2022 by Zoom (time to be confirmed).