

SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | AGENDA

2 March 2022

10:00-12:00 (at 11:00 there will be a short break for 10 minutes)

Please find joining details below:

Zoom teleconference:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83273296582?pwd=LOJlYi9iempyN2Q2QitMSlhHRG9WUT09>

Meeting ID: 832 7329 6582

Passcode: 186184

To submit an apology for this meeting please email
NALCcommittees@nalc.gov.uk or call 020 7637 1865.

1. Apologies and welcome

- 1.1. To note any apologies.

Verbally at
the meeting

2. Minutes of previous meeting

- 2.1. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 28 September 2021 and 20 December 2021 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 28 September 2021, in the action log.

3. Committee work programme 2022/3

- 3.1. To finalise the Smaller Councils Committee work programme for 2022/3.

Appendix
3.1

- 3.2. To consider how to take forward the Smaller Councils Committee work programme.

4. Member services update

- 4.1. The projects manager to attend to give updates on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning. Appendix 4.1

5. NALC civility work

- 5.1. The senior solicitor and head of member services to attend to give an update on NALC's civility work. Verbally at the meeting

6. NALC Star Council Awards

- 6.1. The policy manager to attend to give an update on NALC's Star Council Awards. Appendix 6.1
- 6.2. The committee to consider how they can help promote the awards to smaller councils.

7. Local council elections and NALC Make A Change Campaign

- 7.1. The campaigns intern to attend to provide an overview of the 2022 local council elections and to ask for feedback on NALC's Make A Change campaign. Appendix 7.1

8. Date and time of next meeting

- 8.1. To note that the next meeting of the Smaller Councils Committee will be held on 24 May 2022, location to be confirmed.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 2.1a – Draft minutes of meeting 28 September 2021

Meeting of the NALC Smaller Councils Committee held by Zoom teleconference on 28 September 2021.

Present:

National assembly members: Cllr Bob Blezzard, Cllr Lillian Burns, Cllr Graham Ford (committee chairman), Cllr Malcolm Leeding MBE; directly elected members: Cllr Josephine Parish (committee vice-chairman), Mr Stephen Rickitt

Also in attendance:

Also present were Anders Hanson (projects manager), Claire Fitzgerald (admin manager) for part, Lisa Etchell (projects officer), Jessica Lancod-Frost (policy officer), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications), Mike Drew (NALC vice-chair) and Nick Howell (campaigns intern).

1. Apologies and welcome

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and action log

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

The committee vice chairman talked through the action log.

Comments raised in response included:

- The policy officer apologised that the action relating to leave of absence was still outstanding
- The policy officer confirmed that information on the size and geographical spread of councils that entered NALC's Star Council Awards had been circulated to the committee
- The project manager confirmed that he would be providing updates on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning under item five of the agenda

Resolved (1): That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 are approved

3. Policy and communications update

The campaigns intern introduced himself and reminded committee members about NALC's election surveys.

The campaigns intern also confirmed that he was working on setting up a climate change network and analysing previous climate change survey data.

Resolved (1): That the committee welcomes the campaigns intern to NALC.

4. Governance update

The admin manager gave an overview of the 2021 Smaller Councils Committee elections as follows:

- The committee is made up of five National Assembly members and three directly elected members. The directly elected members can be clerks, councillors or county officers working with smaller councils
- Every member of the committee will stand down this year
- The nominations process is now open. Anyone wishing to stand for election should complete a nomination form and return it to the committees inbox by 25 October
- Voting in the direct elections will take place between 10 November and 6 December
- Voting in the National Assembly elections will take place between 22 November and 6 December
- The results of both elections will be announced on 8 December, with elected candidates taking up their place in January 2022

The admin manager encouraged all committee members to stand for election and to get the message out to people they believe may be interested in standing.

Comments raised in response included:

- The committee requested a representative on management board, which it has at the moment by chance, however what happens when that is no longer the case?

- The admin manager confirmed that the package of requests the committee had put to Management Board would be considered as part of the wider governance review
- Asking for two extra elected members was a compromise, but still vastly inadequate given the number of smaller councils
- Would it be possible to have two extra members before the governance review and could the governance review be used to strengthen the connection between smaller councils and NALC?
- The Larger Councils Committee has eighteen members and there are hundreds of large councils overall, yet the Smaller Councils Committee has only eight members despite there being thousands of smaller councils.
- Under the current rules the committee could end up with no directly elected members being councillors
- The vast majority of councils within NALC are deemed to be smaller, so the vast majority of what NALC does is aimed at them
- It would be interesting to see an analysis of the size of councils on national assembly

Resolved (1): That the update on elections be noted.

5. Member services update

The projects officer introduced herself and informed the committee that she would be working on the Local Council Award Scheme and providing support to the Improvement and Development Board.

The projects manager gave an update on the Local Council Award Scheme as follows:

- Round two of the awards was nearly concluded, all panels had met over the last couple of weeks
- The projects manager was now in the process of bringing the report together and informing councils of the outcome
- Twenty two councils had submitted applications in the second round and eight panels had met
- Each panel consisted of a mix of councillors and clerks
- A mix of large and small councils had applied, with councils going for different levels of the award
- Information on outcomes would be provided for the next committee meeting
- The deadline for the third round is now 8 October

- So far eight councils have applied, of these four are considered smaller, three are applying for quality, one for foundation. The projects manager was aware of more councils that were likely to apply
- The projects manager was holding sessions at the Devon and Lincolnshire county association conferences to promote the award scheme

An update on E-Learning was also provided as follows:

- One county association was potentially looking to play a greater part in E-Learning
- Breakthrough Communications was still working on their modules, NALC hadn't received them yet
- E-Learning would be rolled out more widely at the end of November

The committee chairman asked members if they had any comments on the extension of the scope of the local government and social care ombudsman, as this would impact smaller councils.

Comments raised in response included:

- It was a crazy idea as it would give the disaffected a stick to beat with
- The ombudsman would struggle to resource responses
- For the ombudsmen to be open to every council it would need to employ thousands more people

The head of policy and communications clarified that extending the jurisdiction of the ombudsmen was long standing NALC policy. If members wanted NALC to reconsider this position, they would need to talk to their county association or the new committee might want to consider it next year.

The head of policy and communications also confirmed that the ombudsmen was engaging with NALC in a number of areas as part of a tri annual review.

The head of policy and communications informed the committee that the NALC chairman would be attending and giving a speech at the SLCC conference in October and that he would be accompanying the chairman at the conference.

The projects manager confirmed that staff contact details were available on the NALC website and that NALC was in the process of redesigning it.

Resolved (1): That the committee welcomes the projects officer to NALC.

Resolved (2): That the updates from the projects manager on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning be noted.

6. NALC civility work

NALC civility work

The national vice chairman (member services) and head of policy and communications gave an update on the work of the Civility in Public Life Project Working Group and its most recent meeting:

- A statement from the working group had been published which the Committee was encouraged to read and be aware of
- A project officer had been appointed and will start next week
- The latest edition of NALC's LCR magazine includes an article on the project by the chairman of the SLCC
- The working group had developed a work programme of projects and activities including promoting the national model member code of conduct and existing resources such as the good governance checklist, supporting lobbying to change the standards regime and the development of new guidance, templates and policies
- A local resolution protocol had been identified as quick win and was among the guidance being developed with input from Hoey Ainscough Associates who attended the recent meeting
- Recruitment of clerks had been raised by county associations and the working group as a current issue
- A logo and branding for the working group was being developed by the SLCC
- The Committee provided feedback on the practicalities of staffing committees for smaller local councils especially those with only five councillors

Resolved (1): That the update on NALC's civility work be welcomed.

7. Committee chairman's report

The committee chairman spoke to a report he had written covering the future role of the committee.

Cllr Bob Blezzard stressed the importance of pursuing two additional committee members and securing a place for the committee chairman on Management Board.

Cllr Malcolm Leeding called for the new committee to identify the particular skills, experience and expertise of members.

Cllr Josephine Parish emphasised the need for qualitative data, longer meetings, better representation for smaller councils and a stronger line of communication.

Resolved (1): That the committee endorses the report, conducts a detailed skills audit of new members and recommends that new committee members use to its fullest extent the power to coopt supplementary (albeit nonvoting) members with a view to balancing its base.

Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 23 November at 10:00am by Zoom teleconference.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 2.1b – Draft minutes of meeting 20 December 2021

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 terms of reference, work and 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).

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 2.2 – Smaller Councils Committee Action Log

Smaller Councils Committee

28 September 2021	Minutes of previous meeting and action log ACTION: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 are approved	2	Y
28 September 2021	Policy and communications update ACTION: That the committee welcomes the campaigns intern to NALC	3	Y
28 September 2021	Governance update ACTION: That the update on elections be noted	4	Y
28 September 2021	Member services update ACTION: That the committee welcomes the projects officer to NALC.	5	Y
28 September 2021	Member services update ACTION: That the updates from the projects manager on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning be noted.	5	Y
28 September 2021	NALC civility work ACTION: That the update on NALC's civility work be welcomed.	6	Y

28 September 2021	Committee chairman's report ACTION: That the committee endorses the report, conducts a detailed skills audit of new members and recommends that new committee members use to its fullest extent the power to coopt supplementary (albeit nonvoting) members with a view to balancing its base.	7	N
20 December 2021	Election of committee chair and vice-chair 2022/23 ACTION: That Cllr Graham Ford be elected temporary chair.	3	Y
20 December 2021	Election of committee chair and vice-chair 2022/23 ACTION: That Cllr Josephine Parish be elected as committee vice-chair	3	Y
20 December 2021	Committee terms of reference ACTION: 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.	4	Y
20 December 2021	Filling vacant positions ACTION: That the process for filling vacant positions be noted and expressions of interest considered at the next meeting.	5	N
20 December 2021	Filling vacant positions ACTION: That the committee chair and vice-chair consider the skills, interests and geographical spread the committee might seek from new members.	5	N

20 December 2021	Work programme for 2022/3 That the ideas for the draft work programme be noted and further proposals considered at the next meeting.	6	Y
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APPENDIX 3.2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH

Appendix 3.2 – Ideas for taking forward the 2022/3 Smaller Councils Committee work programme

This paper sets out the ideas that were generated at the last meeting (the numbered headings) and provides some more detail linked to existing work as to how they might be taken forward.

1. Carbon literacy

- Climate emergency one of our big themes, this is what we've done so far. These are some suggestions as to what else we can do:
- Promote membership of the climate emergency network to smaller councils
- Engage with the carbon literacy trust about training

2. Identifying future membership needs for advice/guidance and providing feedback/input on NALC service

- NALC officers to attend Smaller Council Committee meetings as appropriate to hear from members about what advice and guidance they want us to develop over the next two years

3. Practical issues arising from limited capacity

4. Sharing good practice

- NALC has a range of mechanisms and initiatives for sharing good practice: case study publications, Star Council Awards, the NALC website, LCR magazine
- Provide examples, write articles and encourage other small councils to provide examples for case study publications on our big themes, articles and blogposts
- Promote the Star Council Awards and increase the number of entries from smaller councils
- Promote membership of NALC's national networks to smaller councils
- Invite committee members to contribute to projects which might include reports highlighting what smaller councils are capable of doing

5. Supporting NALC campaigns/big themes and helping develop the evidence base including through surveys

- Continuation of big themes agreed by policy committee on health and well-being, climate change and young people
- New big themes agreed by policy committee on housing/planning/neighbourhood planning, (to include practice regarding planning consultations) culture/sport, community/cultural assets and transport
- Suggest content and resources for themed webpages
- Develop and respond to any future surveys looking at what councils are currently doing and the barriers they face to doing more. This could include practice on planning consultations

6. Improving good governance and increasing take-up of the Local Council Award Scheme and CiLCA

- Support and promote the work of the Civility and Respect Working Group to smaller councils
- Promote attendance at webinars on how to prepare an award winning Local Council Award Scheme application
- Encourage county associations to include copy in any newsletters they send out
- NALC attendance at county association meetings to talk about what's involved in preparing a Local Council Award Scheme application
- Being prepared to support and advise councils and clerks they know in putting together their applications

AGENDA ITEM 4 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 4.1 – Member Services Report - February 2022

This is a summary of some of the current work being undertaken by the member services team.

Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS)

The first round of the award scheme for 2022 is currently underway. The triage stage has been completed and the applications will soon be going to panels. There are eleven applicants in this round (five Quality Gold, two Quality and four Foundation) with three of these smaller councils (two going for Foundation and one going for Quality).

We have recently made some changes on the admin side which should help make the scheme run more efficiently. We are also currently working on a new grid that will help applicants, panel members and county associations have a better understanding of what each of the criteria mean and how they are assessed. We continue to attend occasional meetings with county associations to explain how the scheme works and to encourage participations.

Online learning

Our online learning offer provided through the platform Nimble is developing new momentum thanks to the civility and respect project. Our intention is that by the end of March all county associations will be able to sign up learners for the courses that are provided. Many of these are generic courses on key HR/workplace topics such as health and safety, diversity, and leadership skills and these are written by Nimble themselves. We also offer three courses written by Warwickshire ALC, and some bespoke civility and respect course will be available. Most courses are £14 with the income shared between county associations, Nimble and NALC.

Further information will be available shortly.

Website and CRM

A revamped website remains a priority, but we have decided to bring these two projects together as we realised how much they interlink. This will ensure that

they fully integrate, and we do not create a website that then needs further financial outlay to make it work effectively with a CRM system.

We are currently putting together a broad plan of what we are trying to achieve from these projects, with a view to working with an external company who can help us refine this into a fuller specification. This means that we are not currently committing to a specific implementation date, but a new project plan will be drawn up when we have the spec. So far, apart from the initial user testing with Heavy Penguin, there has been no financial commitment on this project,.

Peer challenge

We are discussing with the LGA how we will undertake two peer challenges later in the calendar year. Although a couple of councils have previously expressed an interest neither have committed yet and so we would welcome interest from other larger councils, especially those who have achieved Quality Gold in the Local Council Award Scheme.

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AGENDA ITEM 6 – SMALLER COUNCILS’ COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 6.1 – NALC Star Council Awards

Summary of NALC Star Council Awards 2021

- No Star Council Awards held in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- 2021 Awards were launched in February.
- Delivered entirely online through all phases from nomination to judging to award ceremony.
- Categories:
 - Clerk of the year (Sponsored by Vision ICT in 2021)
 - County association project of the year (sponsored by CCLA in 2021)
 - Young Councillor of the year (in 2021 sponsored by DCK Accounting Solutions)
 - Councillor of the year (sponsored by Breakthrough Communications)
 - Council of the year (sponsored by Blachere Illumination for 2021)
- Received over 200 entries.
- The online awards ceremony took place on 8 October 2021 and can be viewed [here](#), receiving 700 views to date.

Proposal for NALC Star Council Awards 2022

- Aims are to increase the number of nominations, online ceremony views and media coverage.
- Given ongoing pandemic and uncertainty, continue with online ceremony.
- Maintain same categories (County Association project of year, Young Councillor of year, Councillor of year, Council of year, Clerk of Year)
- Launch end February, nominations close end May, judging June/July, public vote for Council of the year and County Association vote for County Association Project of the Year July/August and online awards ceremony October/November.
- Nomination criteria same as in 2021 but with the removal of COVID-19 emphasis and no nominations from spouse/family member.
- Improve judging process with more judges and not judging all categories.
- Continue approach regarding winners’ trophies and finalist certificates.
- Longer-term open question feasibility/appetite for move to pyramid approach with county awards and winners going through the national

awards. No feedback received from county associations at fortnightly meeting on 26 January.

Local council elections in 2021

A summary of NALC's local council election 2021 report and its key findings.

MAKE A CHANGE
BECOME A COUNCILLOR

nalc

The report

Report name

Local council elections 2021

Summary

The report collected a range of data from local (parish and town) councils, councillors and county associations. It analysed survey data in conjunction with data collected from principal authorities to paint a broader picture of the local elections in 2021. In analysing the data, three key themes emerge: democratic participation, diversity, and campaign process. The reports aims to discover insights that can help NALC shape its future campaigns, key issues to lobby to the government and identify ways to work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to raise awareness of local elections and make them more inclusive. The report makes several recommendations to local councils, councillors, county associations, the government and other stakeholders.

Weblink

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/elections-1/3658-local-councils-elections-2021-report/file>

Data size

NALC collected data from local councils, councillors and county associations across England between July and September 2021. The surveys collectively received 1,004 responses.

Survey breakdown:

Councillors — 556

Local councils — 429

County associations — 19

Key findings

The report found that:

- 38% of local councillors elected were through contested elections. That's up from 29% in 2019.
- 92% of local councillors would recommend becoming a councillor. That's up from 79% in 2019.
- Of the councillors elected in the 2021 local elections, 59% are male, 38% are female and 3% other. Unchanged from 2019.
- The 2021 local elections showed that 9% of councillors identify as disabled under the Equality Act 2010, an increase from 7% in 2019.
- 54% of councillors are aged 65+ with 37% between 45-64, and 9% being under 45.
- 50% of councillors served on their local council for less than 5 years with 25% serving between 5-10 years, and 25% serving for more than 10 years.
- 10% of local councils reported their entire council was made up of brand-new councillors.
- Community (39%), issue or interest (37%), and family and friends (31%) were sighted as the main reasons why councillors got involved with their local council. 10% sighted work or an organisation while 8% said neighbourhood plan.
- Physical notices (59%) and Facebook (53%) were the main ways of promoting local elections.

Recommendations

Councillors

- Raise awareness of local council elections.
- Encourage more people to become a councillor by talent spotting and asking them to stand for election in their local council.
- Highlight the work local councils do and the services they provide.

Local councils

- Raise awareness of local council elections and encourage more people to stand for election by using NALC's Make A Change materials, engage with the local media and holding virtual events.
- Publish candidate information on the website.
- Review the annual budget of the local council to set aside funds for promotion and costs of elections.
- Highlight the work of local councils by applying to NALC's Local Council Award Scheme.

County associations

- Utilise NALC's Make A Change materials to encourage more people to stand for elections.
- Work with principal authorities to promote local council elections and capture accurate data.
- Engage with regional and county media outlets to increase their information and coverage of local council elections.

Recommendations

Local Government Association (LGA)

- Ensure that all principal authorities are providing materials, support and training to local (parish and town) councils whilst also promoting these elections.
- Encourage principal authorities to work together with county associations in providing election support and promotion.
- Share best practice with NALC and ensure that LGA's Be A Councillor campaign links to and supports NALC's Make A Change campaign.

Government

- Set up a National Democracy Fund to promote local (parish and town) council elections and encourage democratic participation.
- Pilot digital voting in local council elections.
- Work with NALC and other stakeholders to ensure that information about local councils is available on the GOV.UK website and on the Find Your Local Council web page.
- Ensure that data from local council elections is collated, published and easily accessible.

NALC commitment

NALC is committed to supporting councillors, local councils and county associations in promoting elections, attracting new councillors, increasing contested elections, delivering more regional and national media coverage, and digitalising the election process.

NALC will do this by:

- Ensuring the Make A Change campaign and materials meet the needs of local councils and councillors by incorporating the results and feedback of the report.
- Providing county associations with access to media and communications training and support liaising with regional and county media outlets to promote local elections.
- Lobbying the Electoral Commission and the government to simplify and digitalise local elections.

NALC information

About NALC

Established in 1947, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is a membership organisation and the only national body representing England's 10,000 local (parish and town) councils and their 100,000 councillors. NALC provides a national voice for local councils by campaigning on their behalf, raising awareness of their work, and providing them with a range of services to support their needs.

Contact

109 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LD

020 7637 1865

nalc@nalc.gov.uk

www.nalc.gov.uk

Lead officer

Nick Howell, campaigns intern — nick.howell@nalc.gov.uk

MAKE A CHANGE
BECOME A COUNCILLOR

nalc

SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | AGENDA

2 March 2022

10:00-12:00 (at 11:00 there will be a short break for 10 minutes)

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| 4.1. The projects manager to attend to give updates on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning. | Appendix 4.1 |
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5. NALC civility work

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6. NALC Star Council Awards

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7. Local council elections and NALC Make A Change Campaign

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|--|--------------|
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|--|--------------|

8. Date and time of next meeting

- | | |
|---|--|
| 8.1. To note that the next meeting of the Smaller Councils Committee will be held on 24 May 2022, location to be confirmed. | |
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AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 2.1a – Draft minutes of meeting 28 September 2021

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Also in attendance:

Also present were Anders Hanson (projects manager), Claire Fitzgerald (admin manager) for part, Lisa Etchell (projects officer), Jessica Lancod-Frost (policy officer), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications), Mike Drew (NALC vice-chair) and Nick Howell (campaigns intern).

1. Apologies and welcome

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and action log

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

The committee vice chairman talked through the action log.

Comments raised in response included:

- The policy officer apologised that the action relating to leave of absence was still outstanding
- The policy officer confirmed that information on the size and geographical spread of councils that entered NALC's Star Council Awards had been circulated to the committee
- The project manager confirmed that he would be providing updates on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning under item five of the agenda

Resolved (1): That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 are approved

3. Policy and communications update

The campaigns intern introduced himself and reminded committee members about NALC's election surveys.

The campaigns intern also confirmed that he was working on setting up a climate change network and analysing previous climate change survey data.

Resolved (1): That the committee welcomes the campaigns intern to NALC.

4. Governance update

The admin manager gave an overview of the 2021 Smaller Councils Committee elections as follows:

- The committee is made up of five National Assembly members and three directly elected members. The directly elected members can be clerks, councillors or county officers working with smaller councils
- Every member of the committee will stand down this year
- The nominations process is now open. Anyone wishing to stand for election should complete a nomination form and return it to the committees inbox by 25 October
- Voting in the direct elections will take place between 10 November and 6 December
- Voting in the National Assembly elections will take place between 22 November and 6 December
- The results of both elections will be announced on 8 December, with elected candidates taking up their place in January 2022

The admin manager encouraged all committee members to stand for election and to get the message out to people they believe may be interested in standing.

Comments raised in response included:

- The committee requested a representative on management board, which it has at the moment by chance, however what happens when that is no longer the case?

- The admin manager confirmed that the package of requests the committee had put to Management Board would be considered as part of the wider governance review
- Asking for two extra elected members was a compromise, but still vastly inadequate given the number of smaller councils
- Would it be possible to have two extra members before the governance review and could the governance review be used to strengthen the connection between smaller councils and NALC?
- The Larger Councils Committee has eighteen members and there are hundreds of large councils overall, yet the Smaller Councils Committee has only eight members despite there being thousands of smaller councils.
- Under the current rules the committee could end up with no directly elected members being councillors
- The vast majority of councils within NALC are deemed to be smaller, so the vast majority of what NALC does is aimed at them
- It would be interesting to see an analysis of the size of councils on national assembly

Resolved (1): That the update on elections be noted.

5. Member services update

The projects officer introduced herself and informed the committee that she would be working on the Local Council Award Scheme and providing support to the Improvement and Development Board.

The projects manager gave an update on the Local Council Award Scheme as follows:

- Round two of the awards was nearly concluded, all panels had met over the last couple of weeks
- The projects manager was now in the process of bringing the report together and informing councils of the outcome
- Twenty two councils had submitted applications in the second round and eight panels had met
- Each panel consisted of a mix of councillors and clerks
- A mix of large and small councils had applied, with councils going for different levels of the award
- Information on outcomes would be provided for the next committee meeting
- The deadline for the third round is now 8 October

- So far eight councils have applied, of these four are considered smaller, three are applying for quality, one for foundation. The projects manager was aware of more councils that were likely to apply
- The projects manager was holding sessions at the Devon and Lincolnshire county association conferences to promote the award scheme

An update on E-Learning was also provided as follows:

- One county association was potentially looking to play a greater part in E-Learning
- Breakthrough Communications was still working on their modules, NALC hadn't received them yet
- E-Learning would be rolled out more widely at the end of November

The committee chairman asked members if they had any comments on the extension of the scope of the local government and social care ombudsman, as this would impact smaller councils.

Comments raised in response included:

- It was a crazy idea as it would give the disaffected a stick to beat with
- The ombudsman would struggle to resource responses
- For the ombudsmen to be open to every council it would need to employ thousands more people

The head of policy and communications clarified that extending the jurisdiction of the ombudsmen was long standing NALC policy. If members wanted NALC to reconsider this position, they would need to talk to their county association or the new committee might want to consider it next year.

The head of policy and communications also confirmed that the ombudsmen was engaging with NALC in a number of areas as part of a tri annual review.

The head of policy and communications informed the committee that the NALC chairman would be attending and giving a speech at the SLCC conference in October and that he would be accompanying the chairman at the conference.

The projects manager confirmed that staff contact details were available on the NALC website and that NALC was in the process of redesigning it.

Resolved (1): That the committee welcomes the projects officer to NALC.

Resolved (2): That the updates from the projects manager on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning be noted.

6. NALC civility work

NALC civility work

The national vice chairman (member services) and head of policy and communications gave an update on the work of the Civility in Public Life Project Working Group and its most recent meeting:

- A statement from the working group had been published which the Committee was encouraged to read and be aware of
- A project officer had been appointed and will start next week
- The latest edition of NALC's LCR magazine includes an article on the project by the chairman of the SLCC
- The working group had developed a work programme of projects and activities including promoting the national model member code of conduct and existing resources such as the good governance checklist, supporting lobbying to change the standards regime and the development of new guidance, templates and policies
- A local resolution protocol had been identified as quick win and was among the guidance being developed with input from Hoey Ainscough Associates who attended the recent meeting
- Recruitment of clerks had been raised by county associations and the working group as a current issue
- A logo and branding for the working group was being developed by the SLCC
- The Committee provided feedback on the practicalities of staffing committees for smaller local councils especially those with only five councillors

Resolved (1): That the update on NALC's civility work be welcomed.

7. Committee chairman's report

The committee chairman spoke to a report he had written covering the future role of the committee.

Cllr Bob Blezzard stressed the importance of pursuing two additional committee members and securing a place for the committee chairman on Management Board.

Cllr Malcolm Leeding called for the new committee to identify the particular skills, experience and expertise of members.

Cllr Josephine Parish emphasised the need for qualitative data, longer meetings, better representation for smaller councils and a stronger line of communication.

Resolved (1): That the committee endorses the report, conducts a detailed skills audit of new members and recommends that new committee members use to its fullest extent the power to coopt supplementary (albeit nonvoting) members with a view to balancing its base.

Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 23 November at 10:00am by Zoom teleconference.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 2.1b – Draft minutes of meeting 20 December 2021

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 terms of reference, work and 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).

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 2.2 – Smaller Councils Committee Action Log

Smaller Councils Committee

28 September 2021	Minutes of previous meeting and action log ACTION: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 are approved	2	Y
28 September 2021	Policy and communications update ACTION: That the committee welcomes the campaigns intern to NALC	3	Y
28 September 2021	Governance update ACTION: That the update on elections be noted	4	Y
28 September 2021	Member services update ACTION: That the committee welcomes the projects officer to NALC.	5	Y
28 September 2021	Member services update ACTION: That the updates from the projects manager on the Local Council Award Scheme and E-Learning be noted.	5	Y
28 September 2021	NALC civility work ACTION: That the update on NALC's civility work be welcomed.	6	Y

28 September 2021	<p>Committee chairman's report</p> <p>ACTION: That the committee endorses the report, conducts a detailed skills audit of new members and recommends that new committee members use to its fullest extent the power to coopt supplementary (albeit nonvoting) members with a view to balancing its base.</p>	7	N
20 December 2021	<p>Election of committee chair and vice-chair 2022/23</p> <p>ACTION: That Cllr Graham Ford be elected temporary chair.</p>	3	Y
20 December 2021	<p>Election of committee chair and vice-chair 2022/23</p> <p>ACTION: That Cllr Josephine Parish be elected as committee vice-chair</p>	3	Y
20 December 2021	<p>Committee terms of reference</p> <p>ACTION: 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.</p>	4	Y
20 December 2021	<p>Filling vacant positions</p> <p>ACTION: That the process for filling vacant positions be noted and expressions of interest considered at the next meeting.</p>	5	N
20 December 2021	<p>Filling vacant positions</p> <p>ACTION: That the committee chair and vice-chair consider the skills, interests and geographical spread the committee might seek from new members.</p>	5	N

20 December 2021	Work programme for 2022/3 That the ideas for the draft work programme be noted and further proposals considered at the next meeting.	6	Y
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APPENDIX 3.2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH

Appendix 3.2 – Ideas for taking forward the 2022/3 Smaller Councils Committee work programme

This paper sets out the ideas that were generated at the last meeting (the numbered headings) and provides some more detail linked to existing work as to how they might be taken forward.

1. Carbon literacy

- Climate emergency one of our big themes, this is what we've done so far. These are some suggestions as to what else we can do:
- Promote membership of the climate emergency network to smaller councils
- Engage with the carbon literacy trust about training

2. Identifying future membership needs for advice/guidance and providing feedback/input on NALC service

- NALC officers to attend Smaller Council Committee meetings as appropriate to hear from members about what advice and guidance they want us to develop over the next two years

3. Practical issues arising from limited capacity

4. Sharing good practice

- NALC has a range of mechanisms and initiatives for sharing good practice: case study publications, Star Council Awards, the NALC website, LCR magazine
- Provide examples, write articles and encourage other small councils to provide examples for case study publications on our big themes, articles and blogposts
- Promote the Star Council Awards and increase the number of entries from smaller councils
- Promote membership of NALC's national networks to smaller councils
- Invite committee members to contribute to projects which might include reports highlighting what smaller councils are capable of doing

5. Supporting NALC campaigns/big themes and helping develop the evidence base including through surveys

- Continuation of big themes agreed by policy committee on health and well-being, climate change and young people
- New big themes agreed by policy committee on housing/planning/neighbourhood planning, (to include practice regarding planning consultations) culture/sport, community/cultural assets and transport
- Suggest content and resources for themed webpages
- Develop and respond to any future surveys looking at what councils are currently doing and the barriers they face to doing more. This could include practice on planning consultations

6. Improving good governance and increasing take-up of the Local Council Award Scheme and CiLCA

- Support and promote the work of the Civility and Respect Working Group to smaller councils
- Promote attendance at webinars on how to prepare an award winning Local Council Award Scheme application
- Encourage county associations to include copy in any newsletters they send out
- NALC attendance at county association meetings to talk about what's involved in preparing a Local Council Award Scheme application
- Being prepared to support and advise councils and clerks they know in putting together their applications

AGENDA ITEM 4 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 4.1 – Member Services Report - February 2022

This is a summary of some of the current work being undertaken by the member services team.

Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS)

The first round of the award scheme for 2022 is currently underway. The triage stage has been completed and the applications will soon be going to panels. There are eleven applicants in this round (five Quality Gold, two Quality and four Foundation) with three of these smaller councils (two going for Foundation and one going for Quality).

We have recently made some changes on the admin side which should help make the scheme run more efficiently. We are also currently working on a new grid that will help applicants, panel members and county associations have a better understanding of what each of the criteria mean and how they are assessed. We continue to attend occasional meetings with county associations to explain how the scheme works and to encourage participations.

Online learning

Our online learning offer provided through the platform Nimble is developing new momentum thanks to the civility and respect project. Our intention is that by the end of March all county associations will be able to sign up learners for the courses that are provided. Many of these are generic courses on key HR/workplace topics such as health and safety, diversity, and leadership skills and these are written by Nimble themselves. We also offer three courses written by Warwickshire ALC, and some bespoke civility and respect course will be available. Most courses are £14 with the income shared between county associations, Nimble and NALC.

Further information will be available shortly.

Website and CRM

A revamped website remains a priority, but we have decided to bring these two projects together as we realised how much they interlink. This will ensure that

they fully integrate, and we do not create a website that then needs further financial outlay to make it work effectively with a CRM system.

We are currently putting together a broad plan of what we are trying to achieve from these projects, with a view to working with an external company who can help us refine this into a fuller specification. This means that we are not currently committing to a specific implementation date, but a new project plan will be drawn up when we have the spec. So far, apart from the initial user testing with Heavy Penguin, there has been no financial commitment on this project,.

Peer challenge

We are discussing with the LGA how we will undertake two peer challenges later in the calendar year. Although a couple of councils have previously expressed an interest neither have committed yet and so we would welcome interest from other larger councils, especially those who have achieved Quality Gold in the Local Council Award Scheme.

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AGENDA ITEM 6 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022

Appendix 6.1 – NALC Star Council Awards

Summary of NALC Star Council Awards 2021

- No Star Council Awards held in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- 2021 Awards were launched in February.
- Delivered entirely online through all phases from nomination to judging to award ceremony.
- Categories:
 - Clerk of the year (Sponsored by Vision ICT in 2021)
 - County association project of the year (sponsored by CCLA in 2021)
 - Young Councillor of the year (in 2021 sponsored by DCK Accounting Solutions)
 - Councillor of the year (sponsored by Breakthrough Communications)
 - Council of the year (sponsored by Blachere Illumination for 2021)
- Received over 200 entries.
- The online awards ceremony took place on 8 October 2021 and can be viewed [here](#), receiving 700 views to date.

Proposal for NALC Star Council Awards 2022

- Aims are to increase the number of nominations, online ceremony views and media coverage.
- Given ongoing pandemic and uncertainty, continue with online ceremony.
- Maintain same categories (County Association project of year, Young Councillor of year, Councillor of year, Council of year, Clerk of Year)
- Launch end February, nominations close end May, judging June/July, public vote for Council of the year and County Association vote for County Association Project of the Year July/August and online awards ceremony October/November.
- Nomination criteria same as in 2021 but with the removal of COVID-19 emphasis and no nominations from spouse/family member.
- Improve judging process with more judges and not judging all categories.
- Continue approach regarding winners' trophies and finalist certificates.
- Longer-term open question feasibility/appetite for move to pyramid approach with county awards and winners going through the national

awards. No feedback received from county associations at fortnightly meeting on 26 January.

Local council elections in 2021

A summary of NALC's local council election 2021 report and its key findings.

MAKE A CHANGE
BECOME A COUNCILLOR

nalc

The report

Report name

Local council elections 2021

Summary

The report collected a range of data from local (parish and town) councils, councillors and county associations. It analysed survey data in conjunction with data collected from principal authorities to paint a broader picture of the local elections in 2021. In analysing the data, three key themes emerge: democratic participation, diversity, and campaign process. The reports aims to discover insights that can help NALC shape its future campaigns, key issues to lobby to the government and identify ways to work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to raise awareness of local elections and make them more inclusive. The report makes several recommendations to local councils, councillors, county associations, the government and other stakeholders.

Weblink

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/elections-1/3658-local-councils-elections-2021-report/file>

Data size

NALC collected data from local councils, councillors and county associations across England between July and September 2021. The surveys collectively received 1,004 responses.

Survey breakdown:

Councillors — 556

Local councils — 429

County associations — 19

Key findings

The report found that:

- 38% of local councillors elected were through contested elections. That's up from 29% in 2019.
- 92% of local councillors would recommend becoming a councillor. That's up from 79% in 2019.
- Of the councillors elected in the 2021 local elections, 59% are male, 38% are female and 3% other. Unchanged from 2019.
- The 2021 local elections showed that 9% of councillors identify as disabled under the Equality Act 2010, an increase from 7% in 2019.
- 54% of councillors are aged 65+ with 37% between 45-64, and 9% being under 45.
- 50% of councillors served on their local council for less than 5 years with 25% serving between 5-10 years, and 25% serving for more than 10 years.
- 10% of local councils reported their entire council was made up of brand-new councillors.
- Community (39%), issue or interest (37%), and family and friends (31%) were sighted as the main reasons why councillors got involved with their local council. 10% sighted work or an organisation while 8% said neighbourhood plan.
- Physical notices (59%) and Facebook (53%) were the main ways of promoting local elections.

Recommendations

Councillors

- Raise awareness of local council elections.
- Encourage more people to become a councillor by talent spotting and asking them to stand for election in their local council.
- Highlight the work local councils do and the services they provide.

Local councils

- Raise awareness of local council elections and encourage more people to stand for election by using NALC's Make A Change materials, engage with the local media and holding virtual events.
- Publish candidate information on the website.
- Review the annual budget of the local council to set aside funds for promotion and costs of elections.
- Highlight the work of local councils by applying to NALC's Local Council Award Scheme.

County associations

- Utilise NALC's Make A Change materials to encourage more people to stand for elections.
- Work with principal authorities to promote local council elections and capture accurate data.
- Engage with regional and county media outlets to increase their information and coverage of local council elections.

Recommendations

Local Government Association (LGA)

- Ensure that all principal authorities are providing materials, support and training to local (parish and town) councils whilst also promoting these elections.
- Encourage principal authorities to work together with county associations in providing election support and promotion.
- Share best practice with NALC and ensure that LGA's Be A Councillor campaign links to and supports NALC's Make A Change campaign.

Government

- Set up a National Democracy Fund to promote local (parish and town) council elections and encourage democratic participation.
- Pilot digital voting in local council elections.
- Work with NALC and other stakeholders to ensure that information about local councils is available on the GOV.UK website and on the Find Your Local Council web page.
- Ensure that data from local council elections is collated, published and easily accessible.

NALC commitment

NALC is committed to supporting councillors, local councils and county associations in promoting elections, attracting new councillors, increasing contested elections, delivering more regional and national media coverage, and digitalising the election process.

NALC will do this by:

- Ensuring the Make A Change campaign and materials meet the needs of local councils and councillors by incorporating the results and feedback of the report.
- Providing county associations with access to media and communications training and support liaising with regional and county media outlets to promote local elections.
- Lobbying the Electoral Commission and the government to simplify and digitalise local elections.

NALC information

About NALC

Established in 1947, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is a membership organisation and the only national body representing England's 10,000 local (parish and town) councils and their 100,000 councillors. NALC provides a national voice for local councils by campaigning on their behalf, raising awareness of their work, and providing them with a range of services to support their needs.

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