

SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Smaller Councils Committee held by Zoom teleconference on 19 July at 10.00.

Present:

National Assembly members: Cllr Mick Baker, Cllr Bob Blezzard, Cllr Lillian Burns, Cllr Mike Drew (national vice chair, member services), Cllr Graham Ford (committee chair), Cllr Sue Lintern; directly elected members: Cllr Mervyn Head, Cllr Josephine Parish (committee vice-chair).

Staff present:

Anders Hanson (projects manager – for part), Chris Borg (policy manager), Jessica Lancod-Frost (policy officer), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications).

1. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Introductions

New committee members introduced themselves, summarising their backgrounds and providing a surprising fact about themselves.

3. Minutes of previous meetings

The committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 24 May 2022.

The committee chair asked if there were any matters arising. Matters raised in response included:

- Should the first two resolutions from the last meeting go directly to the task and finish group?
- A discussion on the definition of a smaller council took place

4. NALC Online Events

Committee members were invited to suggest topics for future NALC online events, which they did as follows:

- Responding to climate change/the climate emergency
- Showcasing smaller councils that have achieved a great deal

The policy manager stressed that the topics committee members suggested would be considered for events held in the next financial year.

The head of policy and communications confirmed that NALC was looking to share the suggested topics for future events with county associations.

Committee members also discussed the relationship between their local council and principal authority.

The committee chairman proposed that the Smaller Councils Committee write to every county association to ask about the proportion of smaller councils using the NALC precept definition of a smaller council (a local council with a precept of less than £25,000), to find out how many of their councils have declared a climate emergency and anything else they've done to tackle climate change and about their partnership with principal authorities in pursuing this particular area. It was agreed that this be raised at the next county officer meeting.

Resolution (1): That NALC asks county associations about the proportion of smaller councils using the NALC precept definition, to find out how many of their councils have declared a climate emergency and anything else they've done to tackle climate change and about their partnership with principal authorities in pursuing this area at the next county officer meeting.

5. Letter to smaller councils

Cllr Lillian Burns provided an update following the presentation she gave at a formal meeting of Management Board. At least nine of the resolutions arising from the last committee meeting were directly aimed at Management Board and still needed addressing by the committee.

The committee agreed to ask Management Board to include a specific item on the agenda of their next meeting to discuss in fuller detail the letter to smaller councils and associated report.

The head of policy communications wanted to place on record how the 100 responses to the letter to smaller councils compared with the response rate of NALC's other surveys, which were as follows:

Direct funding - 881
Dementia - 200
Climate Change - 200
Local Elections 2019 3,743
Local Elections 2021 1,004

The head of policy and communications confirmed that whilst Management Board didn't have a standing item for the Smaller and Larger Councils Committees, there was plenty of scope for issues to be raised through the relevant service area item. Committee chairs could also put forward ideas to the national chair and vice chairs.

Resolution (1): The committee requests that Management Board includes a specific item on the agenda of their next meeting to discuss in fuller detail the letter to smaller councils and associated report.

6. Update from the committee chairman

The projects manager, member services gave an update on E-Learning as follows:

- E-learning has now been confirmed as a permanent part of the NALC offer to members and is being provided using a platform called Nimble
- Delivery of it is currently dependent on county associations wanting to offer it to their members as they have to sign people up to courses within their area.
- Some parts of the country (mainly the East of England and the South West) also have their own license to offer e-learning and so they will be offering the same courses as well
- NALC are looking at a couple of potential options that may allow us to offer courses in counties where those county associations don't want to do the admin

- The civility and respect project has developed a range of additional courses which will see some shorter introductions available on particular topics via Nimble which will then lead into some additional longer courses
- A page providing more details of the available courses and how to sign up will be on the NALC website shortly

The committee asked if county officers could provide information on the training courses they offer so anyone could join in.

The head of policy and communications advised the committee they would need to ask county officers if they would share this information.

Resolution (1): The committee to ask county officers if they could provide information on the training they offer so that it could be opened up to all local councillors and clerks.

7. Date and time of next meeting

11 October 2022, time and location to be confirmed.