

SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | AGENDA

21 February 2023

10:00-12:00 (at 10:55 there will be a short break for 10 minutes)

Please find joining details below:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87143671201?pwd=a0E3dFlrRVJJMGdoMHdsQkVyVlYrUT09>

Meeting ID: 871 4367 1201

Passcode: 431525

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

1. Apologies and welcome (10.00)

1.1. To note any apologies.

Verbally at
the meeting

2. Minutes of previous meeting (10.00-10.05)

2.1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 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 11 October 2022, in the action log.

3. Councillor training (10.05-10.40)

3.1. The policy manager to attend to give an update on the Smaller Council Committee's request for Policy Committee to consider NALC's policy on mandatory training for councillors and any associated legislative changes required.

Appendix
3.1

3.2. The committee to hold a discussion on whether councillor training should be made mandatory.

4. Climate change (10.40-10.55)

Appendix
4.1

- 4.1. To agree how best to find out which smaller councils have declared a climate emergency and adopted a climate emergency strategy plan and their joint working with other bodies, including principal councils.

5. Financial resilience for smaller councils (11.05-11.20)

Appendix
5.1

- 5.1. To discuss how the committee would like to follow up on discussions to communicate the importance of financial resilience to smaller councils.

6. Local Government Association workforce survey (11.20-11.35)

Appendix
6.1

- 6.1. To note the Local Government Association's workforce survey and for the committee to discuss how to make the survey as widely taken up and as accurate as possible.

7. Celebrating national events (11.35-11.50)

Appendix
7.1

- 7.1. To note the new NALC webpage on the Coronation of His Majesty the King and for committee members to offer feedback on it and to highlight what their councils will be doing to mark the Coronation.

8. Committee chairman (11.50-12:00)

Paper to
follow

- 8.1. To receive a report from the committee chairman.
- 8.2. To note that Cllr Graham Ford will no longer be a member of National Assembly and thus of this Committee as of the close of the day and to discuss how to manage the implications of this development until the end of the year.

9. Date and time of next meeting

- 9.1. To note that the next meeting of the Smaller Councils Committee will be held on 23 May 2023 starting at 10:00am, location to be confirmed.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023

Appendix 2.1 – Draft minutes of meeting 11 October 2022

Meeting of the Smaller Councils Committee held by Zoom teleconference at 10.00 on 11 October 2022.

Attendees:

National Assembly members – Councillors Mick Baker, Bob Blezzard, Lillian Burns, Graham Ford (committee chair) and Sue Lintern; directly elected members – Councillors Mervyn Head and Josephine Parish (committee vice-chair).

Also in attendance:

Jessica Lancod-Frost (policy officer), Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications), Corinne Curtis, Worknest (for part), Linda Larter, Sevenoaks Town Council (for part)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Ian Harrison.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

The committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022.

3. Governance Task and Finish Group

Cllr Lillian Burns provided an update on the work of the governance task and finish group which she had been attending as the representative for the North West region. She reported on a proposal for the Smaller Councils Committee to be replaced by a network for councils with precepts of less than £25,000, which she had voted against, adding that neither the committee nor the recent survey of smaller councils had called for this. She expressed her disappointment that in her view the Management Board had not fully considered the findings from the survey and subsequent report, and that she did not support the committee losing its formal status in NALC's governance and the creation of a new online network.

A discussion then took place in which the following points were raised:

- There was disappointment that the committee hadn't been consulted by the task and finish group on its proposals to National Assembly
- Having a wide variety of experiences is beneficial as smaller councils can be vastly different
- NALC should be working to attract more people to stand on committees and for more members of the Smaller Councils Committee to come from outside National Assembly, with one representative from each region
- Smaller councils seek more assistance from NALC such as with simplified documentation and templates

The head of policy and communications clarified the proposals from the Task and Finish Group to National Assembly. These recognised that the value of committees for smaller and larger councils was in ensuring those councils had a voice in NALC and their current wide membership made that unfocused. National Assembly was to be invited to consult with the committees and draw up proposals to establish special interest groups for the smallest and largest councils for adoption at the end of the current cycle 2023, and should the proposal not be adopted, committee membership to be reviewed for 2023 elections. He added that a range of views were expressed in a debate at National Assembly on developing support for smaller and larger councils and these would be considered separately by National Assembly next year.

Resolved (1): That the committee is opposed to any proposal for the committee to be abolished and no longer part of the formal NALC governance and replaced by an online network representing councils with precepts under £25,000, and sought clarification on any rationale behind this recommendation.

Resolved (2): That the committee meets informally to identify the top five priorities arising from the analysis of the smaller councils survey.

4. NALC analysis of council tax levels of local precepting authorities

The policy officer provided an overview of NALC's analysis of local precepting authorities 2022/3, published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This included the number of local councils by precept range, the profile of Band D changes and average precept and Band D increases by county

association. The information was used by NALC when lobbying for local councils to be exempt from referendum principles.

Committee members were invited to give feedback the analysis, which they did as follows:

- Is there a correlation between local councils increasing their precept and having a unitary principal authority?
- Of the local councils that have a precept of zero, how many are parish meetings?
- The current bandings are too broad
- Local councils needed to be empowered to do more for their communities

The head of policy and communications urged the committee to work on communicating financial resilience to smaller councils in a way that wouldn't scare them.

Resolved (1): That the analysis of council tax levels of local precepting authorities be noted and suggestions including the bandings used and data for areas where local government reorganisation is taking place be considered for next year's report.

Resolved (2): That the Smaller Councils Committee discusses how to communicate financial resilience to smaller councils at its next meeting.

5. Climate change

The policy officer provided an update on the committee's request for information from county associations regarding how many of their local councils had declared a climate emergency, anything else they'd done to tackle climate change locally and ways in which they'd partnered with principal authorities to tackle climate change. A call out to county associations had been issued at the fortnightly county officer call and had subsequently been followed up by email, however only the Cheshire Association of Local Councils and Yorkshire Local Councils Association had responded.

A short discussion then took place as follows:

- The committee noted the good work that local councils in Cheshire and Yorkshire were doing to tackle climate change, including making council

buildings more energy efficient, switching to a no plastic policy and planting trees and wildflowers. However they expressed disappointment at the poor response rate

- Cllr Mervyn Head had undertaken climate literacy training with the Local Government Association, connected with like minded principal councils and worked on a project bringing his principal council together with several local councils
- All local councils should appoint a climate change representative

The committee chair called for climate change to be a central item of the next Smaller Councils Committee meeting.

Resolved (1): That an item on climate change is added to the agenda of the next Smaller Councils Committee meeting.

6. Member services update

a. Worknest update

Corinne Curtis from Worknest attended to provide an update on the review of the Good Councillors Guide to Employment and to invite feedback on what worked well, what didn't work well and what was missing from the current edition of the guide, which committee members offered as follows:

- Could the model contract be shorter and simpler?
- It would be useful to have advice on how to run a good remote meeting
- Smaller councils find it difficult to work out how to treat part time employees such as dog wardens
- Any update to the guide should include the recommendation that local councils adopt the green book
- Cllr Lillian Burns provided feedback from former committee chair Cllr David Francis on the statement around delegation of employment matters on page 29, including that it was factually incorrect, local councils have the freedom to delegate tasks to individual officers for which NALC could usefully provide a reference document and that the smallest councils had difficulties raising committees. Cllr Francis also noted that NALC's PR consultants had produced additional resources since the guide was originally produced

Corinne confirmed that the updated guide would reflect the future needs of local councils and that Worknest was currently looking at the model contract, including making sure that it wasn't too onerous for a smaller employer.

Resolved (1): That the update from Worknest be noted.

b. Civility and Respect Project

Linda Larter from Sevenoaks Town Council delivered a presentation on the Civility and Respect Project, including training, complaints, interventions and solutions and the Civility and Respect Pledge. Committee members were then invited to give feedback, which they did as follows:

- Some councillors who have been in the role for a while don't feel that training applies to them and don't always take it seriously
- Could there be a twin tack of getting individual councillors to sign the pledge as well as councils?
- Monitoring officers don't currently have any powers of enforcement and nothing is currently enshrined in law on how to remove councillors due to bullying unless their behaviour is against the law
- Training should be mandatory as it would raise professionalism in the sector, which in turn would encourage more people to stand as a councillor
- Making training mandatory could add to difficulties in filling council vacancies
- It would be good to have a log of the training committee members have undertaken
- Local councils need support for problems that originate outside the council

Linda informed the committee that the Civility and Respect Project was working with the Association of Democratic Service Officers and Lawyers in Local Government to get support and consistency on monitoring officers. Additionally, the project's legislative work stream was looking at mandatory training.

The head of policy and communications informed the committee that NALC had pushed alongside the Society of Local Council Clerks for stronger sanctions but was poles apart from other membership organisations and government.

Resolved (1): The committee to ask Policy Committee to consider NALC's policy on mandatory training for councillors and any associated legislative changes required.

7. Date and time of next meeting

21 February 2023, time and location to be confirmed.

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AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023

Appendix 2.2 – Smaller Councils Committee Action Log

Smaller Councils Committee

11 October 2022	Minutes of previous meeting and action log ACTION: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July are approved.	2	Y
11 October 2022	Governance task and finish group ACTION: That the committee is opposed to any proposal for the committee to be abolished and no longer part of the formal NALC governance and replaced by an online network representing councils with precepts under £25,000, and sought clarification on any rationale behind this recommendation.	3	Y
11 October 2022	Governance task and finish group ACTION: That the committee meets informally to identify the top five priorities arising from the analysis of the smaller councils survey.	3	N
11 October 2022	NALC analysis of council tax levels of local precepting authorities ACTION: That the analysis of council tax levels of local precepting authorities be noted and suggestions including the bandings used and data for areas where local government reorganisation is taking place be	4	Y

	considered for next year's report.		
11 October 2022	<p>NALC analysis of council tax levels of local precepting authorities</p> <p>ACTION: That the Smaller Councils Committee discusses how to communicate financial resilience to smaller councils at its next meeting.</p>	4	Y
11 October 2022	<p>Climate change</p> <p>ACTION: That an item on climate change is added to the agenda of the next Smaller Councils Committee meeting.</p>	5	Y
11 October 2022	<p>Worknest update</p> <p>ACTION: That the update from Worknest be noted.</p>	6.1	Y
11 October 2022	<p>Civility and respect project</p> <p>ACTION: The committee to ask Policy Committee to consider NALC's policy on mandatory training for councillors and any associated legislative changes required.</p>	6.2	Y

AGENDA ITEM 3 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023

Appendix 3.1 – Councillor training

At its October 2022 meeting, the Smaller Councils Committee resolved to ask Policy Committee to consider NALC's policy on mandatory training for councillors and any associated legislative changes required.

Policy Committee discussed this at its January 2023 meeting and resolved that NALC should strongly encourage training for clerks and councillors (especially new councillors) across the sector, that NALC officers engage with other committees and external stakeholders to promote training across 2023 and that a suitable motion or policy on training be submitted for consideration at the NALC AGM in 2023, if appropriate.

Questions

As part of our engagement with committees and other stakeholders, we would like Smaller Council Committee members to consider the following questions:

Should training for councillors be mandatory?

If yes, why (please think of some reasons/examples) how can this be achieved and what issues need to be addressed (eg enforcement, monitoring and sanctions)?

If no, how can training be more strongly expected/encouraged/supported; and what issues need to be addressed?

AGENDA ITEM 5 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023

Appendix 5.1 – Financial resilience for smaller councils

In its October 2022 meeting the Smaller Councils Committee resolved to discuss how to communicate financial resilience to smaller councils at its next meeting. This paper aims to help facilitate that discussion.

For context, some resources that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) provides to help local councils in the management of their finances are:

- The Practitioners Guide contains information and guidance on matters related to financial resilience such as management of reserves, as well as more broad sound financial management
- The Good Councillor's Guide to Finance and Transparency has been a very popular resource with over 30,000 downloads since it was launched.
- The Model Financial Regulations provide councils a template for sound financial practice
- The Local Council Award Scheme has a number of criteria linked to financial management – at the highest level requiring a three year budget where forward planning is linked to community engagement
- Member councils have access to financial advice via their county association

We also recently agreed a new partnership with the Internal Audit Forum (IAF) with the aim of promoting the awareness and quality of internal audit – an especially important issue for smaller councils who are exempt from annual external audit.

Questions:

What do we mean by financial resilience in the context of smaller councils?

Do the current resources help smaller councils to become and remain financially resilient?

If so, are smaller councils aware of those resources?

What can the committee do to further promote financial resilience amongst smaller councils.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023

Appendix 6.1 – Local Government Association Workforce Survey

Through the Improvement and Development Board (IDB) the Local Government Association (LGA) have offered to support the development of a national workforce/employment strategy for the sector through the delivery of a workforce survey. This survey would be conducted by the LGA's workforce team who have considerably experience in designing and delivering national surveys and who would also assist us in interpreting the data to best help inform the new strategy.

The key aims of the survey are:

- 1) To have a reliable picture of the total workforce in local councils
- 2) To gain an insight into what drives recruitment and retention in local councils

The slides with the LGA initial proposal are included with this paper.

We want to ensure we have a good uptake from smaller councils who will not have much time to fill out complex surveys so we would welcome the views from smaller councils committee to help make this survey as widely taken up and accurate as possible. It would also be helpful to get an insight into who would be best placed in a smaller council to answer questions on their staffing – not just the clerk but also any other members of staff including temporary, zero hour or seasonal workers.

Helping to inform a new workforce strategy for local councils - NALC

Nigel Carruthers
Programme Manager
Local Government Association

Dr Martin Reddington
Technical Manager
Kinetiq

What I am going to cover...

1. The project purpose and scope
 2. Workforce Strategy
 3. The project outputs
 4. LGA approach & design principals
 5. Introduce you to the survey design
 6. Reporting & sample reports
 7. Timescales
 8. Q&A
-

The project purpose and scope

- You are seeking to produce an England wide **Workforce Strategy and Plan** to support the improvement and development of your NALC members.
 - As a first step in being able to produce a comprehensive plan you want to better understand the workforce both in terms of its demographic make-up and any specific workforce needs.
 - To that end, you would like support from the LGA to undertake a workforce census / survey, provide the analysis, and produce an insights report so you have the key workforce data to inform your workforce strategy and plan.
 - The scope of the survey covers all employees working in the 9,000 Town and Parish councils in England: an estimated workforce of approximately 30,000 people?
 - Cost is c.£16k contribution from NALC c£9k
-

What is a workforce strategy?

“helps you achieve your business objectives by sizing up your existing talent and predicting your staffing needs, for the immediate future and for the long term”

Or put another way do we have the workforce
(in terms of capacity and capability)
to meet our goals now and in the future

Workforce Focus



WORKFORCE FOCUS

TAKING STOCK OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
WORKFORCE – SHARING HR IDEAS FOR
THE FUTURE



PRODUCTIVE – AFFORDABLE, EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, MOTIVATED, FLEXIBLE AND ABLE TO THRIVE IN A DEVELOPING DIGITAL WORLD.

JOINED-UP AND COLLABORATIVE – WORKING IN ADAPTABLE STRUCTURES AND TEAMS THAT ARE PROPERLY INTEGRATED ACROSS ALL THE DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING SERVICES ON A PARTNERSHIP BASIS.

INVOLVED IN CO-DESIGNING AND CO-CREATING USER-FOCUSED SERVICES – SO THAT THE IDEAS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE PEOPLE MOST INVOLVED IN SERVICES DAY TO DAY CAN BE FULLY UTILISED IN ENSURING THAT THEIR WORK IS FOCUSED ON WHAT USERS REALLY NEED WITHIN BUDGET CONSTRAINTS.

TRULY VALUED AND RESPECTED – SUPPORTED THROUGHOUT THE STAGES OF LIFE AND CAREER AND ABLE TO ENJOY GOOD QUALITY BENEFITS AS WELL AS FAIR PAY.

DIVERSE – REFLECTING THE COMMUNITIES IT SERVES AND MAKING USE OF ALL THE TALENT IN THOSE COMMUNITIES.

The Project Outputs

Aim of the project is to support NALC to produce a workforce strategy for local councils.

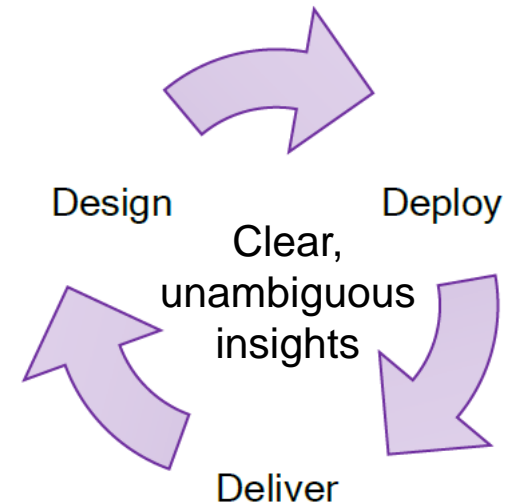
We will develop, deploy and deliver a survey which provides a headline report showing key insights to inform the workforce strategy.

The report format will be a series of key statements supported by infographics.

We will then provide support to NALC to help produce a workforce strategy.

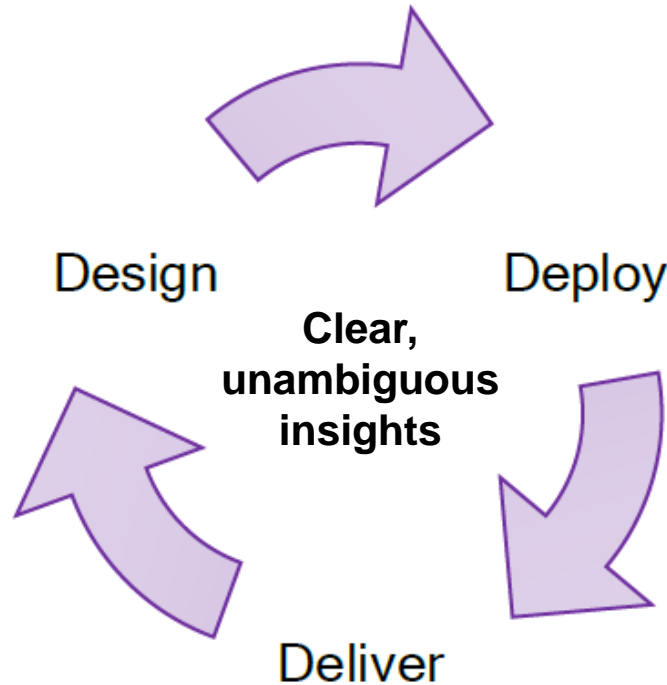
LGA simple and effective approach:

- **DESIGN** The survey design, development, and testing phase. This is key to ascertain your requirements, develop and test the survey tool, develop the communication strategy, and identify any barriers and deployment risks or challenges.
- **DEPLOY** The deployment phase is where we engage with participants to complete the survey. This is where communication, feedback, data capture and on-going engagement is paramount to boost completion rates.
- **DELIVER** The third phase is where we undertake the analytics and deliver your reporting requirements. This phase includes communicating the results back to the participants and help with any action planning. This phase will include support to develop your workforce strategy and workforce plan.



LGA design principles

- By the sector for the sector
- co-creating your survey with you
- Ensuring confidentiality and privacy
- Protecting employees anonymity
- Data security & continuity planning



- 100% on-line web enabled survey tool (accessed from pc, tablet or phone)
- Respondent focused (time to complete, engagement and completion rates)
- Narrative analysis
- Key Driver analysis
- Infographic based report formats

NALC Employee Survey Question Type

- ▶ Workforce Composition – information about job role, age, length of service, and other protected characteristics.
- ▶ Perception of the working environment – using ‘social exchange theory’ to illuminate the experience of employees at work.
- ▶ Revealing the features of the work environment that predict employee contribution – the extent to which employees are engaged with their work and perform with confidence, and their desire to stay within their organisations.



SUSTAIN

(75+)

Good score / outcome to be celebrated.



MONITOR

(51 - 74)

Moderate score / outcome. Capable of improvement.



IMPROVE

(50 or less)

Relatively poor score / outcome. A clear signal to take steps to improve.

NALC Employee Survey Question Type

You

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief Sexual orientation
- Disability
- wellbeing
- Parent or carer?

Your Job

- Job role
- Type council you work for
- Length of service
- Pay grade / £
- Contractual status
- Full time/Part time
- Hours of work
- Travel to work (time)

Your Skills & Training

- Learning and development you need
- Your professional status
- Job Knowledge/skills needs assessment
- CPD

Your workplace experience

- Your wellbeing support
 - Your level of support (management/organisational)
 - Level of resources you need to do a good job
 - Your engagement needs
 - Your challenges
 - What's best thing about working for Town/parish council
-

LGA Survey Methodology for NALC

- Survey should take no longer than 15 mins to complete
 - Engagement rate 35% (range 20% - 55%) – % of respondents who start survey
 - Completion rate 80% (range 60-90%) - % of respondents (who engage) complete the survey
 - Individual emails or QR Code on a letter to respondents
 - Respondents can use Tablet, PC, phone to access survey
 - Key Comms to go out in bulletins, newsletters, mailshots etc
 - Survey landing page messaging & logos
 - NALC messaging/video, privacy statement, confidentiality and anonymity
-

Reporting & Strategy development

- Report is concise, uses infographics and shows key insights
 - Report to be user friendly and easy access for key audiences
 - Post survey briefings to members
 - Support to develop the workforce strategy using key insights showing how this will help local councils deliver their purpose and key goals now and in the future
 - Now I'd like to share some report formats...
-



Total Survey Responses



Women dominate the workforce-
75% reported as female



Women under-represented in senior
management-only 0.8% females earn
80k+, compared with 2.8% males



Highly qualified workforce
37% of workforce have a Masters
degree or PhD



High earners are more likely to
hold professional qualifications
than low earners



An ageing workforce-63% are aged
45 and above



<5% of the workforce of non-
white ethnicity



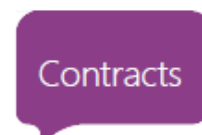
Health and wellbeing-17% of
respondents had reduced ability to
carry out day-to-day activities

22+Hrs

Approx 70% of total respondents
reported working 22+hrs per week

2/3

Of the workforce undertook
CPD/training in the last 12 months



Approx 70% of total respondents
reported being in permanent paid
jobs



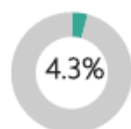
30% of the workforce earn less than
£22.5k per year, while more than 20%
earn over £40k per year



Of the workforce work in Parish councils



Only 1% of people take up their first role through an apprenticeship



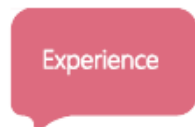
Of the workforce joined in the last 12 months

1/5

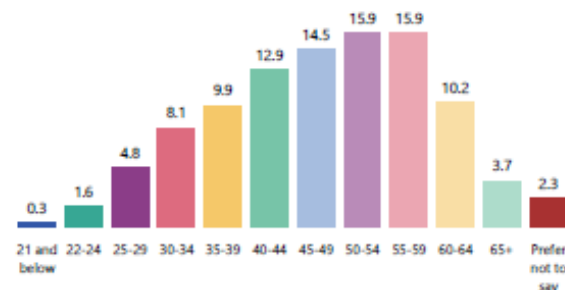
Of the workforce unaware of PKSB or the Digital Skills Standard



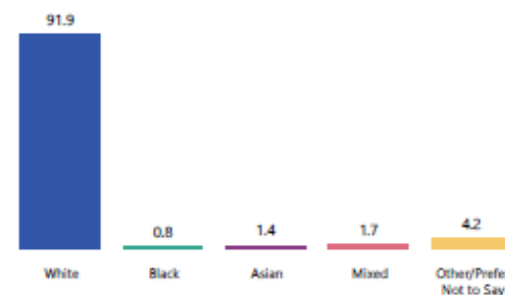
Median Salary of £25k - £35k per year across the workforce



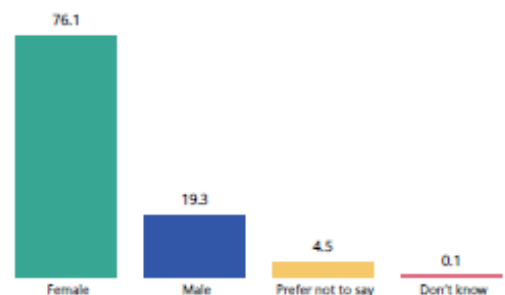
Highly experienced workforce - 40% with over 20 years across workforce



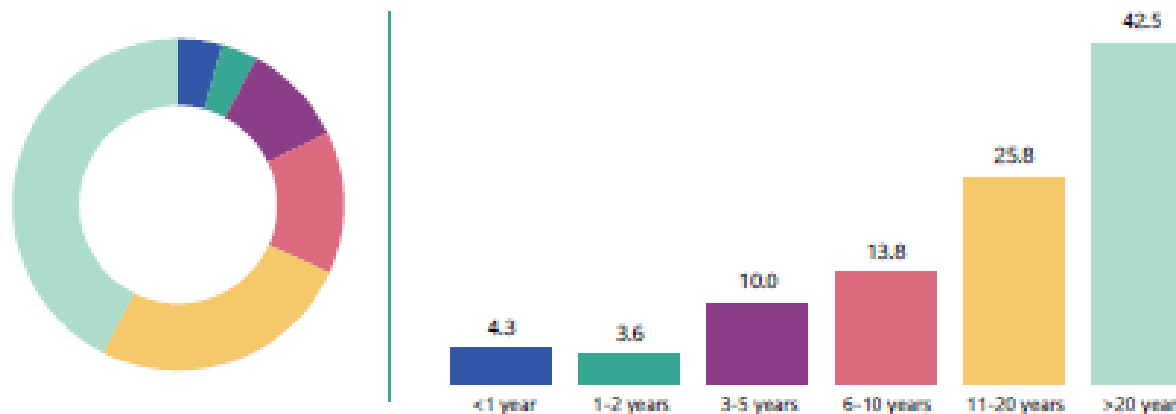
Percentage (%) of Respondents by Age



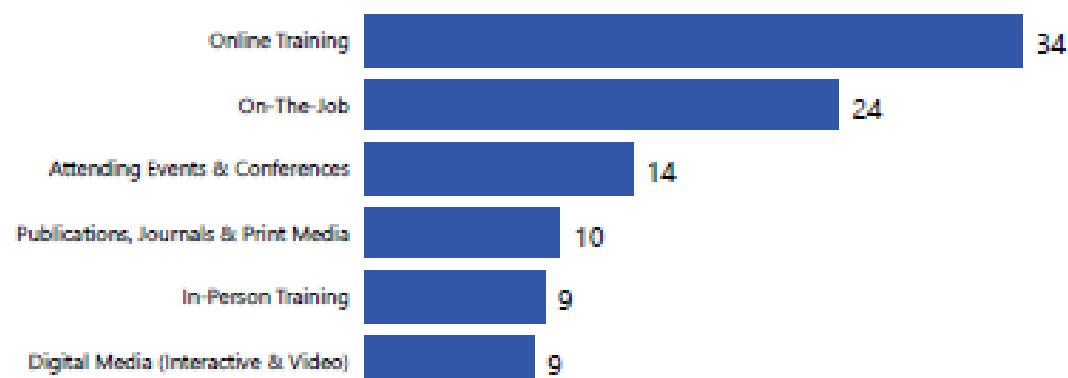
Percentage (%) of Respondents by Ethnicity



Percentage (%) of Respondents by Gender



Percentage (%) of Respondents by Duration in Role



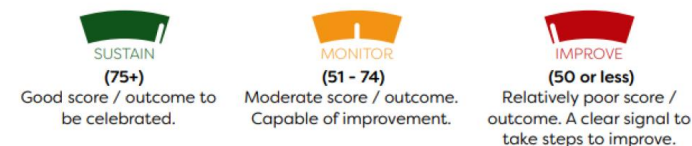
What is your main source of CPD/training? (% of responses)



The Employment Deal



Individual Contributions



Timescales

NALC Project Plan Developing a workforce strategy					
Stage	Month				
Stage 1 – Design	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Initial engagement and planning					
Conducting preliminary meetings with NALC Team					
Survey Design and Development. Setting up pilot survey and working with NALC to achieve final sign-off.					
Design of Comms plan, report template and agree timescales, contingency and project risks.					
Stage 2 – Deploy					
Launch online survey – working with NALC to optimise channels					
Administer online Survey throughout the “deployment period”					
Provide feedback on take up and completion rates					
Stage 3 - Deliver					
Analysis and production of ‘First Pass’ report to discuss with NALC					
Presentation of first draft to NALC Management Team					
Production of full report (fully integrated quantitative and qualitative data) and associated presentations					
Support to develop the NALC Workforce Strategy and Plan					

Any questions?

AGENDA ITEM 7 – SMALLER COUNCILS COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023

Appendix 7.1 – Celebrating National Events 2023

On 31 January the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) launched a [dedicated webpage](#) on the [King's Coronation](#).

The Coronation of His Majesty The King will be taking place on 6 May 2023, and 8 May 2023 has been declared a bank holiday. Local (parish and town) councils have historically been at the heart of community celebrations.

The webpage contains information and advice for local councils, including on organising activities, publicity in the pre election period and what other councils are planning. It also has links to the the official news website for the Royal Family, information on Coronation weekend plans and a range of resources from the Coronation Big Lunch to help organise celebrations and street parties.

NALC will keep the webpage up-to-date with the latest information, such as the Coronation weekend plans, the Big Lunch, and what local councils are planning.

NALC would welcome any feedback on the webpage and would encourage committee members to share what their council will be doing to mark the Coronation.