

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Larger Councils Committee on 18 May 2023 at 10.00 taking place by Zoom.

Present (online):

Councillors Phil Barnett, Mike Drew (NALC vice-chair, member services), and Isabella Roberts, and directly elected clerks, Jane Biscombe (for part), Carl Hearn and Shar Roselman.

Staff present: Chris Borg (policy manager), Charlotte Eisenhart (head of member services, for part) and Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications).

Other guests in attendance: Steve Parkinson, from The Parkinson Partnership (for part).

1. Apologies

Resolved: (1) That the NALC vice chair, member services chair the session in the absence of the committee chair and vice chair and that the meeting proceed as quorate.

Resolved: (2) That apologies be noted from Cllr Pat Ansell, Cllr Paul Harvey (committee chair), Mark Smith and Cllr Peter Astell (committee vice chair).

2. Minutes of previous meeting – 28 February 2023

Resolved: That the minutes from the 28 February 2023 committee session be noted.

3. Local council elections 2023 - updates

3.1 To receive general updates from committee members on outcomes and experiences for their larger councils from the local council elections on 4 May 2023 – particularly regarding levels of independent candidates, cross-party coalitions, numbers of contested elections and related issues.

The NALC vice chair, member services asked the committee members present to provide any updates from their areas from the local council elections taking place on 4 May 2023, after the policy manager provided some context.

Anecdotally there appeared to have been a large increase in the number of councillors standing down, and a decrease in the number of candidates standing for election on 4 May 2023. One committee member had been elected to all three tiers in his area. Some candidates stood on joint tickets. Just three opposition candidates stood for election in Yate.

Resolved: That the round robin updates be noted.

3.2 To receive an update on handling of the committee vacancy created by Cllr Matthew Hulbert who stood down as a local councillor and as a committee member on 4 May 2023.

The policy manager provided a short update that it was not the corporate intention of NALC to be filling vacancies created on this committee by Cllr Hulbert having stood down and by Cllr Parry having lost his seat. The reason for this was that the next round of NALC committee (direct and National Assembly) elections take place later in 2023 for the 2024-25 election cycle. This was the received position across all NALC committees.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

4. Planning for in person committee meeting on 25 July 2023

4.1 To plan the structure of the agenda for the in-person committee meeting on 25 July 2023 at the CCLA London offices (this will not be streamed on Zoom, is likely to be between 11.00 and 15.00 and will need optimal attendance from LCC members, please).

The policy manager confirmed that the CCLA offices in London had been pre-booked to host the next meeting of the committee on 25 July 2023 which would be in person only and not hosted hybrid on Zoom given low turnout and technicalities at the previous committee hybrid session in May 2022. It was agreed that optimal in person turnout would be needed to make the session worthwhile. It was agreed that it should take a workshop format and be as engaging as possible, recognising that some committee members would find physical attendance challenging.

Resolved: That NALC officers be asked to contact the committee to confirm attendance numbers for the in person larger councils' workshop on 25 July 2023 and that workshop agenda items include engagement with larger and Super

Councils, NALC governance on larger councils, the government's neighbourhood governance review and member engagement with the committee.

5. Member services update

5.1 To discuss service needs of larger councils on procurement matters with Steve Parkinson, of the Parkinson Partnership LLP.

The head of member services introduced Steve Parkinson of The Parkinson Partnership to speak and hear needs from committee members regarding the procurement needs of larger councils. On larger councils often a specialist officer deals with procurement issues. The clerk cannot do everything. Performance, pre-qualification surveys, performance measures and value engineering were all considered key. Training is critical, particularly on tendering and specifications. Training courses and content needed to be regularly reviewed.

Resolved: That Steve Parkinson be thanked for his contribution and that the feedback from the committee be used to inform the development of any future NALC procurement materials.

5.2 To receive a verbal update from the head of member services on the latest outcomes from the civility and respect project.

The head of member services noted that there was no current update on the Civility and Respect project due to personnel changes – updates would be provided in due course. On workforce issues the head of member services confirmed that points made by committee members had also been taken on board.

There was then a short coffee break between 11:12 and 11:20 a.m.

6. Government Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan

6.1 To discuss and receive feedback from committee members on the government's Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan and its implications for larger councils (in particular regarding fixed penalty notices and fines).

The policy manager and head of policy and communications provided a short update on the government's recently published Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan . This document needed to be on the radar of all local councils as it would likely mean changes to the way in which fixed penalty notices and fines for litter were issued (legal updates would be provided in due course).

A general discussion ensued in which the excellent URBIE vans used by Yate Town Council to engage its young people were highlighted. In other areas research had confirmed that young people guilty of anti-social behaviour often had no structure to their day and that graffiti prevention and cleaning up playgrounds was usually an issue.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted and that committee members wanting to send NALC their views on the government's Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan send their thoughts and experiences in to policycomms@nalc.gov.uk.

7. Policy consultations update

7.1 To gather verbal feedback from the committee with regard to the government's live consultation on the Infrastructure Levy.

The policy manager briefly confirmed that NALC would be responding to the government's consultation on the Infrastructure Levy in coming weeks. Committee members and their councils were welcome to send their views to the policy manager by 19 May.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

8. Dependants' Carers' Allowance

8.1 Following the committee stage amendment during the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill in the Lords in April 2023, we will discuss and secure feedback from committee members on estimated overall councillor numbers of their larger councils and likely costs of providing the dependants' carers' allowance to such councillors, to strengthen the lobbying case for this campaign.

The policy manager and the head of policy and communications provided a short verbal update on the discussion at the recent Super Councils Network session on the Dependant Carers' Allowance. It was noted that in Wales (as with remote meetings) the allowance could legally be disbursed by community and town councils without being ultra vires. It was also noted that in Wales the cost of the allowance to the public purse was not great. This would likely be pushed again as an amendment at Lords report stage for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

9. Neighbourhood governance review

9.1 To sketch out what the committee wants to see coming out of the government's delayed neighbourhood governance review cited in the Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper (February, 2022).

The policy manager and head of policy and communications provided a brief update that a recent ministerial response in the Lords had confirmed that the government would be issuing its long-vaunted neighbourhood governance review within a year. There was a short discussion during which the parish role and powers, mayors and funding were raised.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

10. Sharing good practice

10.1 Update on NALC good practice visit to Newport Pagnell Town Council on 27/28 June 2023.

The policy manager and Shar Roselman provided headline updates on the study visit taking place to Newport Pagnell Town Council 2023. Organisation of the visit had largely proceeded smoothly thanks to Shar Roselman and her brilliant team. However there was no doubt that selling the event had been very difficult. Flexibility would need to be built into the booking tariffs for future study visits.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted and that a request be made to NALC to organise a study visit to Yate Town Council in summer 2024 on the subject of engaging young people, with three separate booking tariffs.

10.2 Star Council Awards 2023 – request to promote awards to all larger councils in your areas and make at least one nomination by 28 July 2023.

The policy manager promoted the NALC Star Council Awards 2023 which had launched on 27 April. Committee members were asked to make one nomination each if they could. It was confirmed that the key category committee members could help nominate to was Young Councillor of the Year.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted and that committee members be asked to promote and make nominations to the Star Council Awards 2023 in their areas.

11. Martyn's Law (formerly known as the Protect Duty)

11.1 To discuss the potential implications of Martyn's Law (formerly known as the Protect Duty) for larger councils responsible for organising events and public gatherings in open spaces, and the associated risk assessment needs involved in the prevention of terrorist attacks.

The policy manager provided a short verbal update that following a recent conference attended by the head of policy and communications the government was making it compulsory for local councils and other public bodies to comply with certain aspects of Martyn's Law when organising large public events to minimise the threat of terror attacks and to protect attendees. Further legal updates would be provided in due course.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

12. NALC National Networks

12.1 To receive an update on the NALC National Networks for Super Councils, Coastal Communities and Climate Emergency

The policy manager briefly confirmed that there had been online sessions of the NALC Climate Emergency and Super Council Networks. A verbal summary of what the purpose of these networks and their quarterly Zoom sessions were, was provided, and committee members were asked to promote them to their larger councils.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

13. Date and time of next workshop meeting

Tuesday 25 July 2023 at 11.00, CCLA offices, 1 Angel Ln, London, EC4R 3AB (in person only, no Zoom stream).

Councillor Paul Harvey chair
© NALC 2023