

National Council Member role profile

Introduction

At NALC we know that members of National Council are committed to making sure that the voice of town and parish councils is heard at all levels of government, and that local councils have the support in place to deliver the very best for their communities. So we are committed to both supporting National Council to deliver its objectives, and to supporting individual members to contribute to Council, to make the most of their skills in the role, and to enjoy the role.

This document was written with input from National Council members with the aims of:

- Providing clarity on the role of National Council member
- Having a basis on which NALC can design a support offer to National Council members
- Encouraging more Local Councillors from a whole range of backgrounds to become members of National Council

The Council of the National Association of Local Councils oversees the work of NALC and its committees. The Council is made up of elected representatives from each of the County Associations. As the forum for debate and decision making for the national membership body for town, parish and community councils, it is important that members of the Council understand the role and feel able and supported to contribute fully to it.

If you would like to know more about becoming a member of National Council you can contact your County Association or Claire Fitzgerald at NALC

The Role

Councillors will be familiar with the key elements of the National Council Member role, as these in many ways reflect the role of local Councillor. However it is useful to remember that, while there are many similarities, NALC is not a local council. NALC is the national membership body for local councils and there will be times when National Council members may need to discuss issues or take actions that are unique to the role.

Some of the key elements of the role are:

Representation

- Members represent their county associations and member councils at National Council
- Members represent and support NALC and decisions of National Council to their County Associations and member councils
- Council members are also national ambassadors for the sector. They can be asked to contribute to media releases, meetings with stakeholders including government departments or Ministers. Even when not officially acting on a national stage, as members of national council they set the example to others in terms of standards of behaviour and work ethic wherever they are.

Leadership

- National Council members make decisions regarding the work of NALC. This is taken with a strategic view and with the aim of providing oversight and direction. They do not micromanage the work of the organisation or staff.
- Through this they ensure that NALC continues to provide the best possible offer to members
- Through the work of National Council, members also provide leadership to the whole sector. They balance representing their local members views with making decisions in the national interest of all local councils
- Members are aware that their decisions can directly impact on member councils and the reputation of the sector as a whole. And so they actively engage in debate and vote at meetings of National Council

Information

- Members receive a wide range of information on topics relevant to the work of the council. They also provide information to National Council from their own networks, knowledge and experiences
- They use this information to actively make connections between the work programmes of County Associations and NALC
- Members also work with and share information across a wide range of partners, both national and local

Responsibility

- National Council members take responsibility for decisions at National Council

- They support decisions of National Council and the work of NALC
- Members also encourage new members of National Council to come forward

Skills

NALC recognises the huge value to National Council of having a broad range of expertise, points of view and personal experiences. There is no formal range of skills or expertise required for the role, everyone is equal no matter their background or length of service. The list below is a summary of some of the key attributes that council members might bring to the role.

Judgement

This document is an attempt to summarise the key elements of the role and attributes of a council member, but the role will vary and will always have ambiguities. Member's experiences as a local councillor will have equipped them well to exercise their own judgement and this is just as important at National Council. Members will need to balance a range of (possibly competing) views from member councils, their county association, NALC officers and their own personal views. Ultimately the any decision is theirs to make and they are responsible for using their own better judgement for how to act, seeking support where they need it.

Values

National Council plays a vital role in shaping the values and vision of NALC, and members will uphold these values. NALC's vision statement can be found in the Strategic Plan. If you would like a copy of this it can be downloaded from NALC's website. The 2014/5 strategy states:

Our vision for the sector is to improve the quality of life for local communities through having vibrant, dynamic and effective local councils. NALC will be a modern, in-touch organisation that delivers high quality services and works in partnership with County Associations and member councils to support and promote local councils, their staff and their councillors. We will have healthy and strong County Associations working individually and sometimes together, supporting and being supported by NALC. There will be local councils wherever communities want them and they will be representative, in-touch with their electors; and effective, working to quality council status.

Communication

In their local role, council members already need to be good communicators. On National Council all members contribute to discussions and support others to contribute. Not only can they speak confidently and concisely at meetings, but they also are willing to contribute to written documents and reports. Council members and NALC officers support each other to develop these skills, and National Council is a supportive environment in which these skills can be practised and developed.

Approach

Council members balance a range of approaches such as being challenging but constructive; honest but supportive; dedicated and loyal but open and willing to change. They also keep up to date – through training & development, following national news and keep abreast of changes in the sector

Personality



All members bring lots of this! It is vital to the vibrancy of National Council.

The 7 principles of public life

Whilst membership of National Council is not a public office, all members are Councillors in their own Local Council. This means that as elected representatives they have a duty to uphold high standards of behaviour in public life. NALC National Council members also uphold these principles when acting in their NALC role. They act and support others to act in accordance with the 7 Nolan principles of public life:

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs

Support

NALC will support council members to make the most of the role and especially to help new councils members quickly feel confident in the role by:

Information

Information for meetings of National Council will be provided in good time. It will include to help new members find their feet such as maps to locations and named contact in case would like to follow up with anything.

You will need to give information about yourself if you stand for Committees or as Office Holders Elections – this may include name/photo/profile/why standing etc. You will also be invited to complete a skills audit so that NALC can make best use of your talents!

Induction

An induction pack will be provided for new members.

Support and development

NALC will hold a 'skills audit' of council members, and new council members as they start. This will help us know what skills and interests council members have, and help us consider how best to use these

NALC will offer refreshers courses, training and/or develop in specific skills where council members indicate they would welcome this. This could any range of topics from public speaking, working with press to confidence building. We will always encourage and welcome requests for training or support activities. We want to encourage council members to always be on the lookout for opportunities to grow their skills and will do all we can to support that.

Council Members and NALC officers will always encourage and support debate and aim to find ways to allow all to contribute.

Supporting each other

There is a buddy/mentor system for new councillors and further details are available from Claire Fitzgerald at NALC.

Council members are encouraged to support each other at and in-between meetings.