

5 JANUARY 2018

OPEN LETTER TO COUNCILLORS FROM CHAIRMAN OF NALC

Dear Councillor

I wish you a very happy new year and a healthy, prosperous and successful 2018!

I want to flag up with you three areas where I would like us to focus over the coming 12 months to ensure the sector is even stronger at the end of this year.

I was really pleased before Christmas that the Secretary of State Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP announced that there was [no intention to apply referenda principles \(or “capping”\) to the sector for the next three years](#). This is great news and one of the priorities I set for myself as Chairman of NALC.

However if we are to see this realised it is imperative that we engage with our residents on precept increases, are as transparent as possible and look to use a range of alternative funding (from crowdfunding to judicious use of reserves) to support the provision of the new services our communities want. Your county and national association will be providing support and tools to enable you to do this and I would particularly encourage you, as Councillors, to read the [Good Councillor’s Guide to Finance and Transparency](#).

A second theme for this year is to ensure that we are as well run as possible: complying with new requirements such as the transparency code and data protection regulation; investing in training and development for staff and councillors; and encouraging more people from our communities to get involved. More support and advice on these are available from NALC and your county associations.

An easy way to demonstrate this is to join the 600 other councils who have already signed up for the [local council award scheme](#), an easy checklist to demonstrate sound corporate governance.

I also want to work closely with colleagues in the SLCC to promote good relationships within the sector between Clerks and Councillors and between Councillors and Councils. A good starting place for Councillors to deliver this is the guide to [Being a Good Employer](#) which sets out six steps to building successful, professional relationships.

Thirdly I think it is incredibly important that we continue to build positive relationships with principal council colleagues, the new metro mayors and local MPs.

County, district and unitary colleagues are facing difficult financial times and we can work with them to help our communities cope with these challenges and retain vital discretionary services.

NALC will work closely with the Local Government Association to foster better relationships and provide support with devolved services and to impress on colleagues in principal councils the importance of early and genuine engagement with our sector on these issues.

We must also continue to make the case to our local MPs about the brilliant work you and the sector do for your residents. I was encouraged that nationally we are making good progress with recognition from both the Secretary of State and his Shadow on the growing importance of the sector: with Sajid Javid commenting that we had a central role post-Brexit in helping communities take back control; and Andrew Gwynne MP calling for more urban councils to be created where communities want them and that barriers stopping this should be removed.

There will be a good opportunity to further build relationships with MPs as part of our latest Lobby Day on 20 March 2018.

Can I also leave with a little bit of new year reading - our new [prospectus](#) which sets out what we will be lobbying government on your behalf over the coming months - flexible and diverse funding, more devolution and engagement, empowered communities and building capacity and support for Councillors. If you are unhappy with any of this or would like to influence its further development please get involved in the work of your county and national association.

2018 provides a great opportunity for us to support our communities so as the Secretary of State said at our conference, "think big and innovate."

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Baxter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Cllr Sue Baxter
Chairman of NALC
sue.baxter@nalc.gov.uk

PS. Please put 31 October 2018 in your diary the date for this year's [annual conference](#) (highlights last year included Sajid Javid and Angela Rippon) which I want to be even better this year.

PPS. We need to encourage as many Councils as possible to join their county and national association and some of the benefits of membership are set out [here](#).

© NALC 2018