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NALC DEMANDS MORE GRASSROOTS COUNCILS AS PART OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

New local councils must be established in several county areas as result of local government reorganisation says the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Speaking at a parliamentary reception held as part of the organisation's annual Lobby Day, chairman of NALC Cllr Sue Baxter said: "It's our councils who do the little things to make the big things happen, holding our communities together, making our towns and villages places that people want to live and work.

"Not my words, but those of the secretary of state Sajid Javid MP, at our Annual Conference in October last year.

"Real praise indeed, but let's not forget they're not everywhere. Not able to be that vital glue that brings communities together, building social cohesion.

"Local government reorganisation in Dorset and now potentially in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire provide a huge opportunity to address that democratic deficit.

"To build on previous rounds of reorganisation and campaigns by communities themselves in our cities like Birmingham and London.

"To create more grassroot councils to help people help themselves."

Currently the unparished areas of Dorset, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire include the towns of Weymouth, High Wycombe, Corby, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough.

The reception was hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Local Democracy (APPG) as part of NALC's annual Lobby Day taking place in Portcullis House, Westminster on 20 March 2018, which saw over 100 MPs engaging with the sector, making it even bigger than previous years.

Lobby Day gives local councils and county associations the opportunity to build relationships with their MPs, raise their profile and discuss issues affecting them on national and local level.

The key issues raised this year were the Data Protection Bill and what impact the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will have on communities with an estimated financial burden of over £3.5m per year, and a call for the creation of more local councils throughout the country, a key objective in NALC's A prospectus for ultra-localism.

House of Commons deputy speaker, Eleanor Laing MP opened the day, with several other key Parliamentarians in attendance including local government minister Rishi Sunak MP, shadow communities secretary Andrew Gwynne MP, shadow housing minister Melanie Onn MP, co-chair of APPG Scott Mann MP and chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA) Lord Gary Porter.

The day also featured various speakers including from Parliamentary Outreach, Company of Community Organisers and Locality.

Cllr Sue Baxter also hailed the efforts put into this year's Lobby Day and said "It was fantastic to see so many MPs get involved in Lobby Day once again. Each year, the numbers of MPs and councillors getting involved has grown and long may it continue."

Co-chair of APPG Scott Mann MP said: "I have the immense pleasure and privilege of co-chairing our Group, which is made up of Members of the House of Commons and the Lords, who champion the first tier of local government in Parliament.

"Our Group and our growing number of supporters here in Westminster recognise the vital role of community councils who are the first tier of local government and at the heart of so many communities across England.

"One of the things our Group is keen to do is help recognise and celebrate how this brilliant, yet often overlooked part of local government, is making a real difference to local people.

"It's our pleasure for the third year running to again host a parliamentary reception and shine a spotlight on NALC's Star Councils, an initiative I continue to wholeheartedly welcome and support as it recognises the work of councils, councillors, clerks and county associations of local councils. And which clearly demonstrates how this important sector is changing and doing more."