

26 JULY 2022

## **PR 6-22 | RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEW INTO COMMUNITY INITIATIVES**

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is the nationally recognised organisation representing and campaigning for the interests of the 10,000 parish and town councils and many parish meetings in England. Local councils are the backbone of our democracy and closest to local people, providing our villages, towns, small cities and urban neighbourhoods with a democratic voice and structure, now contributing in excess of £2 billion of community investment to support and improve local communities and deliver neighbourhood level services. There are 100,000 local councillors from all walks of life who are committed to public service. They also provide a pool of talent that provides benefits well beyond their own communities.

NALC would like to draw the attention of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to the following:

- Whilst NALC in principle welcomed the publication by the government of the report of the Rapid evidence review of community initiatives we were very surprised and disappointed that it failed to cite local (town and parish councils) anywhere at all.
- The fact that local councils are entirely absent from the report was picked up by a colleague from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) who we believe concurs with our own view that this was a lost opportunity and large oversight on the part of the government.
- The report analysed the concept of social capital but failed to recognise the vital contribution that local councils make to this and how they provide a route to the delivery of community initiatives. Also, in discussing funding, it fails to recognise that local councils, the first tier of local government, have access to public money via their precepts.
- We consider the report compiled to have been a very quick review of various academic studies and conceptualisations of 'community initiative'. However given that there are 10,000 local councils across England ranging from those with budgets of under £25,000 per annum all the way up to Super Councils the size of small principal authorities – all of which deliver projects and initiatives for their communities – it is astonishing that the commissioning departments and report authors did not pick this up.
- We believe that local councils could have been cited much more in report sections 4.1 on 'funding models' and 4.2 on 'types of governance,

management and ownership models' as local councils deliver a huge variety of community projects, often in disadvantaged areas.

- Nowhere in the report is there a reference to environmental capital, which is such an essential component of social wellbeing. The importance for the mental and physical health of communities of having access to open/common land and nature came to the fore during lockdowns. Yet it receives only the most passing mention in this review. (There is a fleeting reference to bringing people together in a green space or in a building). The review also fails to connect the fact that if there are insufficient open/green spaces in urban areas, (many parks are currently being built on), then air quality will continue to deteriorate. It is essential that environmental capital is recognised. It should be a headline item.

Should you require any further information on this response, please do not hesitate to contact Chris Borg, policy manager, on 07714 771049 or via email at [chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk](mailto:chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk).

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