

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023 | DRAFT MINUTES

Present:

Chair; Cllr Keith Stevens, East Sussex Association of Local Councils
Vice chair (finance); Cllr Peter Davey, Essex Association of Local Councils
Vice chair (member services); Cllr Mike Drew, Avon Association of Local Councils,

- Avon Association of Local Councils; Cllr Mike Drew, Barnaby Harding
- Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils; Cllr Elizabeth Luder, Cllr Alastair Grant
- Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils; Cllr Sue Smith, Mel Woof
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils; Cllr Malcolm Watson, Cllr Henry Clark, Penny Bryant
- Cheshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Charles Fifield, Cllr Luke Trevaskis
- Cleveland Local Councils Association; Cllr Clare Gamble
- Cornwall Association of Local Councils; Cllr Stuart Roden, Cllr Isabelle Risner, Sarah Mason
- County Durham Association of Local Councils; Cllr Allan Blakemore
- Derbyshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr John Plant
- Devon Association of Local Councils; Cllr Ian Cowling
- Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils; Cllr Janet Wallace
- East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association; Cllr Keith Portress, Cllr Brian Brooks
- East Sussex; Cllr Keith Stevens,
- Essex Association of Local Councils; Cllr Mike Eldred, Cllr Peter Davey, Charlene Slade
- Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils; Cllr Richard Page, Cllr Alan Porter
- Hampshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Loraine Rappe
- Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils; Cllr Michael Harrison, Cllr Bill Pryce, Carina Helmn
- Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils; Cllr Bob Blezzard, Cllr Anne Bamford, Cllr Steve Cooper
- Kent Association of Local Councils; Cllr Neville Hudson, Cllr Sarah Barker, Charmaine Keatley
- Lancashire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Alan Neal

- Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils; Cllr Anthony Hiron, Cllr Geoffrey Hulland, Cllr Ron Simpson
- Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils; Katrina Evans
- Norfolk Association of Local Councils; Cllr Madeleine Ashcroft, Sarah Bristow
- Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils; Cllr Mike Scott, Cllr Lynn Lavender, Danny Moody
- Northumberland Association of Local Councils; Cllr David Woodard, Graeme Popay
- Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Mick Baker, Kaffy Rice-Oxley
- Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan
- Shropshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Ray Wickson, Cllr Sylvia Pledger
- Somerset Association of Local Councils; Cllr Ewan Jones, Cllr Loretta Whetlor, Cllr Jenny Lawrence
- Staffordshire Association of Local Councils; Robert Pettigrew
- Suffolk Association of Local Councils; Cllr Mark Valladares, Cllr Andrew Lewis, Sally Longmate
- Surrey Association of Local Councils; Cllr Mike George
- Warwickshire Association of Local Councils; Ja'Neen Day
- West Sussex Association of Local Councils; Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock, Trevor Leggo
- Wiltshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr John Scragg
- Worcestershire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Derek Killingworth
- North Yorkshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Heather Phillips
- South Yorkshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Duncan Wright, Cllr Francis Jackson, Cllr Julia Staniforth
- West Yorkshire Association of Local Councils; Cllr Peter Allison, Cllr David Mullen, Cllr Michael Czwarno

Observers:

Cornwall Association of Local Councils; Cllr Graham Ford
County Durham Association of Local Councils; Audrey Christie
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils; Lucy Dalby
Somerset Association of Local Councils; Justin Robinson
Suffolk Association of Local Councils; Cllr Julie Bell

NALC staff:

Jonathan Owen, chief executive
Steve Walker, head of finance and
administration

Justin Griggs, head of policy and
communications

Jane Moore, senior solicitor and legal
manager

Claire FitzGerald, administration manager

Olivia Kane, receptionist/administrator
Greg Henry, finance and admin officer
Beverley Brown, finance and admin officer

Farhana Miah, executive officer

Rajiv Dudakia, digital communications
manager

Silvia Nicole, finance and administration
officer

1. Election of chair of AGM

Resolved: That Cllr Keith Stevens be elected chair of AGM.

2. Chairs welcome

The chair welcomed all representatives to the meeting.

3. Apologies received:

Apologies were received from Cllr David Francis and Cllr Sue Baxter.

4. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022 – 25 October 2022

The chair presented the minutes of the AGM held on 25 October 2022, and sought approval from the AGM. It was noted that there had been a minor error with the attendee list. Trevor Leggo had been listed under the observers list whereas he was a voting delegate and Cllr Douglas Denham-Pinnock was not included as a voting delegate. It was agreed that these errors would be corrected.

The chief executive provided an update on the workforce motion, stating that since the motion had been approved, NALC had undertaken several actions to advance this work:

- A working group was established to examine the work.
- An HR service was set up in collaboration with Worknest.
- NALC issued a Good Councillors Guide (Employment), offering advice to councils and clerks.
- A review of the HR resources was conducted to ensure they were up to date.
- The National Job Vacancy Service was initiated to source job details from a wider audience.

- Close cooperation was established with the Local Government Association (LGA) to access resources related to their workforce link.
- Outstanding work included a benchmark survey, conducted with the assistance of LGA, which would be progressed in the upcoming months to measure progress since the motion was approved.

Sarah Mason sought clarification on the model contract of employment. The chief executive explained that there had been several consultations and that the final contracts had been completed. These contracts would undergo internal approval by NALC governance and were expected to be released by December.

Resolved: That the minutes held on 25 October 2022 be approved with an amendment to the attendee list to include Trevor Leggo and Cllr Douglas Denham-St Pinnock as voting representatives.

5. Annual report and annual accounts:

a. Annual Report

The chair presented the Annual Report to the AGM and gave special thanks to councillors and county associations for working so hard in this challenging year.

The chair provided an update on the NALC's work over the past year and highlighted key priorities and achievements:

- Contributed to discussions around the new office for Local Government.
- Opened up the community ownership fund to applications from local councils.
- Received a positive reception at Party Political Conferences.
- Worked closely with SLCC and County Associations to promote civility and respect. 1300 had signed the pledge.
- Engaged with LGA to develop closer working across the tiers. Bridport TC was showcased at a conference. Peer challenges took place in Morecombe and Cirencester.
- Maintained a strong voice in parliament, supported by the President and Vice-presidents. Baroness Scott generated debate on key sector issues, including remote meetings, access to national funding, standards, and carers' allowances.

Next year:

- NALC will influence Party Political manifestos to place localism at their core.

- NALC will continue working with SLCC on civility and respect to develop an intervention process for councils at risk of failure and to promote employment in the sector.
- Will collaborate with LGA to deliver up to five peer challenges, promoting close working across the tiers.
- NALC will publicize our White Ribbon accreditation, deliver an action plan, and actively encourage others to participate.

Cllr Drew provided an update on the work member services have been doing over the past year, he mentioned key highlights:

- New HR service from WorkNest dealt with 328 queries.
- The new Good Councillors Guide to employment had been downloaded 1,300 times.
- 130 jobs advertised.
- 270 written legal advice.
- 603,000 web page views, including 8800 downloads of practitioner's guide and 4200 downloads of make a change elections campaigns material.
- New web pages on planning and housing complementing resources on climate change and health and wellbeing.
- 849 councils accredited under the local council award scheme.
- 3000 e-mail inquiries, 850 telephone inquiries.

Next year:

- The development and roll-out of a new website and CRM system.
- A comprehensive review of HR resources and the implementation of new employment contracts, accompanied by joint advice with SLCC regarding clerks' hours and job evaluation.
- The release of a new edition of "Local Councils Explained" and "Good Councillors Guide."
- A thorough evaluation of model financial regulations and standing orders.

The chief executive welcomed AGM members to the meeting and gave special thanks to the chair and vice chairs for their work and brilliant championing of the sector. He highlighted key priorities and achievements in the year so far:

- To councillors for their involvement in our work, where they played a crucial role in setting strategic direction and policy objectives during 44 meetings and in various national networks. Further work was planned for the next year, including collaboration with the new assembly to expand, including the micro council network.

- To county officers for actively participating in 26 meetings with NALC, contributing to shaping our work, and extending invitations to events. This collaboration was set to continue into 2024.
- To 1,600 delegates for their attendance at our monthly events and for providing valuable local insights. The programme for 2024 had been published.
- To 100 national bodies that assisted with events and monthly blogs, thereby enhancing the profile of the sector. These organisations included the Forestry Commission, Marine Conservation Society, RBL, Hope for the Future, and many others.
- To NALC colleagues for their remarkable contributions while navigating the challenges of moving to new accommodation and adapting to changing working practices.

Cllr Davey presented the updates from the Finance and Scrutiny Committee, which included:

- The Finance and Scrutiny Committee's ongoing efforts to review the scrutiny component of the committee. Extensive discussions have taken place, and proposals for its separation from the committee have been considered.
- NALC's provision of a quarterly finance report to the National Assembly.
- The annual in-depth examination conducted by external auditors, which resulted in a clean bill of health with no identified issues.
- The further strengthening of NALC's finances through the maintenance of weekly cash balances.

Cllr Davey also expressed gratitude to Steve Walker for his dedicated work throughout the challenging past year.

Resolved That the Annual Report and Annual Accounts for 2022/23 be received and approved.

6. Subscriptions to the National Association

AGM considered the recommendation by National Assembly on 3 October 2023 to increase the affiliation fee for 2024/25 to 7.94 pence per elector with a cap of £2,037 for larger councils.

After a vote, 68 voting in favour, three against and four abstentions, it was agreed that the affiliation fees for next year 2024/25 at 7.94 pence per elector being capped at £2,037 for the largest councils.

Resolved (1): The AGM approved the motion recommending the affiliation fees for next year 2024/25 at 7.94 pence per elector capped at £2,037 for the largest councils.

Resolved (2): To receive and note the draft the three-year budget to 2026.

7. Shropshire CALC Motion

The chair asked the AGM to note the following motion received from Shropshire ALC:

'This Association calls on HM Government to recognise the value of Parish & Town Councils in being effective delivery agents of Government Policy and as such opens up opportunities for the first tier of local government to access funding rather than relying upon their principal authorities to make applications on their behalf.'

Cllr Wickson introduced the motion to the AGM. He spoke about the importance of government funding, and the issues councils face in submitting applications to fundings.

Resolved: After a vote the motion was carried with 74 voting for, one voted against and no abstentions.

7.2. Management Board/ National Assembly Motion –

This AGM calls on all political parties as the general election approaches to commit to implementing the proposals of the committee on standards in public life including introducing sanctions for poor behaviour of councillors and enact that within the first year of the new government.

Cllr Drew addressed the motion and emphasised the significance of implementing sanctions for inappropriate conduct towards councillors, expressing a desire to reinstate such measures.

During the discussion, there was a strong emphasis on endorsing the motion and expediting its progress with the government. This urgency is attributed to the challenges currently faced by parish and town councils in this regard.

Cllr Fifield (Cheshire) pointed out the need for clarification on the objectives and the scope of its impact, particularly as it pertains to councillors from parish and town councils.

Cllr Drew proposed to move the motion as it is with no amendments seconded by Cllr Neal.

Resolved: After a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

Northamptonshire ALC Motion:

The chair asked the AGM to note the following motion from Northamptonshire ALC:

'The Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (Northants CALC) moves that the NALC National Assembly be dissolved as soon as reasonably practicable.'

Northamptonshire ALC withdrew the motion.

Governance motions:

The chair introduced the governance item and ran through each proposal.

Proposal 1: Definition of local council:

Name and title etc. Amend paragraph three vision etc. To define local councils in line with the local government act 1972.

Parish and town councils are the tier of statutory local government that is closest to the electorate, their legal foundation provided by the Local Government Act 1972. Parish councils may resolve to call themselves town, neighbourhood, community, or village councils. Parish councils for areas that have been granted city status by royal charter are known as city councils. Collectively they are often referred to as local councils, the term used throughout this constitution.

Resolved: That the proposal be adopted with 72 voting in favour, one against and three abstentions.

Proposal two: include reference to unitary authorities e.g., Cornwall Council:

Membership section – amend section b to include reference to unitary authorities.

“The National Association shall be organised as a number of independent, self-governing associations, as determined from time to time by the National Assembly, based on one or more county or unitary authorities in England, or on a regional grouping of these bodies except in London, where there shall be a London Association.

Resolved: That the proposal be adopted with 70 voting in favour, one against and four abstentions.

Proposal three: regional groupings of county associations:

County Associations section – include reference to regional groupings to reflect current position e.g., FEMALC, SERCAF etc. Insert new “d) county associations

may be organized into regional groupings to support their work.”

Resolved: That the proposal be adopted with 70 voting in favour, one against and four abstentions.

Proposal 4: To allow on-line voting and remote meetings:

Governance section:

Insert new paragraph to allow for meetings and votes to be held on-line or in person.

“Proceedings of the Association’s governance structures can be conducted on-line or in person. Elections to those governance structures and voting or ballots can be conducted on-line, electronically or in person as appropriate.”

Resolved: That the proposal be adopted with 75 voting in favor set out as above.

Proposal 5: Motions:

Annual and Special General Meeting section – amend to clarify that county associations, regional groupings and policy committee can submit motions to the AGM.

“To consider such motions as may have been submitted by county associations, regional groupings, or the Policy Committee provided that notice of motions are given in writing no later than forty-two clear days before the date of the Annual General Meeting. Amendments to such motions should normally be submitted in writing at least 7 days prior to the AGM.”

Resolved: That the proposal be adopted with 74 voting in favor and one against set out as above.

Proposal 6: Quorums:

AGM and assembly sections

Quorums – amend relevant sections to read one third of those entitled to attend and vote (including remote attendance) for AGM and National Assembly (currently 25% and 20 respectively).

“The quorum of the assembly shall be one third of its membership.”

‘The quorum of a general meeting shall be one third attending and a third of the county associations in membership.’

The quorum for National Assembly would be unchanged.

Clarifications were sought around the wording of the motion, and it was asked if an amendment could be made. However, AGM agreed that the motion would not be amended since a vote had already taken place, and it was proposed that it could be brought back for review next year if an amendment were to be proposed.

Resolved: That the proposal be adopted with 73 voting in favour and one against and one abstention set out as above.

The National Assembly section:

Amend c) to allow county associations to appoint a representative to attend in the absence of their nominated representative or their deputy.

“A County Association in England may nominate one person to function as deputy for its member on the Assembly. If neither the nominated representative nor the deputy is available for a particular meeting, a County Association may appoint another person who is a member of their executive to attend, and that person shall enjoy full voting rights.”

Resolved: That the proposal be adopted with 73 voting in favor and one against set out as above.

Appointments

7.1. Election of President

That the current president continues in post until 2024.

Resolved: That Baroness Scott of Needham Market remain in office until 2024.

7.2. Election of Vice Presidents

That the current vice presidents to continue in post until 2024.

Resolved: That Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle, Andrew Gwynne MP, The Earl of Lytton, Lord O’Shaughnessy and Cllr Sue Baxter remain in office until 2024.

7.3. Appointment of Auditor

To note that NALC’s external auditor Milton Avis continues in post for 2024/25 as agreed by AGM in 2022

Resolved: That NALC’s external auditor Milton Avis continue in post for 2024/25 as agreed by AGM in 2022

8. Next Meeting

Resolved: It is proposed that the next meeting of AGM will take place on 11 November 2024 with the location to be confirmed.

There had been some discussion at AGM about holding the meeting at an earlier date however the proposed calendar of meetings for 2024 proposes this date which works better for planning purposes.

Councillor Keith Stevens, chair.