

## **ISLE OF WIGHT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

### **REPORT OF THE NALC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY ON 24<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2026**

#### **1. WELCOME**

In the absence of the Chair, we were welcomed to the meeting by the Vice-Chair (Finance), Sue Baxter.

#### **2. REPORTS**

##### **2.1 Chair's Report**

In the absence of the Chair a written report was presented. The main point to note was the ongoing pressure from NALC for the Government to reintroduce a standards regime with teeth.

##### **2.2 Vice-Chair (Member Services)**

David Francis presented his report. I was pleased to note the appointment of a new Head of Member Services. Anders Hanson, an existing staff member was appointed after a competitive interview process. In order to help member councils comply with Assertion 10 in the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) there is an Assertion 10 Hub on the NALC website. It was also welcomed that an electronic version of the AGAR is now available which should make it easier to submit the return. It was reported that there have now been 10,511 sign-ups to the new NALC website. 49% are clerks, 41% are councillors and 10% are other council staff. Councillors and clerks are being encouraged to sign up. The goal is 12,000 individual sign-ups by October 2026 (two years from launch).

##### **2.3 Policy Committee**

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework were causing concern. Decision making on larger developments are being moved "upstream" away from local planning authorities with a greater role being given to combined mayoral authorities. A proposal to increase the statutory consultation period from 21 days to 28 days was thought unlikely to be accepted as the Government is moving to speed up the planning process.

##### **2.4 Management Board**

I was shocked to learn that the work to update the job evaluation scheme for clerks which was nearing completion when I was involved over a year ago has still not been signed off. We were advised that feedback from the LGA is still awaited. I am amazed that this is deemed necessary and in my view it undermines the independence of NALC.

#### **3. VOTES FOR 16 YEAR OLDS**

During the mid-meeting coffee break there was a discussion on the Government's proposal to introduce votes for 16 year olds with a range of views expressed.

#### **4. STRATEGIC REVIEW**

NALC is undertaking a strategic review which the Assembly was asked to note, (not approve). Yet again NALC is engaging outside consultants to assist with this work. A company called “Shared Intelligence” has been appointed and £50K taken from reserves to fund this appointment. This seemed all the more perverse to me given that earlier in the meeting a former Vice-Chair (Finance) had warned of perils of using reserves to fund revenue spending. I was surprised to hear the current Vice-Chair (Finance) suggest that because this is spending on a “project” it is not revenue spending. I did suggest that if this expenditure was deemed necessary it could be financed by cutting further spending on the “Civility and Respect” project.

#### **5. NEW NALC ADVOCACY TOOLKIT**

We received a briefing from Will McNerney from yet another outside consultant, Connect Public Affairs. A new “Engaging Parliament Toolkit” has been produced and can be accessed by county associations, councils and councillors on the NALC website. This, we were told will assist in empowering communities to connect with MPs, peers, government ministers and parliamentary select committees.

#### **6. FUTURE MEETINGS**

Future meetings of the Assembly are as follows:

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026 (in person in London)

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2026 (online);

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2026 (online).

**Bob BLEZZARD**

**MARCH 2026**