

Quarterly activity report

January to March 2024

Introduction

The quarterly activity report shows progress in delivering NALC's strategic plan, including information on internal issues, parliamentary and government affairs, events, media coverage, publications and advisory services.

NALC's mission and strategic objectives:

- Strong national and county voices promoting the sector and our manifesto for building stronger communities across England
- Creating more local councils in England
- Supporting councils and councillors
- Effective national and county associations working together to deliver our vision

Chief executive

- The year began with NALC chair Cllr Keith Stevens' [open letter](#), which set out his hopes, aspirations and priorities for the year ahead. Over 3,000 people read the letter. The letter covered the sector's potential to support communities and the importance of sound governance, taking up training opportunities and signing the civility and respect pledge.
- Cllr Stevens also stressed the importance of NALC providing a strong voice for the sector on the national stage, which is particularly important this year of elections. Two good examples this quarter are the IPPR think tank backing many of our policies in their call to re-invigorate [hyperlocal government](#), including giving local (parish and town) councils more powers and making meetings more accessible.
- The [Jo Cox Civility Commission](#) featured NALC's Civility and Respect Project in their report, aiming to tackle the abuse and intimidation of elected representatives following their attendance and presentation at the National Assembly meeting in November last year.
- NALC committees have developed ambitious work programmes for the next two years to address the priorities agreed by the [National Assembly](#) on 9 April 2024.
- NALC's internal modernisation process continues, shifting to digital-first to help reduce NALC's carbon footprint. The process will continue in the new offices for the next year and, most excitingly, develop the new website and CRM system, which, after a slight delay, should be launched soon.

Policy and communications

- Campaigns — NALC worked with the BBC on their investigation and story on abuse and intimidation and with IPPR on their research report. 30 local councils have to date secured funding from the Community Ownership Fund, bringing total funding to £7.1m.
- Engaging with government and parliament — NALC briefed MPs and Peers ahead of debates on standards in public life and local government finance. NALC president Baroness Scott of Needham Market and vice-president Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle spoke in a debate on local government finance. NALC responded to consultations on land data, brownfield development, permitted development rights, Martyn's Law, provisional local government finance settlement 2024/25, street votes and local audit, and inquiries on the Office for Local Government and high streets.
- Events — NALC sold out online events on levelling up, social media, and community transport, amassing over 500 attendees. 97% of attendees would recommend events to others, and 94% were engaged throughout. Guest speakers for committee and national network meetings included Natural England, the Local Government Information Unit, Cllr Cameron Palin (winner of Star Council Awards 2023 Young Councillor of the Year), and Morecambe Town Council.
- Website analytics — NALC's website had 66,066 users who viewed 180,206 pages over 94,736 sessions (a session is the period a user is actively engaged with the website) and an average of 18,738 unique users (users who interacted with the site for the first time).
- Blogs — NALC published blogs from BT Consumer, Clear Group, GoCollaborate, Utility Aid, Parish Council Domains Helper Service, Flitwick Town Council, British Heart Foundation, Elect Her, Action with Communities in Rural England and Epilepsy Action.

Member services

- Joint Panel for Accountability and Governance (JPAG) —NALC secured funding from Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments (SAAA) for a project manager to support JPAG's work and review its effectiveness. This funding also includes an update to The Good Councillor's guide to finance and transparency, which will be published later this year. NALC published the Practitioners' Guide 2024 on behalf of JPAG in March 2024, and it is one of the most frequently downloaded publications on NALC's website.
- Legal service — Responded to 200 requests for legal advice. The Legal Topic Note on pre-election publicity was updated in March 2024, alongside ongoing work of reviewing LTNs for NALC's new website.
- HR service — 184 queries were received from 16 county associations.
- Improvement and development—13 councils were accredited to the Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) (one Quality Gold, four Quality Award, and eight Foundation Award). An online consultation was held to review the LCAS criteria, with a healthy number of views submitted. Two NALC and Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenges were delivered for Houghton Regis Town Council and Taunton Town Council.
- Publications — NALC will be publishing Model Financial Regulations in April 2024, The Good Councillor's Guide in May 2024, and updated HR templates in June 2024.

Finance and administration

- Buckingham Palace Garden Parties — NALC worked with county associations and liaised with The Palace to put forward 100 councillors to attend two Garden Parties in May 2024.
- Job adverts — NALC advertised 36 jobs, totalling over 140 for the financial year.
- Affiliation fees and accounts — NALC is preparing for its annual affiliation fee invoices for distribution to county associations in early April 2024 and is focussed on the preparation of our year-end accounts.
- Cyber essentials — NALC successfully renewed its Cyber Essentials certification for the second consecutive year. This achievement demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding members' data and business operations against evolving cyber threats.

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