



SPCA Bulletin

News and sector updates for Member Parish & Town Councils

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Book your council's free Social Media Health Check today

Breakthrough Communications are NALC's National Partners for advice, guidance and services for council communications, as well as for Data Protection, GDPR and Freedom Of Information.

One of the things local councils ask us about the most is social media. Many councils realise its potential, but are unsure if they are getting the most from it.

Some are also concerned about the challenges that social media poses. Others aren't sure where to start with it.

Our team at Breakthrough Communications has extensive experience in both local government and community communications. We understand the unique challenges many parish and town councils face.

That is why we have created a free Social Media Health Check service to help parish and town councils get the most from their social media. So far we've carried out over 100 of them across the country.

To find out how your council can get more from its social media all you need to do is fill out a quick form. We will take care of the rest.

Once the Social Media Health Check is complete we will be in touch to report back. It really is that simple.

Book your council's free Social Media Health Check today at:

<https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/socialmediahealthcheck/>

NALC Event: Working together to make communities safer

30th March 2022 — 12.00 - 13.15

Sponsors: BHIB Councils Insurance, Blachere Illumination and CCLA

According to the Office of National Statistics, the pandemic affected crime patterns and decreases across individual crime types such as theft offences were offset by rises in fraud and computer misuse offences, resulting in no change in overall levels of crime. Just 26% of the public say the government are doing a good job on dealing with crime, according to recent polling by IPSOS Mori.

You will hear more about what the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) do since replacing police authorities, how they are working with local councils and communities, police and crime panels, and their role in scrutinising PCCs and how effective it is, and their link to local councils.

Speakers: Cllr John Gilli-Ross, chair of Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel and Caroline Henry, Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire

[WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE COMMUNITIES SAFER Tickets, Wed 30 Mar 2022 at 12:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Circulation to provide updates and information to Clerks, Chairmen, Councillors and Staff of Member Councils
– Clerks please distribute within your Council where possible but do not forward outside of your own Council

NALC publishes new report on the 2021 local elections

NALC has published its report on the 2021 local (parish and town) council elections.

This report aimed to gather insightful data to provide an overview of the 2021 local elections. This data captured will assist NALC's future campaigns (e.g. [Make A Change](#)) and help to shape the range of resources available for local councils and county associations.

The research found that the number of councillors elected through contested elections has significantly increased from 29% in 2019 to 38% in 2021. Despite this positive change, 44% of local councils reported the need to co-opt seats. The data also showed that local councils require further support from county associations and principal authorities in raising awareness of local elections.

Ongoing COVID-19 restrictions hindered local elections in 2021. Broader social contact rules prevented many candidates from campaigning in person and decreased voter turnout in several councils. However, moving to virtual meetings positively affected council meeting attendance, expressions of interest, and council diversity.

The report makes several recommendations to the local council sector and external stakeholders to improve the election process. These include increasing election coverage through regional and national media, working with principal authorities to capture election data, and encouraging people to run for election through talent spotting. NALC commits to providing county associations with access to media training and lobbying the government to simplify and digitalise local council elections.

NALC collected data from councillors, local councils and county associations across England between July and September 2021. The surveys collectively received 1,004 responses. A copy of the full report is attached.

Jonathan Owen, NALC CEO, writes...

Remote meetings

In a [House of Commons debate](#) on 24th January, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove MP, declared himself to be "strongly in sympathy with the view that hybrid meetings should continue in order to ensure the maximum amount of efficiency". I very much hope this is a positive step forward and we are continuing to urge the government to make permanent the provision for councils at all levels to be allowed to hold remote meetings. This week our chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, was a signatory to a joint letter from several national local government bodies to the opposition parties calling for their support.

NALC is also supporting a [petition](#) by our colleagues at the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) and Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) calling on the government and parliament to allow councils in England to have the choice to meet remotely. I'd be grateful if you could support our collective campaign on this important issue by signing the petition and promoting the petition as widely as possible, including on social media.

Media coverage

It was good to see BBC Look North cover NALC's opposition to government proposals that will impact the country's burial grounds, including those run by our local councils. Our head of policy and communications, Justin Griggs, featured in the story alongside colleagues from Skegness Town Council which can you watch again [here](#).

Spam emails

We have seen an increase in the volume of spam emails in circulation specifically targeting local councils. Some of these emails purport to come from the chair of the council. Please be careful when opening any emails you receive, an example we have seen is below:

"Could you please spare a minute to assist me in completing a task discreetly. Would be glad to receive your response through email because I'm presently in a meeting.

Best Regard

Cllr X (with the correct name of the chair used but not from their email address)"

Rural Coalition

NALC's chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, met the rural affairs minister, Lord Benyon, at the meeting of the [Rural Coalition](#) on 26th January, here's a summary:

- The minister indicated that the levelling up white paper was due to be published very soon. He stressed that levelling out was important too – to more remote places to unlock rural potential and support businesses and residents. He was confident the white paper would have a positive impact on rural communities. The Coalition raised concern that the government's plans to achieve net-zero by decarbonising domestic heating could have a disproportionately negative impact on rural areas. We also flagged up the forthcoming publication of a report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on rural services demonstrating how, for too long, people in rural and coastal areas have experienced poorer access to health and social care.
- There was a discussion on levelling up and devolution which included considering the potential rural implications of the forthcoming white paper, responding as a Coalition when it is published and organising a parliamentary event.
- The Coalition has also agreed to undertake further work on the theme of young people.

NALC Policy Committee

NALC's Policy Committee, which oversees the development and promotion of our policy objectives, met on 25th January. In advance of the draft minutes being published here's a summary:

- The Committee endorsed proposals for their work programme which includes reviewing aspects of our policy development and promotion process, responding to the levelling up white paper and a new big theme for this year on planning, housing and neighbourhood planning.
- Councillors were keen to forge a closer working relationship with the Society of Local Council Clerks on policy issues and agreed to invite Shelley Parker, external affairs and policy development manager, to the next meeting.
- They considered policy motions from the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils on urban council gulls, agreeing to make representations to the government on the approval of licenses and to undertake further research; from the Hampshire Association of Local Councils regarding changing councillor numbers through community governance reviews, which wasn't supported; and from the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Council, where they supported measures to ensure compliance of planning applications through building control.

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

In 2022, Her Majesty the Queen will become the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee and celebrations to mark the Queen's historic 70-year reign will occur throughout the UK and the Commonwealth as part of a year-long programme of events. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has asked us to share a letter from the secretary of state, Michael Gove, MP which highlights opportunities for local councils and communities to engage with the Platinum Jubilee – you can read more on this [here](#).

Coastal Communities

Continuing to build effective relationships and working closely with our partners including the other local government sector bodies was among the priorities of our chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, set out in his recent [open letter](#). So it was good this week to meet up with Emily Cunningham from the Local Government Association and swap notes on their [Special Interest Group on Coastal Issues](#) and our own NALC National Network: Coastal Communities. I'm also delighted that Emily will be the guest speaker at our next meeting on 21st March – you can find out more about all our networks and sign up on our [dedicated webpage](#). And for the Twitterers among you, do give Emily and her colleagues a follow at [@LGACoastalSIG](#).