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Government clarification over parish and town council involvement in reorganisation proposals

This week, we welcomed the government's [clarification on parish and town councils' involvement](#) in developing proposals for unitary local government by local authorities. This follows strong representations we have made to government, including by our chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, who [wrote directly to the local government and devolution minister, Jim McMahon MP](#), expressing our concern that recent guidance to local authorities failed to include parish and town councils in a list of local partners, stakeholders and public bodies they should engage with. In response, the minister said, "This government absolutely values the crucial role played by parish and town councils in local government" and clarified that "I expect local leaders to seek views from their MPs, as well as ensuring wider engagement with other local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses. This should include parish and town councils in the spirit of that guidance".

Is the fight for standards a losing battle?

On 26 February 2025, we hosted another insightful online event, this time on the crucial topic of [behaviour standards in local government](#). Our expert panel featured Will Fletcher, the interim chief executive officer at the Jo Cox Foundation (and who is also a parish councillor), Cllr Marianne Overton MBE, the chair of the Local Government Association Civility in Public Life Steering Group, and Paul Turner, the vice-president of Lawyers in Local Government. They delivered powerful and thought-provoking insights on how parish and town councils can foster more

respectful and effective meetings. Through their presentations and the questions that followed, they shared key takeaways from their organisations' responses to the government's standards consultation and offered a comprehensive look at the future of civility in public life. Around 90% of attendees felt engaged throughout the event, and I'd like to encourage all attendees to complete feedback forms to help us improve our events. [Explore our entire lineup of events on our website and secure your spot today!](#)

Updated anti-bullying and harassment template

We've worked with our employment law, HR, and health and safety services partner, WorkNest, to update our anti-bullying and harassment policy template. The updates are based on the latest advice and legislation relating to these policies. Parish and town councils should review their existing policies and update them to ensure they include the most up-to-date advice, similar to when they were advised about significant changes to sexual harassment legislation last year.

On the blog: International Women's Day

[In this week's blog](#), our former communications officer Nadoya Reid explored the steps we have taken to support women in local government and the work still needed to achieve true gender equality. From flexible working policies to leadership representation, she highlights the importance of fostering an inclusive workplace. The blog also shares valuable advice for women aspiring to lead and practical steps men can take to be better allies. Please read the blog to discover how we can all contribute to a more equitable future.

Fortnightly county officers call

In this week's fortnightly meeting between NALC and county associations, we provided several updates, including information on an in-person day for county officers at the NALC office, the recent meeting of the [National Assembly](#) and the [Star Council Awards](#), model financial regulations and legal updates. There was also an information exchange on the English Devolution White Paper with county officers outlining what was happening in their area.

East Suffolk Council conference for town councils

I was pleased to join my colleagues from the award-winning Suffolk Association of

Local Councils, who were crowned the Star Council Awards 2024 County Association of the Year last week, at East Suffolk Council's first-ever Town Councils Conference. This timely event focused on the national and local implications of local government reorganisation and devolution for parish and town councils. It also featured sessions on good governance, peer review, and planning, plus a great opportunity to speak to the other 80 attendees.

John Smith Trust

Our policy manager, Chris Borg, met with Giga Phartenadze, the founder of the Youth Supreme Council and an assistant professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University in Georgia, on 4 March 2025. Giga is currently undertaking a fellowship at the [John Smith Trust](#). His action plan focuses on engaging young people in politics, promoting sound and transparent governance, and working with local authorities. He will explore how local authorities address these topics, including parish and town councils. Chris provided helpful updates for his work on our work, such as the [Make A Change campaign](#), [engagement with young people](#) and the drive to improve standards through our [civility and respect](#) work. This meeting highlights parish and town councils' far-reaching influence and interest in local governance!

And finally...

Our [Star Council Awards](#) on 25 February 2025 has garnered widespread media coverage, highlighting the achievements of exceptional parish and town councils, councillors, clerks and county associations nationwide. Outlets such as [BBC Radio Sussex](#) (2h 8m), [Maldon & Burnham Standard](#), [Nantwich News](#), [Cornish Stuff](#), [Milton Keynes Citizen](#), [MSN](#), [Sussex Express](#), and [Voice Newspapers](#) reported on the event, showcasing the winners and finalists of our prestigious Star Council Awards. Coverage included Essex Cllr Richard Collins' national recognition, a BBC radio interview with Young Councillor of the Year Cllr Nathan Dunbar, Penzance's James Hardy being named Clerk of the Year, and Great Linford Parish Council securing the coveted title of Council of the Year. The awards celebrated outstanding contributions to local governance, with media outlets emphasising the impact of parish and town councils in strengthening communities.

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