

Subject: Chief executive's bulletin - 24 April 2025

Date: Thursday, 24 April 2025 at 09:54:21 British Summer Time

From: National Association of Local Councils

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24 April 2024

NALC and CPRE launch a new guide to empower communities to shape local development

Last week, alongside the CPRE (The Countryside Charity), we [launched an exciting update to one of the most trusted resources for responding to planning applications](#).

As planning reforms and rapid development continue to reshape towns and countryside, communities need tools to ensure local voices are heard. The revamped guide is the go-to starting point for anyone who wants to understand – and have a say in – what gets built in their local area. With tens of thousands of downloads, the guide has long been a favourite for those keen to protect and shape their communities. Now, it's clearer, sharper, and more accessible than ever.

NALC receive response from Jim McMahon MP on councillor allowances

In April 2025, we wrote to the local government minister, Jim McMahon MP, about giving co-opted parish and town councillors the same rights to access the parish basic allowance as elected councillors. We also urged the minister to give parish and town councils the same right as principal authorities to pay their councillors the dependants' carers' allowance to help improve the diversity of candidates standing for election and attendance at council meetings. Both have been our long-standing policy. The minister replied that the door was open to this potential change and that we were welcome to submit further evidence to his department. We will continue to lobby government officials and take the minister up on submitting additional evidence.

NALC quarterly activity report

This week, we published our [quarterly activity report](#) covering January to March 2025. The quarterly activity report details progress in delivering our strategic plan. The last quarter's key highlights include providing extensive advisory support in handling 145 legal enquiries, 109 HR advice line calls, and 51 communications and data compliance queries. We issued two legal bulletins and maintained our Cyber Essentials accreditation for the third year. We influenced the English Devolution White Paper, securing key reforms on funding, council powers, and governance standards. We also engaged in several government consultations and meetings with MPs and peers, contributing to policy discussions on local government. Additionally, we published various guidance materials, including updates on elections, finance, devolution, and council operations. The subsequent report covers April to June 2025 and will be published in July 2025.

On the blog: Utility Aid

[In this week's blog](#), our partner, Utility Aid, breaks down the key energy market trends from the first quarter of 2025 and what they could mean for your parish or town council moving forward. From soaring oil prices and dwindling gas storage to updates on electricity pricing and introducing new nuclear charges, the insights are essential for parish and town councils looking to stay ahead. With a focus on sustainability, financial impact, and smarter contract decisions, this blog is packed with timely information to help you navigate an uncertain energy landscape.

National Network: Micro councils

Our [national network for micro councils](#) held its latest meeting on 16 April 2025. The strategic policy adviser at The Charity Commission, James Wilkinson (who recently [wrote a blog](#) for us), gave a helpful presentation on parish and town council duties under Charity Commission rules when managing assets. The network discussed local government reorganisation and agreed that micro councils were unlikely to take on many new assets or services, registering and considering their views was still important. NALC's vice-chair (member services), Cllr David Francis, gave an update on local council registration with the Information Commissioner's Office. The network's WhatsApp group has proven popular, with many members reporting it's been a valuable tool for sharing information. The network also appointed Ginny Gibson, the clerk of Croxden Parish Council in Staffordshire, as a co-chair.

Meeting with Alex Norris MP

As part of our ongoing engagement with the government, on 22 April 2025, our chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, met with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Building Safety, Fire and Local Growth), Alex Norris MP. It was good to hear the minister be very positive about our sector's role in devolution, local government reorganisation and the Plan for Neighbourhoods. The minister emphasised that parish and town councils would become more, not less important, due to local government reform and that the government had no plans to change the legislation around creating new parish and town councils. He was impressed by the role Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council played on its Neighbourhood Board and as the lead and accountable body, which may be a model for others in the future. During a visit to Lincolnshire, Alex was pleased to hear that parish and town councils played a key role in building civil resilience and were trusted by communities and blue light services. We agreed to continue to work constructively on the role of parish and town councils in the future, including a further meeting once the English Devolution Bill is published.

Creation of new parish and town councils

Many county associations are actively discussing with principal authorities the creation of new parish and town councils and the support they can provide. I was pleased to be invited by Leicestershire and Rutland to attend an excellent event briefing principal authorities on this issue. In addition to my contribution, it was beneficial to participants to hear about the experience of creating new parish and town councils in Northamptonshire and Weymouth.

National Employers for Local Government Services

The National Employers for Local Government Services has made a [full and final pay offer](#) to trades unions of a one-year (1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026) offer. With effect from 1 April 2025, an increase of 3.20 per cent will be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition to all NJC pay points. A response from the trade unions is awaited. We will continue to provide updates on any developments.

Martyn's Law Steering Group

Following the brilliant news that the [Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Act](#) (known as Martyn's Law) received royal assent on 3 April 2025, an urgent meeting of the sector's Martyn's Law Steering Group took place on 22 April 2025. The group agreed that there was a lack of awareness amongst many parish and town councils before the Bill (now Act) entered parliament last year and during it about what

Martyn's Law is, but now that it is on the statute books, guidance and awareness raising is urgently needed. The group committed to producing an advice note (due to be published by the end of July) offering good practice, links and guidance as part of a first wave of communications. The group will meet at the end of July to review this phase and will then plan the next phase, a more detailed production of a short guide explaining the principles of combatting terrorism, and how to use the template terrorism risk assessment and policy which the group will also produce, to explain the best ways parish and town councils are likely to need to comply with Home Office guidance if their venues fall within the standard or enhanced tiers. We will produce other resources on how parish and town councils must comply with the Act post-commencement, which is estimated to be in 24 months. You can also find out more about [community safety](#) on our website.

County Association Staff Day

Yesterday, we held a County Association Staff Day at our office. The day's purpose was to introduce newer county association staff and refresh experienced staff on our work and the membership benefits. It was an opportunity to meet NALC staff in person, put faces to names, learn more about each team's work, and answer questions. We were also joined by our partners, Breakthrough Communications, The Parkinson Partnership LLP and WorkNest, who provide support and advice to parish and town councils.

And finally...

At this week's Rural Coalition meeting, the coalition welcomed their new president, the Right Reverend Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Newcastle.

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