

Northern Group of Local Councils Association

23 May 2018 – York

1. This was relatively poorly attended and a distribution list is to be circulated to ensure emails are correct.
2. Concern was expressed at Northern Associations are not properly represented on national NALC C'tees. There may be a proposal coming forward that there are reserved regional seats.
3. That issue then moved to the election process at the NALC AGM in Oct 2017 and especially the information provided on candidates and the timing – at the end of a two-day conference.
4. Concerns were expressed at the way meetings of the national assembly (aka the national council) are run with non-members being allowed to speak at length.

My impression – these four seem to be long-standing concerns

5. Of my immediate interest was the feedback on the national Lobby Day. My sense was that the numbers of MPs actually engaged by County Associations was very patchy and dependent on other Parliamentary pressures. The other thought was that a general lobby lacks focus. I mentioned our approaches to the constituency offices, local contacts with MPs and their offices was regarded as the best way to influence and give information.
6. All were relieved at the Govt. backing down on the need for Councils to have *Data Protection Officers*. The toolkit is generally well-received and is the type of practical help which the national NALC should be encouraged to produce.

When there was a call for agenda items, I suggested the following

7. The new national model standing orders – other county associations have pointed out some items overtaken by events (e.g. references to a data protection officer) but generally these are being recommended to member councils.
8. Feedback on the new audit arrangements – no problems were reported. Some of the areas had been allocated PKF Littlejohn in the past and confirmed how helpful they were. The Councils in Durham were allocated Mazars who are based in Durham which meant they ran workshops for the clerks.
9. Horizon scanning – I intended this to look for issues potentially coming the sector's way in the future. Devolution took up most of the discussion and it seemed that our request for a seat on the new NoT Authority's Overview & Scrutiny C'tee will be followed with interest. One interesting aspect was whether Associations were represented on *Local Nature Partnerships* and I shall follow that up.

Planning

10. Yorkshire raised issues about Green Belt intrusion and problems faced by local councils in resourcing public inquiry attendance. No real issues not previously raised up here but reassuring (?) that our experiences are mirrored elsewhere.

The next meeting is to be in Crewe on 23 Oct 2018 at 1100, with an aim of seeing if there can be a co-ordinated northern approach to matters being discussed at the Annual Conference & National Assembly later that month.

I don't see a benefit in my attendance but do not know if Cllr Francis wishes to go. It's a long way for what is likely to be a two-hour meeting.

Stephen

31 May 2018