Jonathan Owen

Chief Executive NALC

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils – September 2021

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National Association of Local Councils

EXTRAORDINARY RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC FROM LOCAL COUNCILS

- Speed of response
- 400 case studies
- Local knowledge
- Human focussed, not weighed down by process or bureaucracy
- Some great examples from Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
- New civic spirit and sense of community evident?

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Historic opportunity to put local councils at the heart of building back better!

- Growing reputation with national government, think tanks and political parties
- Delivering on climate emergency, health and wellbeing and much more!
- New councils being established (Northampton)
- Greater pubic interest and engagement including through remote meetings & Jackie Weaver
- Demonstrated to residents ability to support communities during pandemic.

Est.1893 themj.co.uk Thursday | 9 July | 2020 | £3.45

Parishes lined up for greater powers in devo White Paper

By Michael Burton

More powers for town and parish councils are earmarked in a radical shake-up of town and county hall structures due in the autumn White Paper on devolution.

Confirming last week the Government will be 'pressing ahead with the publication of our White Paper on devolution and local recovery this autumn' local government minister Simon Clarke said the plans would 'remove the complexity of governance and reduce costs to the taxpayer while making space for town and parish councils to be genuinely empowered'.

Speaking at the Local Government Association virtual conference he added: 'I'm acutely aware of the vital contribution that town and parish councils make to everyday life, whether it's keeping public toilets open, running car parks or maintaining natural spaces which have been a lifeline to many throughout this time.' He added: 'I really do want to say a thank you to parish and town councils who have been doing amazing work.'

Justin Griggs, head of policy at the National Association of Local Councils, said: 'We need to recognise that many parish and town councils have stepped up during the pandemic and must be part of the devo agenda. Where reorganisation takes place

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Simon Clarke (pictured with chancellor Rishi Sunak) had praise for parish and town councils

He said the paper would include plans for 'more elected mayors and unitaries as in Dorset, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire'

he said: 'We don't want councils to make serious in-year savings or issue s114 notices when it's not required.'

In advance of the White Paper many

Councils still at risk despite £500m boost

The head of Parliament's financial watchdog has warned 'a lot' of councils remained at risk of 'effectively going bankrupt' despite a £500m cash injection.

Communities secretary Robert Jenrick last week announced an unringfenced £500m and will allow council and business rates tax deficits to be repaid over three years instead of the usual one. In addition, where losses are more than 5% of a local authority's planned income from sales, fees and charges, the Government will cover 75p for every pound lost.

Despite the latest package, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has conceded that councils could still be left with unmanageable pressures and urged any authority thinking of issuing a Section 114 notice to contact the department.

But chair of the Public Accounts Committee, Meg Hillier, said this week: 'My concern is that s114 notices could effectively be delayed rather than prevented, that local government is already having to make tough decisions about its spending, notwithstanding the announcement made

OPPORTUNITY PROVIDED BY NEW COMMUNITY SPIRIT?

“There’s nothing more local than the parish or town council. They know their community street by street and to say they inspired and supported local volunteering in response to Covid is an understatement”

(Royal Voluntary Service report (March 2021)

/together

on them

- A massive 12.4 million people volunteered during the pandemic, 4.6 million of them for the first time, of whom 75% would volunteer again

"*We found a clear public appetite for a society in which we are more connected to each other and the community spirit of 2020 is kept alive.*"
- Bishop Nick Baines, Chair of **/together** trustees

LGA report Local Service delivery and place-shaping. A framework to support parish and town councils

“The potential of parish and town councils to contribute to vibrant and successful local and community governance has grown noticeably in the last decade.

“This framework aims to set out a practical set of actions and considerations for a principal council that is considering working more closely with its town and parish (local) council sector

Centre for social justice backs NALC'c campaign to create more local councils

"Parish council-level representation provides a vital, highly local level of accountability and decision-making"

NALC hopes that these issues will be picked up in forthcoming white paper on levelling up and recovery and the PM's devo deals

CSJ The Centre for Social Justice

OUR CAMPAIGNS – designed to help the sector raise its profile and see its role recognised

- Climate change emergency
- Make a change campaign
- Health and wellbeing
- Youth Engagement
- Fair funding
- Sanctions

SERVICES TO YOU – working with county associations to provide day-to-day support

- 100 legal topic notes, briefings and financial briefings including standing orders, financial regulations and practitioners advice
- 5000 legal and financial and other queries dealt with last year
- Resources, toolkits (including GDPR), advice - 625,000 web page views, 2m twitter impressions
- Good councillors guides – employment, planning, social media, finance. 175000 publications downloaded
- HR templates, with HRSP; communications advice from Breakthrough communications, risk advice from BHIB
- Working with SLCC on sector improvement : CILCA (3500), Local Council Award Scheme (634 and growing)

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SERVICES TO YOU – LOBBYING GOVERNMENT – removing barriers that get in your way

- Successfully lobbied Government not to impose referendum principles or capping for 3 years, subject to sector behaving itself!
- Persuaded Government to exempt sector from the requirement in the Data Protection Bill to appoint an external DPO officer. Saving £3m (But you still have to comply with other requirements!)
- Government delivered mandatory rate relief on public conveniences saving sector 4m
- Corona virus – lobbying re remote meetings and financial support
- Agreed to make vexatious parish polls more difficult (subject to parliamentary time)
- Lobby Day

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BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS

- Lack of awareness of role of local councils, locally and nationally
- The diversity challenge
- Encourage more people to stand for election and increase in contested elections
- Communications with residents – accessible websites, .gov domains and e-mails, streaming meetings

Election 2021: What about parish councils?

By Rob England and Jacob Tomlinson
BBC News

23 April 2021

BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS

- Inadequate governance, (Local Council Award Scheme)
- Understanding of councillor role as employer/mental health
- Relationships between councillors and clerks
- Public attitudes, social media
- Strengthen standards regime, sign up to code of conduct - government to respond to COSIPL report including sanctions
- Training! Training! Training!
- SLCC/OVW/County Associations/NALC Civility Panel promoting joint working on good governance & civility in public life

HOW CAN COUNCILLORS HELP?

- Rethink relations "Good, positive effective relations, both in and outside of councils, are the keys to delivering for our people and places."
- Rethink ambitions "Our relevance as the 1st tier of local government rests firmly on supporting and improving our communities and being at the heart of local place-shaping."
- Rethink Engagement "Our 100,000 councillors are the closest democratic representatives to residents. They can play a crucial role in restoring faith in democracy and confidence in how our country is governed and decisions which affect our lives. But we cannot merely rely on the ballot box every four years to deliver this."
- Uphold the highest standards of conduct and behaviour. Take up training and development opportunities.

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QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- Do you think there is a greater sense of community as a result of the pandemic and how do we harness it and encourage new volunteers to continue to engage?
- What views do you have on NALC's services or its campaigns?
- What is your local council doing to engage young people?
- How do we build partnerships with other tiers of government and the wider public sector?
- How do we promote civility and respect in public life?
- How do we seize the moment and ensure local councils assume their rightful place as the first tier of local government.

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