

Spring Conference 2019

NALC, Royal National Hotel, 11 February 2019

Approx 76 TPC representatives present from a number of councils.

LTC Attendees – Ian Graham & Shona Bendix

Standards

A review by the Committee on Standards in Public Health has been published 'Local Government Ethical Standards'.

NALC on Strategic Direction

Believe they have good brand recognition, 'parish' name off-putting to some, need to shout about what they do, build trust, have an easier process to set up councils and develop their new aims of strong and shared values, centre of community and vibrant councils.

Government is looking again at its community focus.

Tracey Crouch MP

Encouraged lobbying and spoke of the knowledge developed on GDPR thanks to engagement with groups.

Spoke about identified loneliness especially in 18 to 24 year olds who are increasingly feeling especially lonely. However over 65s still have highest level of loneliness.

Urban are more likely to be lonely. Young professionals also have problems.

9 million people have been identified as lonely which is a subjective concept. Isolation is an objective concept. Impacts of loneliness include obesity, early death, smoking and behaviour issues. 1 in 5 GP appointments are down to loneliness.

Now have a lead minister but it is cross-department (6) in some respects.

Social prescribing is now possible for activities and some councils might have information about local activities they can provide to GPs or make accessible through noticeboards.

The first round of a £20m fund has been agreed.

Q&As

Over 75s TV licence – will probably be retained but is a decision for the BBC.

Brexit – no idea about the consequences and outcomes.

Social prescribing – under Minister for Health. There is money coming in for this.

NALC is asking for examples of how to tackle loneliness.

Youth loneliness – more work being carried out and contemplating the impact of social media.

Planning – problems exist with planning not providing infrastructure needed for disabled people and to address loneliness.

Pensioner fairs – MP holds these, 65 organisations, 600 attending, on bus routes, in schools so accessible, brings new people out but cannot make them join anything.

Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments

Positive feedback from larger councils about advice and AGAR process.

There were some problems with electronic processes and many negatives in relation to delays. They missed some targets in this first year of operation.

Scale of non-responders was high, many exempt authorities did not declare themselves exempt etc.

Use of personal emails by clerks is problematic as no continuity for councils of who to contact and no info on website is also a problem.

Additional fees are chargeable for non-compliance. Next year have a parish meeting AGAR and one for other councils. PMs were confused and they hope there will be less non-responders.

You only need to send in AGAR electronically or by post, not both.

Internal audit will need to confirm that an exempt authority was correct to declare as exempt.

Internal audit only controlled by certain provisions in Governance and Accountability Guide.

Training is available and you can buy the Good Councillors Guide on Finance.

Non-compliance has no sanctions of substance. There is a report in public interest option, and can be named and shamed to Government and in their annual report.

Local Government Communications

Very basic session about websites needing to contain contact details and to help avoid time taken up with FOI requests. Also not to forget things like having councillor ID badges for in-person contact.

Youth Services

Session promoting putting youths at the centre of things as leaders not as consultees. Yate TC have a mini-Glastonbury which tends to attract families. Presented that residents do not talk well to youths but, if you do, then they react well and positively. Cinemas are fine but is a nightmare doing cinema for money. Better to do it as an incidental thing to a coffee morning and charge for the coffee instead. Makes it more affordable. Needs to feel better than a multiplex.

Discussion about the difficulties of engaging with those who have had tricky backgrounds which make it harder for them to know how to respond to being engaged with. Giving them cameras so that they could photograph what they like and what they do not like. Sometimes giving them examples is helpful but could restrict their thinking.

Neighbourhood Planning

Should make representations on the level of CIL for different types of development. Influence what they give you for your neighbourhood pot and what they spend their CIL money on.

Note that neighbourhood plan should be flexible enough to deal with changing CIL priorities. Refer to your defined infrastructure priorities (which can change).

Noted in principle applications enabling outline permissions to be given which are then later used as a basis for chipping away at planning rules and plans, local and neighbourhood. All is down to

whether the LPA is sufficiently strong. NPs can set principles for certain sites and can set a site delivery plan with grant through Locality.

Invest in capital not revenue as the latter is not robust and sustainable.

Sponsors

A range of useful stallholders and sponsors. Good contacts for toilet development, insurance review and advice established, advice from Blachere that should rent Christmas lights owing to a maximum 3 year life-span, and play equipment/infrastructure ideas obtained, among other things.