

NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Your Council is invited to attend an **EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (EGM)** of the New Forest Association of Local Councils to be held via **Zoom** on **Tuesday 12 December 2023**, commencing at **7.30pm**.

Graham Flexman
Co-ordinator

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
2. **Chairman's Announcements**
3. **Minutes**
To note (rather than approve) the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023.
4. **Constitution Survey Responses**
A verbal update on the responses received to the recent NFALC survey.
5. **Vision Statement and Operational Assessment**
To consider the Vision Statement and Operational Assessment per the attachment. (**Appendix 1**).
6. **Draft Constitution**
To consider the amended draft Constitution in context of **Items 4. and 5.**, per the revised attachment. (**Appendix 2**).
7. **Changes to NFALC in Practice**
To discuss the delivery and practical details of changes to NFALC, and other matters arising.
8. **Any other business**
9. **Closing remarks**
10. **Next meeting** - Due to be held on Thursday 18 January 2024 at ATC from 6.00pm.

NFALC VISION STATEMENT & OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

13th November, 2023

Issues facing NFALC as it stands

- Extremely low attendance and engagement, ***due to:***
- Little perceived value to offer local councils, ***resulting in:***
- Low awareness amongst local councillors, ***and:***
- A concomitant failure to represent the interests of the majority of councils, ***meaning:***
- A concomitant failure to meaningfully fulfil its purpose, ***exacerbated by:***
- An inability to effectively make decisions or to act within a reasonable timeframe, ***and:***
- A lack of clear role or direction.

Issues facing local councils across the Forest

- Time-poor, obligation-rich
- Variable in terms of individual expertise and experience
- Small fish in big pond, often low priority in wider context of the District and the County
- County and District decisions and agendas are often opaque and/or party political
- Little interconnectivity across the entire Forest, usually just with the nearby local councils
- Uncertainty moving forward in terms of potential local government restructuring
- Hard to find energetic, engaged, knowledgeable new local councillors
- Variable support offered
- Variable resources available

Proposed solutions for both moving forward

- Gradual move towards hybrid meetings as standard, whereby every Ordinary Meeting will be accessible both in person and online, with Councillors choosing to attend, speak and vote in whatever manner (in person or online) is most appropriate for them.
- Hold Ordinary Meetings on rotating weekdays, eventually aiming to meet in multiple Forest locations, so that all councils are able to attend at least some meetings per year (currently councils whose meetings clash are permanently excluded, as are councils who are based impractically far from Lyndhurst).
- Increase Ordinary Meeting frequency from every 3 months to every 2 months, to keep consultation and engagement more relevant, up-to-date and responsive.
- Produce and maintain a Forest-wide calendar of all local council and local authority meetings.
- Revive the website into a one-stop-shop for local Councils and Councillors, providing advice, knowledge, resources, and clear points of contact for specialist NFALC Representatives who can offer advice, expertise or representation in specific fields relevant to the New Forest in particular (Verderer engagement, Commoning, forestry, traffic management, events organising, etc.) - whilst some local councils do not need this, many others could benefit.
- Expand the constituted purposes to encompass a more interconnected, networking function for and amongst local councils and councillors within the New Forest, pooling human resources, knowledge and expertise and sharing workloads.
- Look to facilitate and promote informal social or networking events for local Councils and Councillors to engage with each other, and with representatives from relevant outside bodies and local authorities.
- Look to establish a Forest-wide clerks' network, to facilitate efficient communication between clerks and the sharing of information, resources, contacts.

- Look to establish a Forest-wide Planning Chairs’ network, to facilitate efficient communication between planning committees and the sharing of information, resources, experience and advice.
- Look to establish a presence at outward facing events, such as the New Forest Show, to increase public awareness and engagement, encouraging interest in becoming a local Councillor, and further involvement with NFALC from current local Councillors – helping to future-proof local councils.
- Further constitute a role to seek to represent and further the New Forest’s interests in a non-partisan fashion, which does not prioritise party political interests.
- Embrace an “Assembly of Councillors” approach, whereby individual councillors are encouraged to attend, engage and vote in their own right (with a maximum of three votes per member council at any one meeting), and not just as an appointed representative of their local council.
 - This will increase awareness of and interest in NFALC amongst individual councillors, and help build up a larger and more interconnected community of invested councillors who can move the organisation forward into the future.
 - Alongside a lowered quorum, increased voting numbers would allow NFALC to be more active, to respond more dynamically and efficiently, and to make decisions within a reasonable timeframe.
 - “Spreading the load” of voting across multiple councillors would result in less obligation and time commitment than is required from a single council representative (the current system), and the potential introduction of proxy voting would further aid time-poor councils.
- Having reconstituted NFALC to enable these solutions, to then revisit and if necessary revise the constitution on an annual basis thereafter, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and effective.

NFALC CONSTITUTION

1. THE NAME of the Association shall be “NFALC”, being both THE NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS and also THE NEW FOREST ASSEMBLY OF LOCAL COUNCILLORS.

2. THE PURPOSES

The purposes of NFALC are:

i) To take all action necessary to represent, protect, support, promote and cultivate the interests of all local Councils in the New Forest District and/or the New Forest National Park.

ii) For local Councils and Councillors to engage with other local Councils and Councillors within the New Forest, likewise to make their views known to the New Forest District Council, the New Forest National Park Authority, the Hampshire County Council, and any other relevant councils, authorities, bodies, institutions and stakeholders.

iii) To further represent, protect, support, promote, preserve and cultivate the distinct and traditional culture, character, identity and heritage of the New Forest and its local Councils, and in doing so to prioritise the interests of the New Forest and its unique communities over those of any local authority, non-local group, or political or external organisation or entity.

3. MEMBERSHIP

i) All Parish and Town Councils within the New Forest District and/or New Forest National Park on or after November 13th 2023 shall be entitled to membership as follows:

a) Full Members – those Councils that are in membership of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

b) Associate Members – those Councils, within both the New Forest District and the New Forest National Park on or after November 13th 2023, not in membership of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils.

c) Associate District Members – those Councils, within the New Forest District on or after November 13th 2023, but outside of the New Forest National Park, not in membership of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils.

d) Associate National Park Members – those Councils, within the New Forest National Park on or after November 13th 2023, but outside of the New Forest District, not in membership of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils.

ii) Unless explicitly stated and/or qualified, the term “Member Council” as used in this

document refers to all categories of membership outlined in I), and the term “Member Councillor” shall refer to a Councillor belonging to a Member Council.

iii) All Councillors belonging to Member Councils are Member Councillors, and entitled to attend and to vote in their own right, where this does not conflict with “5. VOTING”.

iv) NFALC shall determine, from time to time, the level of fees (if any) to be paid for each class of membership.

4. REPRESENTATION

Each Member Council and their Member Councillors shall be entitled to attend meetings of NFALC and take part in the discussions.

5. VOTING

i) Subject to paragraphs ii), iii), iv) and v) below, each Member Councillor shall be entitled to vote on a Motion, up to a maximum of three per Member Council per meeting. Should an attendee represent multiple Member Councils, they shall be entitled to one vote for each Member Council they represent, where that Member Council does not exceed three votes. In the event of an equal number of votes being cast for and against a Motion, the person presiding at the meeting shall have a casting vote.

ii) All votes must be made subject to due and open minded consideration at the meeting itself, and free from predetermination, or they will be considered invalid.

iii) Full Member Councillors shall be entitled to speak and vote on all matters coming before NFALC, including all matters relating to HALC and NALC.

iv) Associate Member and Associate National Park Member Councillors shall be entitled to speak and vote on all matters relating to the New Forest National Park.

v) Associate Member and Associate District Member Councillors shall be entitled to speak and vote on all matters relating to the New Forest District.

6. REPRESENTATION ON THE COUNTY ASSOCIATION

At its Annual Meeting, if necessary, NFALC shall appoint one Councillor from a Full Member Council to be a Director of the County Association, and also up to three other Full Member Councillors to deputise in the absence of that Director at any meeting where the appointee attends at the County Association as a Director.

7. MEETINGS

i) NFALC shall hold its Annual General Meeting (or Moot) in person, in the month of June or July on or around Midsummer’s Day each year, and shall hold at least five other meetings during the year as Members may decide.

ii) The first business at each Annual Meeting shall be, if necessary, the appointment of a Chairman from amongst the Councillors belonging to Full Members of NFALC, and such other Officers as the Association may decide. Such appointments are made for the full term of the Councillor ending when a full election or full uncontested election to their local council occurs, or until such time as the holder is no longer a Councillor, or a vote of No Confidence is held in which each Member Council is given a single vote, and two thirds of all Member Councils vote for a motion of No Confidence at two consecutive meetings.

iii) The terms Chairman and Vice-Chairman as used in this document are gender neutral, and such titles shall be applied regardless of the gender identity of the holder of such an appointment.

iv) An Extraordinary Meeting may be called by the Chairman or acting Chairman at any time, or on receipt of a written representation from at least three Full Member Councils.

v) An Emergency Extraordinary Meeting may be called by the Chairman at any time.

vi) At all meetings a Quorum shall be 9 individual voting attendees from Member Councils, excluding any proxy attendees.

vii) In order to facilitate the achievement of NFALC's purposes, the Chairman shall appoint such Representatives as is deemed necessary at any meeting.

viii) In order to facilitate the achievement of its purposes, NFALC shall appoint such Focus Groups, Representatives or Committees as it deems necessary at any meeting.

ix) Focus Groups shall be appointed on a 'task and finish' basis and appointed for the specific purpose of pursuing, on behalf of NFALC, any topics or matters of interest deemed appropriate. Each Focus Group so appointed shall report on its work to the Ordinary Meetings of NFALC. There shall be no limit to the number of Members of each Focus Group and all Member Councillors with an interest in the topic shall be entitled to attend any Focus Group meetings.

x) The Chairman and Vice Chairman of NFALC shall be ex-officio Members of all Focus Groups and Committees and shall receive all papers relating thereto and be entitled to attend and vote at the Focus Group meetings.

xi) The Chairman and Vice Chairman of NFALC shall be ex-officio Chairman and Vice Chairman of all Committees until such time as each Committee votes on a Chairman and Vice Chairman.

xii) On the appointment of a Focus Group, NFALC shall appoint a Facilitator Council to provide administrative support and lead discussion on the topic for which the Focus Group has been appointed.

8. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

i) Notices of all meetings (excepting Emergency Extraordinary Meetings) shall be sent to Member Councils by the Secretary or Honorary Secretary at least thirteen clear days before the meeting. Failure or omission to give notice of a meeting of NFALC (or a Focus Group

or Committee) to any Member Council, Member Councillor or person entitled to attend, or the non-receipt of such a notice, shall not invalidate the proceedings of such a meeting.

ii) An Emergency Extraordinary Meeting may be called by the Chairman at any time, whereupon notice shall be sent to all Member Councils at least three days before the meeting. Failure or omission to give notice of an Emergency Extraordinary Meeting of NFALC (or a Focus Group or Committee) to any Member Council, Member Councillor or person entitled to attend, or the non-receipt of such a notice, shall not invalidate the proceedings of such a meeting.

iii) Notices of meetings and accompanying papers will be given digitally, unless also requested in hard copy by a Member Council in advance of the meeting.

iv) Notices of Annual Meetings and their accompanying papers will automatically be given by post in hard copy, as well as in digital form.

9. RESOLUTIONS

Any Member Councillor wishing to have a resolution discussed at a meeting shall notify the Secretary or Honorary Secretary in writing 21 clear days before the meeting and include the full text of the resolution and, in addition, shall ensure that they attend the meeting to propose the resolution. The Chairman of the meeting may accept, at their discretion, a further resolution of an emergency or urgent nature if notified on the day of the meeting.

10. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

An Amendment to the Constitution may be moved at a meeting of NFALC by a Full Member Councillor and must be approved either by the Chairman and a majority of the Full Member Councillors present, or by a three quarter majority of all Full Member Councillors present, where at least two thirds of all Full Member Councils have a Councillor in attendance. Notice of any proposed amendment shall be given to all Member Councils 28 clear days before the date of the meeting.

11. DISSOLUTION

Any proposal that NFALC shall be dissolved shall be the subject of 60 clear days notice by the Secretary or Honorary Secretary to all Member Councils and to HALC, the Hampshire County Council (HCC), the New Forest District Council (NFDC) and the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA). In the event of NFALC adopting the proposal (which shall require votes at two consecutive meetings with a three-quarter majority of Member Councils at each), it shall first be notified to the Chief Executive of HALC, together with particulars of any property held, the balance of funds in hand and an Account of income and expenditure since the last Annual Meeting. The adoption of such a proposal shall then be notified to NFDC, HCC and the NFNPA in both digital and hard copy formats. The future of any property and the funds of NFALC shall be determined by the Full Members of NFALC.

13th November 2023