



# **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC OFFICERS**

## **Annual Training Event and AGM**

**Wednesday 18 March 2026**



Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH

***THE event for all who work in Civic Office***

## BOOKING IS OPEN!

We have been teasing you with the date for a little while but here is the fully detailed timetable, workshop descriptions and importantly, the [Booking Form](#). We have learned from talking to our members that whilst they were happy to have online training during the pandemic they much prefer in person events, so for the second year running, we are inviting our members to join us for a face-to-face event.

In all our planning for this event we have been very conscious that the most pressing issue for most of our members is Local Government Reorganisation and we have kept this in the forefront of our minds when putting together the programme.

Delegates are being invited to attend two plenary sessions and two workshops, from a choice of four, and you will find more information on these in this brochure.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ELECTION TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

During the [AGM](#) we will be electing a committee to steer **NACO** through the following year. Nominations for members of the Committee need to be made by 5.00 pm on Wednesday 11 March 2026. [The Nomination Form](#) is on the website, and we hope that if you are interested in becoming a member you will complete one. Please note that the form can only be accepted if it has been signed by your line manager, agreeing to your nomination. The Committee meets three or four times each year and meetings are usually hybrid. If you would like to know more about what is involved, please contact the Chair, Tracy Frisby, on [chair@naco.uk.com](mailto:chair@naco.uk.com)

## OUTLINE PROGRAMME

There will be two Plenary Sessions, attended by all delegates and you then choose a further two workshops from a choice of four – A, B, C and D below. You will be able to let us know your choices when you complete the booking form.

### Plenary Session 1

#### Local Government Reorganisation and its impact on civic office

In April 2023, the six district councils in the county of Cumbria and the county council were abolished and replaced with two new unitary councils – Westmoreland and Furness and Cumberland councils. In 2021 a similar reorganisation took place in Northamptonshire, with the abolition of the county council and seven districts and boroughs - replaced by two Unitaries.

In the next two years this model will be used across 21 other county areas as Local Government Reorganisation will create the biggest structural change in over half a century. The impact on the work we do cannot be underestimated.

We are putting together a panel of speakers who were directly affected by these and similar reorganisations to share their experience of the change process, the establishment of new protocols and the impact on civic life in the abolished council areas.

Questions sure to be addressed include:

- What profiles have been established for the office of Chair of the new unitary councils?
- What has happened to the ancient offices of Mayor in those borough and city councils that were abolished - their traditions, civic treasures and relative precedence?
- What has become of more recently created Mayors from the 1974 reorganisations?
- What has been the impact on pre-existing Town Mayors within the former districts and boroughs?
- In unparished boroughs and cities set for abolition, what are the relative merits of Parishing v Charter Trustees?

With specific recent experience of LGR what are the key lessons for those of us in civic office who are approaching this between now and 2028?

Even if your council is not directly affected by the proposed changes (London and existing metropolitan areas) you will still be able to contribute to this session with, for instance, your relationship with town councils. Bear in mind also that once these two tranches are complete, government might then turn its attention to the creation of more Unitaries of around half a million population, leaving very few immune from possible change.

### Plenary Session 2

#### An update on NACO's Guidance Notes on a Ceremonial Response to Death

*Led by Jim Babbington OBE DL, Vice Chair, NACO*

Local Government Reorganisation will have a profound impact on the structures within which many of us operate. The implications for the ways in which we offer a ceremonial response to death will be significant. What will this look like in a new unitary authority? Will greater responsibilities end up falling on parish and town councils? Who now needs to be included in our plans? These and many other questions will be discussed at the 2026 Training Day. For those already working within a unitary this will be an opportunity to share your experience and shape the way forward. For those in the turmoil of reorganisation it will be a chance to plot the route ahead. Plans need to be robust, resilient and capable of implementation, whatever else is happening. This workshop aims to ensure you are ready – come what may.

## Workshop A

### Application of Risk Management within the civic function

*Led by David Humm, NACO Executive Member*

The presentation will cover the root cause of vulnerability leading to risk, how those causes should be identified within the civic function, and what can be done to mitigate the vulnerabilities from developing into risk.

The presentation will touch on Martyn's Law specifically, to clarify what that means for a civic team. How to increase Situational Awareness whilst in public, why that is important and applicable for civic delivery.

## Workshop B

### Harnessing Artificial Intelligence and social media for civic engagement

*Led by Stephen Burke, NACO Executive Member*

Empowering Civic Officers with digital tools for enhanced community impact

- introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Public Sector
- the evolving role of social media in civic communication
- integrating AI tools for effective public engagement and service delivery
- best practices for responsible and ethical use of AI on social platforms
- developing action plans for AI adoption and Social Media Strategy in civic roles.

## Workshop C

### More than a robe and chain: The Civic Officer's role explained

*Led by Emara Roth and Paul Mayhew, NACO Executive Members*

This session demystifies the role of a civic officer. Learn how to balance tradition and efficiency, navigate protocols, support the civic head's public image - from ceremonial duties and civic protocols to community engagements and political neutrality. This session explores the skills, diplomacy, and discretion required to thrive in this unique and prestigious role.

## Workshop D

### Open Mic

*Led by Pat Seager, Vice Chair, NACO and Sarah Asquith, NACO Executive Member*

This ever-popular workshop returns. This is your opportunity to discuss in depth problems and situations you are facing. Quite often you will find you are not alone and there are other members in the same boat. We know how much our members value networking, and this is an opportunity for you to do just this. At our last Training Event in Southwark one member said she wished there could be a day when members just talked to each other. She felt she would get an immense amount of help and advice that way.

## The Outline Timetable for the day is:

<b>09:30 – 10:00</b>	REGISTRATION
<b>10:00 – 10:15</b>	Civic Welcome and Housekeeping
<b>10:20 – 11:35</b>	Plenary Session 1
<b>11:45 – 12:55</b>	Workshop 1
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	LUNCH
<b>14:00 – 15:10</b>	Workshop 2
<b>15:15 – 15:30</b>	AGM
<b>15:30 – 16:15</b>	Plenary Session 2
<b>16:15</b>	Chair's Closing Remarks

## ACCOMMODATION AND TRAVEL

Our start time of 10.00 am provides maximum opportunity for as many delegates as possible to travel to Sheffield on the day.

If you do need to stay overnight there are plenty of hotels in Sheffield and Sheffield has excellent travel links with most of the UK.

We have created a document with some [accommodation information and travel facts](#).

Any queries regarding travel and accommodation should be sent to Stephen Burke at Sheffield City Council, [stephen.burke@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.burke@sheffield.gov.uk)

## AND FINALLY – THE DELEGATE FEE

The fee for the event will include attendance for the whole day, all refreshments and a buffet lunch. Because of **NACO**'s good budgeting and housekeeping, we are proud to be able to offer this event at a delegate rate of only **£150**.

**BOOK NOW!**

Any queries regarding this event should be emailed to [secretary@naco.uk.com](mailto:secretary@naco.uk.com)