

Northumberland Association of Local Councils

Minutes of an Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 18 October 2014 at 10.30am in Storey Park Community Centre, St Mary's Field, Morpeth

Present: Cllr D Woodard (President), Cllr R Butler (Chair of County Committee), D Francis (Secretary) and 31 representatives from member-councils.

1. Welcome: the President welcomed everyone to the meeting and received apologies for absence.
2. Minutes: the minutes of the 2013 AGM, held on Saturday 19 October 2013 were agreed as a correct record.
3. Matters arising:
 - (i) Minute 10 Local Development Plan – councils had recently been updated on progress with the next stage of consultation over the LDP in Northumberland, which would begin in mid-December, for a 2-month period.
4. Annual Report and Accounts: Ray Butler presented the annual report and also in the absence of the Honorary Treasurer, the audited accounts for 2013-14. After some discussion, the meeting received the report and accounts.
5. Subscription formula for 2015-16: Ray Butler presented the recommendation of the County Committee, to introduce a new subscription formula for 2015-16, to be based on an increased 'fixed charge' and a variable amount based on the Council Tax Payer base of each parish, together with the National ALC levy, (which is based upon the number of electors). The ensuing discussion recognised the difficulties which the County Council had caused, both by ceasing its support for NALC/CAN, and by declining to pass DCLG 'Localisation of Council Tax Support' grant to local councils. Nevertheless, there was substantial goodwill among local councils, who value NALC and its close working relationship with CAN. On a formal vote, it was agreed without dissent to:
 - (i) Implement the recommended subscription formula, based on a £30 per annum fixed amount, a 26.1p in the pound Council Tax base variable amount, the National ALC levy, and a 'cushion' to reduce the cash increase of any council to no more than £250 per annum.
 - (ii) To amend the NALC constitution to accommodate this formula, as follows:

Subscription: Each member council shall pay to the County Association on or before 1 July in each financial year ending 31 March, a subscription which shall be based upon the number of electors and the Council Tax base for the parish and the scale of subscriptions shall be reviewed from time to time by the General Meeting.

6. Appointment of Honorary Officers: the meeting agreed to reappoint as follows:

- (i) President: David Woodard
- (ii) Vice Presidents: Norman Dunn and Alex Wallace
- (iii) Treasurer: Gillian Turner
- (iv) Auditor: Peter Basnett

7. Appointment of County Committee members: the meeting agreed to appoint or re-appoint as follows:

Louis Brown	Ashington
Ray Butler	Choppington
Monica Anderton	East Tynedale
Mike Wood	Haltwhistle and West Tyne
Ernest Dobson	Prudhoe
Raymond Thompson	Newcastle

8. Presentation: David Francis gave a talk on the theme 'Active local councils in our area – the past, present and future'. Drawing on the experiences of the last 15 years, he pointed to the succession of 'sticks and carrots' deployed by Government to develop and/or regulate our sector. He highlighted the current array of legislation, covering 'open-ness and transparency', the extension of public rights, and issues regarding financial controls. Looking to the future, he called upon our principal authorities to recognise the broad outlook of our sector, which extends beyond the 'local services' focus, and the problems inherent in the revised Northumberland Charter. Austerity measures, the threat of precept-capping and the passporting of Government grants to local councils, were likely to be high on our agenda. In the near future, we would be looking carefully at the General Election political commitments, and we would be supporting the possible creation of new councils in Tyneside.

Following a question-and-answer session the President thanked David, and the meeting closed at 12.20pm.