



NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the County Committee at 10am on Saturday 9th September 2023 at Stakeford and Bomarsund Social Welfare Centre. Stakeford. Northumberland NE62 5UD

Present in person: Cllrs: Alex Wallace, John Potts, David Francis, Paul Vaughan, Mike Wood, Paul Dancer, Alan Sambrook, Paul Claridge, John Tully, David Nicholson.

Present online: Cllrs: Graham Curry, Gwen Woodman, Simon Taylor and Viola Rook.

Also Present

Mr Graeme Popay – Chief Officer [Actions marked as GP]

1: Welcome.

Chair Cllr Alex Wallace welcomed everyone to the meeting. Alex reported on a recent meeting that he and the CO had with Diane Munro, Asylum Seeker & Refugee Manager for NCC. Diana was reaching out to NALC to see if there were any job opportunities, (either as a volunteer or in an employed status) within Parish/Town Councils that could be suitable for Ukrainian refugees in Northumberland. Alex asked members to discuss this further within their Councils – more information would be in the next ENews **ACTION GP**.

2: Apologies for Absence.

Cllrs: Sylvia Hill, Martin Dickson-Green, Alan Taylor, Deb Wilson, Karen Overbury, Graham Eastwood, Adam Hogg, David Hughes, Gillian Turner.

3: Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th June 2023

All agreed to accept the minute as a true record.

4: Matter Arising

Item 9 - Cllr John Tully raised the topic and asked for an update on allowances/expenses – following the last meeting the CO had officially raised this with the Monitoring Officer and it had been raised again on his call with them last week. He agreed to contact the Monitoring Officer to see if there was an update on progress. **ACTION GP**

Item 9 – Cllr Colin Wakeling reported that he had spoken to Neil Easton. He asked if this was a problem across the County? Could this be something NALC could survey on? Colin to provide some words and GP to put an article in the ENews. **ACTION CW & GP**

5: Finance

A financial report was tabled showing the current position

Outcome - All agreed to accept the report.

Alex reminded members that Gillian Turner would be standing down as treasurer at the AGM and we did need to think about a successor.



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Contd.

6: Training & Mentoring

GP reported that over 30 Cllrs and Clerks had signed up for training with the Parkinson Partnership. The arrangement with Durham & Cleveland ALC had attracted several participants on their Zoom training as well as five Clerks who have signed up for the CiLCA training. A review of County training opportunities and costs was discussed. It was agreed that a Training working group (Alan Sambrook, David Nicholson and David Francis) would meet and report back to the next meeting.

7: Purpose of the Committee

After discussion it was agreed that a working group (Paul Vaughan, David Nicholson and David Francis) would meet and report back to the next meeting.

8: County Conference

The date was set for Thursday 5th October. 2:00pm – 6:00pm at County Hall and bookings were now open on EventBrite. The final program had been agreed with NCC and was as follows: a market place setting staffed by NCC Officers to allow members to circulate and ask questions, two breakout training/briefing sessions, one with National Association CO Jonathan Owen and the other on FixmyStreet led by NCC. This would be followed by a plenary starting at 4:00pm led by Glen Sanderson to include Q&A session. There would be refreshment and a light buffet throughout the day provided by NCC

9: National issues

Cllr David Francis gave a verbal report on national key issues including:

- Martyn's Law - NALC has supported the government's aim of making the public safer at publicly accessible locations and security measures but stressed that interventions should be reasonable, affordable, and proportionate.
- Planning system - The government has been undertaking its plan to reform England's planning system, mainly through its proposed Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. Despite limited powers, local councils are vital in providing local perspectives on planning decisions. Many councils have created neighbourhood plans, giving them a stronger voice within the planning system. NALC has continuously highlighted the crucial work councils do on planning and continues to push them to have greater power and control over planning issues in their area. (NALC have launched a new webpage to support this - nalc.gov.uk/our-work/planning)
- Hedgerow protection - NALC has urged the government to simplify the rules to protect hedgerows and give local (parish and town) councils a more significant role

Cllr Francis reported that his term as Chair of the National Policy Committee was ending soon and he asked for the Committee support to remain the Northumberland ALC representative.

This was agreed.



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10: Issues raised by Committee members

Question raised by Cllr Paul Vaughan – How County communicates refuse collection dates with the public. Cllr Vaughan was concerned that there was too much emphasis on social media being the main communication tool for NCC residents which disadvantaged the less IT literate in the community, could this be backed up with written advice. Cllr Viola Rook was concerned that from her experience of being on the Digital Inclusion Working Group we were in danger of creating a two tier society – those with the skills and technology and those without. Members requested some clarity on Cllr Vaughans concern - **ACTION GP**

From Cllr David Francis – in 2015 NCC produced a policy regarding pre application planning advice, there had been a recent review of this process and a new Charter had been introduced. Cllr Francis was concerned that this had reduced the role of Parish & Town Councils and had contacted NCC. Cllr Alex Wallace – believed that this document was still in draft form. Cllr Francis & The CO had received a reply from Rob Mufin Director of Planning as follows: There has not been a formal PC role on pre apps for several years, as the service is normally commercially confidential until an application is actually submitted

11: Topics of Future meetings

No time to available to discuss.

12: Any Other Urgent Business

None – please contact GP if you have a topic for discussion.

12: Future Meeting of the Committee

Next meeting – Saturday 25th November 10.00am Stakeford and Bomarsund Social Welfare Centre. Stakeford. Northumberland NE62 5UD

Meeting Closed at 11:45