



Northumberland Association
of Local Councils

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Held at 10.15 am on Saturday 9 October 2021 in The East
Bedlington Community Centre

Present:

Mr D Woodard (President in the Chair), Cllr A Wallace (Chair of the County Committee), Ms G Turner (Honorary Treasurer) and representatives of 39 Member Councils.
Stephen Rickitt (Chief Officer)
And other guests

1: Welcome and apologies for absence

The President welcomed all to the meeting, the first physical one since the pandemic lockdown.

Apologies were given from

- Cllr David Bewley – Amble
- Cllr Peter Coates - Longhirst
- Cllr Liz Dunn – Lynemouth
- Cllr Christine Greenwell - Ponteland
- Cllr Violet Rook – Blakelaw & North Fenham
- Shotley Low Quarter Parish Council

2: Minutes of the 2020 AGM

The minutes of the digital meeting held on 3 October 2020 were agreed as a true record and signed by the President.

3: Matters arising

None

4: Annual Report 2020-2021

In moving the Annual Report as previously circulated, Cllr Wallace looked back to how Members of the Association had worked hard to support their communities during the pandemic. He was, however, saddened that no Member Councils had entered the national

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Star Councils Awards and urge that we do not hide our achievements. He paid tribute to his colleagues on the County Committee, CAN for their assistance and the staff. The report was approved. [A copy is attached to the signed minutes]

5: Finance

5.1 The Accounts for 2020-2021

On the recommendation of the Honorary Treasurer, the Accounts 2020 -2021 (as shown in the Annual Report) were considered and approved. She paid tribute to the continuing work by Margaret Tweddell in keeping and presenting the financial information in such good order.

5.2 Subscription formula for 2022-2023

On the recommendation of the County Committee, the Meeting resolved that this Association increases both the standard amount and the variable element based on the Band D equivalent by one percent as this is the increase being recommended for the national NALC's levy.

6: Honorary Officers

The following were elected as the Honorary Officers:

President – David Woodard

Vice Presidents – David Francis and Alex Wallace

Treasurer – Gillian Turner

Auditor – Peter Basnett

7: Appointment of County Committee Members

The following seats fell vacant due to rotation and the further vacancies as shown. The Meeting resolved to elect the Councillors as shown in the table below for three-year terms.

The Chief Officer informed the meeting that work had resumed on reviewing the existing constituencies.

Constituency Area (C) or Single Council seat (S)	Member of the County Committee
Ashington (S)	Matthew Cuthbert
Berwick & Islandshire (1)	Alan Bowlas
Berwick & Islandshire (2)	Colin Wakeling
Blyth (S)	John Potts
Choppington (S)	Paul Vaughan
East Tynedale (C)	Monica Anderton
Haltwhistle & West Tyne (C)	Mike Wood
Hexham and Hexhamshire (C)	Graham Curry
Newbiggin (S)	Gwen Woodman
Newcastle (2) (C)	Steven Phelps
Ponteland & Rural West (South) (C)	Alan Varley
Prudhoe and East Tynedale (C)	Christine Cuthbert
Seahouses & Belford (C)	Sylvia Hillan
Ashington (S)	Matthew Cuthbert

The Meeting also agreed to elect Cllr Graham Eastwood as the Seaton Valley representative

8: The Business Plan 2018-2023

The Chief Officer went through the targets in the plan and comments as shown in the table.

Target	Chief Officer Comment's relating to 2020/2021
A: To run or participate in at least one event per year promoting Local Councils	This had not occurred due to the pandemic
B: To avoid any complaints about delays. The administrative systems do not allow for a target time.	No formal complaints had been received
C: To offer at least ten training events for members	This had been exceeded with the move to digital briefings proving popular
D: To continue to distribute at least 40 issues of the Weekly Enews	This had been exceeded when aggregating the Enews and the Member Council Updates
E: To promote a widespread and well-informed interest in local government with the same target as in A above	This had not occurred due to the pandemic
F: To have at least one Member Council enter the national Star Council awards each year	Not met

Gi. To hold awareness raising events in Newcastle and North Tyneside by 31 December 2018	Gi – The Chief Officer regretted that his attempts to engage with senior members and officers of both the City Council and North Tyneside Council had not currently met with success
Gii. To have at least one new local Council established in both Newcastle and North Tyneside by 31 December 2022	Gii – This target is unlikely to be achieved

9: Any other urgent business

None

10: Presentation and Discussion - A celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Association.

10.1: The Past

Cllr David Francis went through the history of the first creation of civil parishes in 1894

How parish councils came into this world

- Created by the Local Govt Act 1894, at the same time as urban and rural DCs, and shortly after county councils
- Unlike the other 'tiers', the concept of parish councils drew greatly on the values of community-level self-governance, harking all the way back to pre-Norman structures and traditions.
- Brought together powers previously exercised by the Vestry; Churchwardens; and Overseers: mortuaries; consents re Gas and Water works facilities; licensing Knackers Yards; nomination of parish Constables; Metropolitan commons; consent for highways improvements; closed churchyards, parish books; the parish chest; fire engines and fire escapes.
- The 1894 Act also gave additional powers: maintenance of public footpaths and other rights of way; management of sanitary functions, concurrent with RDCs and UDCs (ponds, ditches, sewage works, water supplies); recreation grounds and public walks; village greens.
- Then, further powers gradually added: allotments, postal facilities, provision of public buildings and offices; document depository; war memorials; playing fields; public entertainment, smallholdings.

But:

- Precept limited to 3d in the £ (or up to 6D, subject to Parish Meeting consent)
- Loss of agricultural rates income in 1890s and 1920s
- Gradual loss of some of the 1894 powers

- Growing concern in the 1920s and 30s that parish councils may be abolished

Formation of associations of parish councils:

- Attempts to form a national body in the 20s and 30s were short-lived
- A few county associations were created at that time
- Mid 1930s, the Rural Department of the National Council of Social Service formed a Central Parish Councils' Committee, which compiled several advisory publications, and undertook some basic advisory casework
- Then World War 2 intervened, but towards the end of the war there was growing interest in forming a national association, and a growing recognition that this could best be achieved by a bottom-up process, of creating county associations
- So the Central PCs Committee compiled some useful promotional material and a model constitution for a county association, and worked via the rural community councils (where they existed) and similar bodies to support the creation of county associations
- Durham Association was established in 1945
- Then, in 1946 the Rural Department of the Northumberland and Tyneside Council of Social Service set about organising consultations and conferences to establish a Northumberland Association
- NAPC created in November 1946, with NTCSS' Michael Martindale as Acting Secretary. NAPC formalised itself further in the following months, but MM moved-on to an RCC/APC chief officer post in Cambridgeshire, and Alec Trotter was appointed in February 1947 as his successor.

1950s onwards:

- C 85 PCs, of which 67 became members of NAPC
- NAPC helped create the Northumberland RCC as a separate body, in 1951, with Alec Trotter as its chief officer. That RCC-NAPC relationship has stood the test of time very effectively and productively
- Mid 1950s NAPC worked with the County Council on a review of parishing, which reduced the number of separate parish areas from c 500 down to c166, and increased the number of PCs to c 140
- New powers came with Acts during every decade since then: recreation, the arts, planning, lotteries, crime prevention, renewable energy etc. General power of competence. But also some removal of powers: e.g. support of postal services, right to appoint school governors. Plus the loss of business rates income in the late 1980s
- New councils were created from the 1980s onwards: Morpeth; Blakelaw & North Fenham; Berwick; then the 8 new ones in SE Northumberland in 2009, making this county of very few in the country to be entirely parished.

10.2: The Present

The Chief Officer went through the results of the Northumberland & Newcastle Local Councillor Census 2021 drawing an initial conclusion that membership of Local Councils during the pandemic had held up well. The results were to be considered by the County Committee at its next meeting. [A copy is attached to the signed minutes]

10.3: The Future

The Chief Officer then posed questions as a way of looking ahead

Meetings

Would these be Face-to-Face or Digital in the future. In his view Local Government needed the power to hold hybrid meetings if an individual Council wished to do so

Finance

Our sector needs the removal of the threats of precept rises being effectively capped as this deterred innovative work. Similarly the emerging suspicion of a looming limit on borrowing was concerning

Councillors

Was there a likelihood of more party-political level within our sector and what might be the effect of “single issue” Councillors coming forward

Powers

The Chief Officer unashamedly support the removal of the qualifications restricting the use of the General Power of Competence, although some dissent was expressed during the meeting

Standards and the Ombudsman

Would there be a common model code of conduct, and would the remit of the Ombudsman be extended to part or all of the Local Council sector? Whilst the current standards regime was broadly believed to be toothless, a real danger exists of an overly bureaucratic replacement. He had grave concerns about the resource implications of the Ombudsman being able to investigate Local Councils

Urban Community Councils

He foresaw grassroots pressure for the creation of these and lived in hope that the upper-tier urban authorities would realise the extra opportunities brought by their creation.

Concluding, the Chief Officer was confident that Parish Town and Community Councils would survive for the next 75 years.

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There being none, the President declared the meeting closed at 11.45 am, thanking the Community Centre for providing the facility and for all those attending..

Confirmed as a true record
and signed by the President.....

Date.....

DRAFT