



Northumberland Association of Local Councils

Dear Colleagues,

County Committee

There will be an electronic meeting of the County Committee on Friday 24 September 2021 at 10.00 am

The ZOOM link is in the accompanying email. The meeting will be recorded – see item 6 below.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Rickitt

NALC Chief Officer

20 September 2021

AGENDA

1: Welcome

The Chairman will open the meeting.

2: Committee Membership and Appointments

At the time of agenda preparation, there are no candidates for co-option

3: Apologies for Absence

The Chief Officer will give details of any apologies received. Members of the Committee are reminded that if they are unable to attend, a substitute Councillor is welcome but please let the Chief Officer know so that they may be admitted to the meeting.

4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 July 2021

To agree the draft minutes as a true record

5: Matters arising, (if not otherwise on the agenda) including

- Rail Services
- Second Homes and Holiday Lets

6: Style of Meetings

The Committee asked that investigations were undertaken into recording meetings and make these available to members of the Committee for a short period after the meeting. This would particularly apply to the informal briefings with invited speakers. As a test, this meeting will be recorded using ZOOM with access only for those with the meeting password.

7: Election Recharges in Northumberland

To consider the response from the County Council in Appendix One.

8: Recruitment of Clerks and Internal Auditors

8.1 There are signs that some Member Councils are struggling to find a clerk and/or an internal auditor. Difficulties are also experienced if a Local Council needs a short-term temporary locum clerk.

8.2 This is not a local issue as other County Associations have reported similar problems.

8.3 Vacancies are shown free of charge in the Enews. Attempts to compile a register of possible locum clerks and/or internal auditors have met with no success in the recent past.

8.4 The County Committee is asked to consider the problem and suggest any avenues which might be explored.

9: Borrowing Approvals

The County Committee is asked to consider whether to express concern at the possible national restrictions on borrowing approvals implied by the recent email from MHCLG to the national NALC – copy in Appendix Two

10: The Briefing Programme September 2021 – January 2022

The following is the current working draft (as at 15 September)

All on-line and starting at 7.00 pm

Ref	Date	Title	Presenter	Bookings	Attendance
1	Thurs 23 Sept	General Introduction to Local Councils	NALC / SER		
2	Tues 5 Oct	Finance and Budgeting for Local Councils	NALC / SER		

3	Thurs 14 Oct	Planning – Permitted Development and Prior Notification	NCC		
4	Tues 26 Oct	Planning – Highway and Rights of Way Issues	NCC		
5	Mon 8 Nov	Common Land and Village Greens	NALC / SER		
6	Mon 22 Nov	Planning -Section 106s and Developer Contributions	NCC		
7	Thurs 25 Nov	Chairing a Local Council	NALC / SER		
8	Wed 8 Dec	Planning - Neighbourhood Plans – Lessons Learnt	NCC		
9	Tues 14 Dec	Planning – Conservation Areas	NCC		
10	Thurs 13 Jan	Standards & Codes of Conduct	NALC / SER		
11	Monday 24 January	Planning - Enforcement	NCC		

11: Finance

Report attached

12: Issues raised by Committee Members

This is the opportunity for Committee Members to raise matters which may be of general interest affecting Local Councils in Newcastle and Northumberland.

13: The Association's AGM

To provide a verbal update on the arrangements.

14: The County Council's Town and Parish Council Charter

To provide a verbal update following the meeting of the Working Group with the County Council on Tuesday 21 September.

15: Dormant Parish Councils

The following parish councils have not met for a considerable time

- Akeld
- Bewick
- Cheviotside Ilderton
- Cheviotside Roddam
- Earle
- Ewart
- Kilham
- Snitter

The chief officer is holding an initial scoping meeting with County Council officers to discuss possible community governance reviews. A verbal update will be given on the outcome of that meeting.

16: National Issues

16.1 To select upto three voting members for the national NALC's digital AGM to be held on Tuesday, 26 October 2020 via zoom starting at 11:00

16.2 A verbal update will be provided on key national issues.

17: Any Other Urgent Business

Please let the Chairman and Chief Officer know of any items that you wish to raise.

18: Future Meetings of the Committee

It is recommended that the next meeting is held on Friday 22 October at 1000 by Zoom.

Appendix One – Election Recharges in Northumberland

Please see attached a breakdown of the estimated figures that make up the £450 administration cost. Tasks are completed by an appropriate member of staff for the level of responsibility of each individual item and the rates of pay have been checked and are correct against the current NCC bands.

As you can see from the list the figures add up to £602.27. The £450 charge is based on the original 2016 rates of pay and materials and printer charges.

Payment timing within the current year is in line with any unscheduled polls contested or not that we are asked to plan for. If the town and or parish councils are struggling to pay the invoice, they should contact the Accounts Receivable Team (number on the invoice) who will work with them to achieve an appropriate repayment plan. Invoices must be raised at the appropriate time and VAT accounted for correctly. The money is due to be paid to the Council now and it is not appropriate not to send an invoice and just deduct the money due from the precept next year.

If you require any further clarification on this matter do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Mark

Mark Crawford (AEA Cert)

Election Manager

PROJECT MANAGEMENT COSTS – ELECTIONS

The project management costs were introduced in 2016 and have been in place since for both contested and uncontested elections.

Uncontested = £450

UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS	ESTIMATED COST
TASKS	
Agree date of election and count location	21.75
Agree date and time for postal vote opening	21.75
Agree date and time for count	21.75
Set up election in Xpress	16.71

Prepare folder in Sharepoint to hold documents relating to election	8.35
Prepare paper folder to hold documents/proofing relating to election	8.35
Prepare nomination envelope to hold and mark off nominations received	8.35
Check and order any required stationery from SHAWS	16.71
Cost of nomination pack from Shaws	Min 5.50
Book venue for postal vote opening	8.35
Send out polling station booking letters and Reminders	10.21
Update system from completed polling station booking letters	5.10
Inform Rosemary/IT of attendance at postal vote opening	8.35
Run timetable from Xpress and checked	8.35
Share timetable with team and update calendar with dates	10.21
Inform Civica of election	8.35
Send Civica Election Management Report	8.35
Email Parish Clerk to request if poll cards are required	8.35
Prepare and check Notice of Election	16.71
Publish Notice of Election at: Reception/Website including setting up relevant pages/Send to Parish Clerks	26.92
Update calendar with Civica data and production dates	10.21
Download, proof and approve poll card templates	25.06
Send out nomination packs on request	2.55
Take appointments for nominations to be received	2.55
Appoint DRO and RO for management of the election	43.55
Receive, adjudicate and enter nominations into Xpress	Min 8.35
Check and send out Notice of Validity of Nomination and attach copy to nomination	Min 8.35
Prepare and check Statement of Persons Nominated	8.35
Prepare and check Notice of Uncontested election	8.35
Publish SOPN and Notice of Uncontested election at: Reception/Website/Send to Parish Clerks	26.92

Cancel polling stations not required	13.46
Cancel count venue	13.46
Cancel postal vote venue	13.46
Inform Civica not required	2.47
Close down election in Xpress/ and print post-election documents	16.71
Pre-election set up costs from printers	150

Appendix Two – Borrowing Approvals – Email sent to the County Committee on 10 September 2021

Dear all,

The national NALC have just forwarded an email from the MHCLG dealing with borrowing approvals.

The substance states

“In terms of the broader review of MHCLGs Parish Borrowing application form and guidance documentation, we have already established working groups with a select number of County Officers and Parish Clerks who volunteered to engage in our review process. I will be directly communicating with them to share our application pack for review and ask specific consultation questions to gather their thoughts. Happy to copy you into that email.

The ancillary documents on the members’ area of the NALC website need to be reviewed and updated – an updated version of all our documentation to replace the existing versions on the NALC website will be provided when our review has been conducted and implemented.

I have one further point that I wished to raise. In recent months the Parish Borrowing team at MHCLG have noticed a significant rise in the number of incoming applications from Parish or Town Councils who are requesting to borrow an amount of £1million+. We do not currently have a hard limit on the maximum amount a Council wishes to borrow as our assessment takes into consideration affordability, impact on precept and plans for repayment. However, it is worth noting that any applications exceeding £500k (particularly those £1mil+) require an extra layer of senior review prior to granting borrowing approval, which can extend our processing times. I was wondering if NALC had any insight into the reasons behind the number of substantial applications lately? My thinking was that as we are now moving out of COVID restrictions many Councils may now be picking up large scale projects that were on hold.

It would be greatly appreciated if NALC could communicate to County Officers that we have received an increased number of large-scale applications lately which we are working through, and if anything could be done to ‘control the traffic’ on the £1mil+ applications and prioritise based on urgency we would be very grateful.”

I shall update the piece in the Enews in the next Member Council Update. I may be too pessimistic, but I read a hint that there may be a time in the near future when borrowing by our sector is capped in some way.

Kind Regards,

Stephen

Stephen Rickitt

Chief Officer