

Northumberland Association of Local Councils

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

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Northumberland Association of Local Councils

2016-2017

PRESIDENT

Cllr David Woodard

Vice Presidents

Cllr David Francis

Cllr Alex Wallace

Hon Treasurer

Miss Gillian Turner

Hon Auditor

Mr Peter Basnett

County Committee

Mrs M Anderton

Cllr G Askew

Cllr A Barrell

Cllr R Butler (chair to Nov 2016)

Cllr K Dalton

Cllr E Dobson

Cllr S Fenwick

Cllr T Hood

Cllr M Horn

Cllr D Parker

Cllr J Potts

Cllr C Rawlings

Cllr J Reynolds

Cllr C Seymour

Cllr R Thompson

Cllr S Todd (Chair from Nov
2016)

Cllr A Wallace

Cllr J Whisson

Cllr M Wood

East Tynedale

Widdrington Station & Stobswood

Choppington

Choppington

West Bedlington

Prudhoe

Ashington

Felton

Amble

Morpeth

Blyth

Ponteland

Rothbury

Berwick Upon Tweed

Dinnington

Newbiggin by the Sea

East Bedlington

Cramlington

Greenhead

Chief Officer Stephen Rickitt

As at March 2017

What we offer

We are an association of local (i.e. parish and town) councils, which draws membership from Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. Our over-riding aim is to develop and support active and effective local councils. This requires local councils to be aware of local needs and concerns, and to find a way of addressing them, whether by taking direct action themselves or by encouraging others to take the lead. Local councils have unlimited powers to raise money by precepting on the Council Tax, and this is an opportunity which can be used enthusiastically but prudently to support local initiatives and services.

To support local councils, we provide or arrange:

- A regular distribution of topical information, mostly by email
- Advice to clerks and councillors, on a wide range of topics: legal, managerial, financial, etc
- Training: mostly short events, but also support for the CiLCA qualification (Certificate in Local Councils Administration)
- Accreditation of applicants for the national Local Council Award scheme
- Initial processing of applications to the Transparency Fund (National ALC) and for loan consent (DCLG)
- Access to new opportunities, ranging from insurance policies, equipment schemes, IT solutions
- Advice to community groups on forming new councils
- Assisting in arranging representation on bodies such as the Standards Committees, and National Park governance bodies.

In addition to providing this direct help, we also undertake policy and partnership work, on behalf of the local councils' sector. This involves monitoring changes, policies and proposals which may impact on local councils, and working to influence the decisions which are made by local government, agencies and public utility providers. It also means working with other bodies to develop opportunities which can benefit local councils and their communities.

Although we are an independent body, we also form part of the National Association of Local Councils, from whom we draw specialist support on legal and policy topics, and to whom we pay an annual financial levy.

Chairman's Foreword

I am pleased to be able to report a successful year for the Association. A number of Councils have re-joined us and there has been a good programme of events for members.

A number of long-serving Councillors stood-down or were not returned at the May 2017 Elections and, although the report does not technically include that period, I would like to pay a special tribute to Ray Butler and Stuart Todd for their work chairing the County Committee.

It has been our first year without David Francis as the Chief Officer and I'd like to thank him for his work in making the transition as smooth as it has been.

Stephen Rickitt has set out a summary of the work in his report. There has been a change of style in some areas but the aim of supporting our members continues.

I'd like to thank Stephen, Margaret Tweddell (who keeps the financial records in order) and the other colleagues at CAN for their work, together with Gillian Turner and Peter Basnett (the Honorary Treasure and Auditor respectively).

Finally, can I thank my fellow members of the County Committee for their work and forbearance.

With best wishes for the future

Cllr Alex Wallace
Chairman of the County Committee

Introduction and Summary

NALC is one of the county associations of local councils in England, which together form the National Association. 'Local council' includes parish, town, neighbourhood, community and village councils of which there are 162 in our area (Northumberland and Newcastle), although some do not have a functioning local council. There are currently no local councils in North Tyneside.

As at 31 March 2017, all but eight are members of our Association, and one re-joined in early April 2017. NALC was formed in the 1940s and for many years received administrative and professional support from CAN (Community Action Northumberland), thus saving on 'overhead' costs, and reducing duplication in the provision of our seamless advisory work to support local communities.

In 2015 a more formal separation of the two organisations occurred, although CAN still hosts the NALC Chief Officer and provides administrative support under a three-year memorandum of understanding (2016-2019)

NALC is governed by a County Committee composed of representatives appointed by our member-councils. The chairman from November 2016 until the election in May 2017 was Stuart Todd (Newbiggin-by-the-Sea) supported by John Potts (Blyth), Alex Wallace (East Bedlington) and Mike Wood (Greenhead) as Vice-Chairmen

The past year was a year of change as David Francis had retired on 31 March 2016. Stephen Rickitt took up the post as part-time NALC Chief Officer in April. At the same time there have been increasing pressures on member councils particularly due to the changing transparency requirements.

Supporting individual councils

This is the core function of the association. Advice has been given on a wide range of topics such as

- Codes of Conduct
- Procedure at Meetings
- Village Greens and Common Land
- Property Issues
- Finance and Audit
- Freedom of Information, and particularly individuals making a large number of requests
- Powers

Employment support

Providing Member Councils with support regarding employment issues is a significant role. Whilst in the vast majority of Councils there are no employment

problems, there are a small number where the employer/employee relationship runs into difficulties. Details of individual cases must remain confidential but Councils are encouraged to seek assistance at an early stage. Employment support direct to clerks was previously given through the Society of Local Council Clerks. They have now formed a separate body (The Association of Local Council Clerks) which has formal Trade Union status. It's still relatively new and at the time of preparation there is no locally based representative.

Transparency

The changes in the method for auditing the smaller councils has enabled the Association to obtain grant funding for the Parish Portal and over thirty Councils had enrolled by 31 March 2017 with more following.

Other Training

In addition to the Transparency Training, we have also hosted training for individual Local Councils and Introductory Sessions for new Councillors and Clerks.

A joint training session with the County Council was held in December 2016 for clerks as a briefing on the May 2017 Elections and the "Purdah" principles.

During 2016-2017, we held 13 training events attended by 78 Councillors and Clerks.

NALC Enews, The Transparency Portal and the Website

The NALC Enews has changed style and is a weekly email giving brief descriptions of items of interest, with links to more information. The new look has been well received.

A major item of work in 2016/2017 was been the creation of a Transparency Portal giving Local Councils the opportunity to have their own website which is easy to operate. As at 31 March 2017, 37 Local Councils have enrolled with more in the pipeline. Under the Transparency Code Councils have to publish key information on a website.

Because of the work on the Portal, the reinvigoration of the Association's website has been delayed as and a work in progress. The new address is

<https://northumberlandalc.uk/>

Working with the City and County Councils

The Association's relationships with the two principal councils have been re-invigorated during the year. Meetings have been held with City Council officers and work is on-going to assist the five member Councils in Newcastle.

The Chief Officer now attends the County Council's Town & Parish Liaison Working Group as an adviser, together with representatives of the Northumberland Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Working with the National NALC

Our liaison with the national NALC continues, Cllr David Francis (Newton on the Moor) is the Association's representative on the national council and serves on the Policy and Smaller Councils Committees.

The Association agreed to offer membership of the *Direct Access Scheme* for our largest members and 11 Councils have now taken this up.

Planning Matters

Commenting on Development Control issues is regarded by Local Councils as one of their most important functions. Liaison is in hand with both principal councils' planning officers to enhance the training given for Local Councillors. In addition, the NALC Enews draws attention to planning matters on a regular basis.

Localisation of Council Tax Benefits

The County Council continues to exercise its power not to pass any of this through to Northumberland's Local Council. Representations continue to be made as does the issue of the retention of the national New Homes Bonus.

Looking Forward

Elections for the 1237 places on Northumberland's Local Council took place on 4 May 2017. Work for the year includes

- Induction & Other Training
- Development of the Association's website
- Development of a Business Plan
- Encouraging use of the Transparency Portal, particularly by those Councils with a dormant or no website

NALC's finances

The audited accounts are attached to the report. The surplus is modest, and assisted by grants from the national Transparency Fund, these will cease at the end of 2017-2018.

The County Committee decided to charge £10 for attendance at courses, paid electronically through Eventbrite. Although part of the fee is retained by Eventbrite, the saving in administrative time is considerable.

Over this year, opportunities have been taken to cut costs wherever possible. An example is the saving made by not printing and posting copies of the papers for the November 2016 AGM, but making them available electronically.

The Association has recognised the financial pressures on member councils and is keeping subscription increases to the minimum necessary. The proposal is for subscriptions to rise by 1.99 % for 2018-2019.

A Personal Note

I'd like to thank all who have made my first year an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Naming individuals is always difficult but I'd like to pay special tanks to Cllrs Ray Butler and Stuart Todd as the Chairs of the County Committee, David Woodard as President and David Francis, my predecessor. Their assistance has been invaluable.

My colleagues in the CAN Office are owed a debt of gratitude for their forbearance.

Stephen Rickitt
NALC Chief Officer
14 September 2017

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2017

<u>2015/2016</u>		<u>2016/2017</u>	
£		£	£
	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
414.70	Sundry Debtors	135.21	
7,454.00	Cash on Deposit	<u>13,675.21</u>	13,810.42
	<u>LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>		
-	Sundry Creditors	-	
5.00	Receipts in Advance	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
7,863.70			13,810.42
	<u>FINANCED BY</u>		
7,400.80	General Reserve - Accumulated Surplus	7,863.70	
462.90	- Surplus for Year	5,946.72	
-	- Deficit for Year	<u>-</u>	
7,863.70	*Includes funds held for transparency to be used 2017-18		13,810.42 *

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Statement of Income & Expenditure

1 April 2016 - 31 March 2017

<u>2015-2016</u>		<u>2016-2017</u>	<u>2015-2016</u>		<u>2016-2017</u>
£	<u>Expenditure</u>	£	£	<u>Income</u>	£
12,298.16	National Association - Membership Fee	14,875.36	41,008.79	Membership Subscriptions	43,896.63
30,000.00	Community Action - Agency Fee	30,000.00	-	-	-
1,012.00	Local Council Review	1,001.00	1,396.00	Local Council Review	1,368.50
27.00	Publications & Printing	74.45	27.00	Publications	-
297.00	Meetings & Events	45.00	471.73	Training Events	130.52
-	General Activities	3,368.75	-	General Activities	100.00
13,405.63	Transparency Fund - Grants	15,685.49	14,596.08	Transparency Fund	36,155.49
-	- Website Portal	10,000.00	-	-	-
-	- Room Hire	355.50	-	-	-
-	- Travel Expenses	301.95	-	-	-
-	-	-	3.09	Bank Interest	3.08
462.90	Excess of Income over Expenditure	5,946.72	-	Excess of Expenditure over Income	-
<u>57,502.69</u>		<u>81,654.22</u>	<u>57,502.69</u>		<u>81,654.22</u>

Publication–Arnold Baker Local Council Administration
 General Activities- £3k Website:£368.75 VAT course
 Transparency Fund–Payment due to CAN for ongoing work on Website Portal

General Activities –CILCA Registration & resits £50:donation £50
 Transparency Fund- grants £158685.49;Portal £10k:enablement £10470

MEMBER COUNCILS 2016-2017

Acklington	Featherstone	Norham
Acomb	Felton	North Sunderland & Seahouses
Allendale	Ford	Nunykirk
Alnmouth	Glanton	Otterburn
Alnwick	Greenhead	Ovingham
Alwinton	Haltwhistle	Ovington
Amble	Harbottle	Pegswood
Ancroft	Hartburn	Plenmeller with Whitfield
Ashington	Hartleyburn	Ponteland
Bamburgh	Hauxley	Prudhoe
Bardon Mill	Hazlerigg	Rennington
Bavington	Healey	Rochester & Byrness
Beadnell	Hebron	Rothbury
Belford with Middleton	Heddon on the Wall	Rothley and Hollinghill
Bellingham	Hedgeley	Sandhoe
Belsay	Hedley on the Hill	Seaton Valley
Berwick upon Tweed	Henshaw	Shoreswood
Birtley	Hepple	Shotley Low Quarter
Blakelaw & North Fenham	Hepscott	Simonburn
Blanchland	Hexham	Slaley
Blyth	Hexhamshire	Stamfordham
Bowden	Holy Island	Stannington
Branxton	Horncliffe	Tarset & Greystead
Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst	Horsley	Thirlwall
Broomhaugh & Riding	Humshaugh	Thropton
Broomley & Stocksfield	Ingram	Tillside
Brunswick	Kielder	Togston
Bywell	Kirkwhelpington	Tritlington & West
Capheaton	Knarsdale with Kirkhaugh	Chevington
Carham	Kyloe	Ulgham
Chollerton	Lesbury	Wall
Choppington	Longframlington	Wallington Demesne
Coanwood	Longhirst	Warden
Corbridge	Longhorsley	Wark
Cornhill	Longhoughton	Warkworth
Corsenside	Lowick	West Allen
Cramlington	Lynemouth	West Bedlington
Craster	Matfen	Whalton
Cresswell	Meldon	Whittingham, Callaly & Alnham
Dinnington	Melkridge	Whittington
Doddington	Milfield	Whitton & Tosson
Duddo	Mitford	Widdrington Station & Stobswood
East Bedlington	Morpeth	Widdrington Village
Edlingham	Netherton with Biddlestone	Wooler
Eglingham	Netherwitton	Woolsington
Ellingham	Newbiggin by the Sea	Wylam
Ellington & Linton	Newbrough	
Elsdon	Newton by the Sea	
Embleton	Newton on the Moor & Swarland	
Falstone		

CONSTITUENCIES FOR THE COUNTY COMMITTEE

The following Councils each have a seat on the Committee

Ashington, Blyth, Choppington, Cramlington, East Bedlington, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Seaton Delaval and West Bedlington.

Three seats are allocated for the Newcastle Councils

The remaining seats are allocated as follows using non-single Council constituencies

Allendale

Allendale, West Allen

Alnwick

Edlingham, Eglingham, Longframlington, Felton, Newton-on-the-Moor and Swarland, Shilbottle, Alnwick, Hedgeley, Denwick, Rennington, Acklington, Warkworth, Longhoughton, Craster, Embleton, Newton-by-the-Sea, Alnmouth, Lesbury, Glanton

Amble

Togston, Hauxley, Amble by the Sea

Berwick & Islandshire

Duddo, Kyoeloe, Ancroft, Lowick, Horncliffe, Ord, Holy Island, Norham, Shoreswood, Berwick upon Tweed

Ellington

Ellington and Linton, Cresswell, Lynemouth

Glendale

Carham, Ingram, Ilderton, Kirknewton, Chatton, Ford, Kilham, Cornhill-on-Tweed, Earle, Roddam, Bewick, Chillingham, Wooler, Ewart, Doddington, Bowsden, Milfield, Branxton, Lilburn, Akeld

Haltwhistle and West Tyne

Coanwood, Plenmeller with Whitfield, Thirlwall, Horsley, Henshaw, Knaresdale with Kirkhaugh, Hartleyburn, Featherstone, Greenhead, Melkridge, Bardon Mill, Haltwhistle

Hexham and Hexhamshire

Hexhamshire, Haydon, Hexhamshire Low Quarter, Corbridge, Blanchland, Slaley, Hexham, Acomb, Sandhoe, Broomhaugh & Riding

Mid Tyne

Simonburn, Wark, Chollerton, Newbrough, Birtley, Humshaugh, Wall, Whittington, Warden

Morpeth

Stannington, Mitford, Hebron, Hepscott, Morpeth, Pegswood, Longhirst

North Tyne & Redesdale

Kielder, Greystead, Falstone, Bellingham, Tarsset, Kirkwhelpington, Corsenside, Otterburn, Rochester, Bavington

Ponteland and Rural West (South)

Stamfordham; Ponteland; Capheaton; Belsay; Whalton.

Prudhoe and East Tynedale

Shotley Low Quarter, Healey, Broomley & Stocksfield, Bywell, Hedley, Prudhoe, Horsley, Henshaw, Ovington, Ovingham, Wylam

Rothbury & Coquetdale

Alwinton, Cartington, Alnham, Elsdon, Rothley, Hollinghill, Nunnykirk, Hesleyhurst, Hepple, Harbottle, Whitton and Tosson, Biddlestone, Snitter, Nethererton, Callaly, Brinkburn, Whittingham, Thropton, Rothbury

Rural West (North)

Tritlington and West Chevington, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Matfen, Capheaton, Stamfordham, Belsay, Whalton Wallington Demesne, Meldon, Netherwitton, Longhorsley, Thirston, Hartburn

Seahouses and Belford

Belford, Ellingham, Adderstone with Lucker, Middleton, Easington, Bamburgh, Beadnell, North Sunderland

Widdrington

East Chevington, Widdrington Village, Ulgham, Widdrington Station and Stobswood