

# **Northumberland Association of Local Councils**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

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# Northumberland Association of Local Councils

**2021-2022**

**PRESIDENT**

Mr 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 – East Tynedale Forum	Cllr A Hogg – West Bedlington
Cllr D Bewley – Amble	Cllr T Hood (Vice-Chair) - Felton
Cllr A Bowlas – Berwick	Cllr D Hughes - Milfield
Cllr P Claridge – East Chevington	Cllr R Locke – Hazlerigg
Cllr P Coates – Longhirst	Cllr S Phelps – Dinnington
Cllr B Crosby – East Bedlington	Cllr J Potts (Vice-Chair) - Blyth
Cllr G Curry - Corbridge	Cllr V Rook – Blakelaw & North Fenham
Cllr C Cuthbert – Prudhoe	Cllr A Sambrook – Pegswood
Cllr M Cuthbert – Ashington	Cllr A Taylor – Meldon
Cllr L De Simone – Cramlington	Cllr S Taylor - Alwinton
Cllr M Dickson-Green - Bellingham	Cllr P Vaughan - Choppington
Cllr L Dunn – Ellington	Cllr C Wakeling – Norham & Islandshire Assoc.
Cllr G Eastwood – Seaton Valley	Cllr A Wallace (Chair)
Cllr C Greenwell - Ponteland	Cllr D Wilson - Ulgham
Cllr D Henderson - Allendale	Cllr M Wood (Vice Chair) – Greenhead
Cllr S Hillan – North Sunderland	Cllr G Woodman - Newbiggin

**Chief Officer** Stephen Rickitt

Membership shown as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

## **What we offer**

We are an association of parish, town and community councils (often called “local 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 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 Council Administration)
- Accreditation of applicants for the national Local Council Award scheme
- Initial processing of applications for loan consent from the DLUHC
- 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 the Northumberland National Park Authority.

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.

We are willing to assist the formation of new local councils in Newcastle and North Tyneside if local communities so wish.

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 even though last year's hopes of an early end to the pandemic were sadly misplaced.

Our Member Councils have continued their extensive work in and for their local communities. My only regret is that as a sector we are shy of letting people know just how much we do. For many people, you say "parish council" and immediately a certain TV sitcom springs to mind. We must do more to broadcast our successes and work.

The Association continues to remind the three principal councils, the national park authority, and the combined authority of the role of local councils as there may well be projects for which we are ideal partners.

I am sure that one of the few benefits of the pandemic is the move to digital meetings. These have enabled more colleagues from other organisations to attend our meetings than would have been the case in pre-pandemic times.

Having said that, there is still a need for face-to-face meetings, but I implore Westminster to allow our Councils to have the choice of whether a physical meeting or a digital meeting is better for their purposes.

I would 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 Treasurer and Auditor respectively).

David Woodard (President) & David Francis (Vice-President) together with the Vice-Chairmen Amanda Barrell (to May 2021) Tony Hood, John Potts & Mike Wood have been a continuing source of advice and guidance for which I remain very grateful. David Francis also deserves our thanks for his continued service as our representative on the national NALC, especially as the Chair of their Policy Committee.

Finally, can I thank my fellow members of the County Committee, both past and present, for their work, friendship, and good humour.

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. There are 162 local councils in Northumberland and Newcastle, with a further eight Northumberland parishes who do not have a functioning local council at the present time. There are currently no local councils in North Tyneside.

We are delighted to report that all the active Parish, Town and Community Councils in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Northumberland are members of our Association.

NALC was formed in 1946 and for many years received administrative and professional support from CAN (Community Action Northumberland). 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 memorandum of understanding.

In 2021 our AGM celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our founding with presentations from Cllr David Francis and Stephen Rickitt looking over the past history of the Association and the sector more generally, the present and some thoughts for what the future might hold.

NALC is governed by a County Committee composed of representatives appointed by our member-councils. The chairman this year was Alex Wallace supported by Tony Hood (Felton), John Potts (Blyth) and Mike Wood (Greenhead) as Vice-Chairmen. Amanda Barrell (Choppington) was a Vice-Chairman until May 2021.

## **The State of the Area**

In our previous Annual Report we were cautiously optimistic that the pandemic was easing. Sadly, that hope was unfulfilled and national restrictions remained in force but with a phased removal of restrictions in England as the year progressed.

The long-term effects on society generally and, our sector in particular, remain unclear. Some of our high streets are losing familiar faces but new businesses are starting to emerge.

The move to remote/on-line working may increase the number of households leaving urban areas but that will cause further pressure on housing stock. Member Councils generally welcome the increased tourist trade, albeit with some concerns about particular difficulties in the “hotspots”. The increase in second homes and the emergence of a growing market for short-term holiday lets is a significant issue as the stock of affordable long-term rental property is shrinking. At the time of writing (April 2022) the results from the national English Census in April 2021 are awaited.

## **Local Councils and the Pandemic**

In May 2021, legislation allowing Councils to meet digitally lapsed, despite a failed effort by the national local govt. bodies to seek court ruling on interpreting existing legislation in a way to formally authorise their continuation. Some Councils took a view that the least-worst option was to continue with digital meeting rather than have no meeting due to an inability to reach a quorum of Councillors who were able to physically meet or problems with finding a venue.

Member Councils continued to assist their communities in a number of ways, especially by supporting groups and societies who may not have received national funding. More details of that work was set out in the 2020/2021 Annual Report.

## **The Work of the Association**

The County Committee continued to hold informal Friday morning meetings with a range of guests allowing for discussion on a range of issues including

- Mobile food vans
- Digital Engagement with the County Council
- Borderlands Growth Initiative
- Northumberland Communities Together
- Regeneration
- Libraries

We were pleased that officers from the national NALC are able to join some of our meetings and contribute to discussions. The Chair of the County Council's Town & Parish Liaison Working Group (Cllr Isabel Hunter) attends most meetings as do some officers and on several occasions the County Council's Leader (Cllr Glen Sanderson).

With all the local councils in Newcastle being in membership, we are endeavouring to increase our contacts with the City Council and have already been in contact with their new chief executive.

## **Briefings**

The Association ran a range of briefings during the year. We were grateful to Rob Murfin (the County Council's Chief Planning Officer) and his team for presenting a number of planning briefings during the year.

The briefings are now entirely digital, and one side effect was an ability to offer briefings during the winter months.

We held 18 events attended by 332 Councillors or Clerks during this year. Four Councils received bespoke individual training for which we charge a flat-rate fee so there are no travel costs penalising Member Councils who are further away from our office.

## **May 2021 Elections in Northumberland**

Notwithstanding the pandemic, elections were held for all Northumberland's Parish, Town & Community Councils on 6 May 2021. It was encouraging that 1134 candidates stood for election with contests in 43 seats.

### **Assistance to member councils**

Advice given to Member Councils during the year reverted to the more usual range of questions came to the fore and we assisted Councils on such matters as freedom of information, financial issues, planning, highways and standards.

The Association continues to retain the Parkinson Partnership who assisted eight Member Councils with a range of VAT issues. In addition, we sought formal legal advice from the national NALC's Legal Dept. on seven occasions, as well as more times informally.

In addition, the Association has circulated 31 copies of the Enews and 36 copies of The Member Council Update during this year.

### **Working with the National NALC**

Our liaison with the national NALC continues, Cllr David Francis (Newton on the Moor and Swarland) is the Association's representative on the National Assembly and chairs their Policy Committee and is on the Management Committee

### **The Review of County Committee Constituencies**

The Working Group met in early 2020 and started work on a report for Members to consider but further work has been delayed by the National Emergency.

### **NALC's finances**

The unaudited accounts are in this report. We are pleased to report there was another modest surplus in 2021/2022.

The Association has recognised the financial pressures on member councils and is keeping subscription increases to the minimum necessary, to mirror the increases in the national levy.

## **Conclusion**

I could not have performed as well as I hope I have without the considerable assistance of colleagues and friends from Member Councils and the County Committee, together with the national NALC and colleagues from other County Associations. It is always invidious to name individuals but Councillor Wallace, Councillor Francis, and Mr Woodard, in particular, have given great help as have my colleagues at Community Action Northumberland, especially Margaret Tweddell who keeps the finances and figures in pristine condition

Stephen Rickitt  
NALC Chief Officer  
22 April 2022



**NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

**Balance Sheet at 31 March 2022**

<u>2020/2021</u>			<u>2021/2022</u>	
£			£	£
	<b><u>CURRENT ASSETS</u></b>			
62.27	Sundry Debtors	330.41		
29,570.72	Cash on Deposit	<u>41,203.02</u>	41,533.43	
	<b><u>LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</u></b>			
-	Sundry Creditors	-		
-	Receipts in Advance	<u>-</u>	-	
<b>29,632.99</b>				<b>41,533.43</b>
	<b><u>FINANCED BY</u></b>			
20,374.02	General Reserve - Accumulated Surplus		29,632.99	
9,258.97	- Surplus for Year		11,900.44	
-	- Deficit for Year		<u>-</u>	
<b>29,632.99</b>				<b>41,533.43</b>

**NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

**Statement of Income & Expenditure**  
**1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022**

<u>2020-2021</u>		<u>2021-2022</u>	<u>2020-2021</u>		<u>2021-2022</u>
£	<u>Expenditure</u>	£	£	<u>Income</u>	£
17,872.53	National Association - Membership Fee	19,238.91	54,660.34	Membership Subscriptions	57,064.20
30,000.00	Community Action - Agency Fee	30,000.00	-	-	-
825.00	Local Council Review	682.00	1,145.50	Local Council Review	970.00
12.50	Meetings & Events	301.38	206.53	Training Events	1,777.80
400.00	Miscellaneous	400.00	-	Miscellaneous	50.00
-	-	-	100.00	Donations	-
950.00	NALC Website	280.00	-	-	-
1,600.99	Parishes Website Portal	2,459.87	5,025.00	Parishes Website Subscriptions	5,400.00
-	-	-	1.61	Bank Interest	0.60
119.99	Publications	-	-	-	-
9,258.97	Surplus	11,900.44	-	Deficit	-
<b><u>61,138.98</u></b>		<b><u>65,262.60</u></b>	<b><u>61,138.98</u></b>		<b><u>65,262.60</u></b>

1. Meetings & Events - AGM Expenses £138.50; Room Hire £19; Zoom £143.88  
2. Miscellaneous - External Consultants (Advice Service)

1. Miscellaneous - NNPA

## MEMBER COUNCILS 2021-2022

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

There are eight parishes in Northumberland without a functioning parish council.

Akeld, Bewick, Earle, Ewart, Ilderton, Kilham, Roddam and Snitter.

Easington is now part of Belford and Cartington has been divided between Rothbury and Whitton & Tosson.