



NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the County Committee held at 10am on Saturday 11th May 2024 at County hall, Morpeth. Northumberland NE61 2EF

Present in person: Cllrs:, John Potts, David Francis, John Tully, Colin Wakeling, Mike Wood, Alan Sambrook, David Nicholson. Monica Anderton, Paul Vaughan.

Present online: Cllrs:, Chris Cuthbert, Violet Rook, Liz Dunn.

Also Present: Mr Graeme Popay – Chief Officer [Actions marked as CO]

1: Welcome.

Cllr John Potts welcomed everyone.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Cllrs: Gwen Woodman, Adam Hogg, David Woodard, Paul Claridge, Karen Overbury.

3: Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd March 2024

All agreed to accept the minute as a true record.

4: Matters arising

- Northumberland Local Bus Board – Colin Wakeling had not heard about the first meeting and would contact Neil Easton regarding a date.

5: Finance

The Financial report was tabled showing the current position. David Nicholson also tabled a revised report and invited comments on members preference.

It was agreed that Margarets version was correct from a financial regulations point of view Davids version was easier to understand. All agreed to accept the report.

David Nicholson to contact Margert regarding debtors. The CO pointed out that most P&TC were in a pattern re payment and very few required chasing.

6: National Issues

David Francis gave a verbal report on recent national issues including:

- Publications – NALC updating “Local Councils Explained “ and “The Good Councillors Guide” was now published and free to download on NALC website
- NALC & SLCC met to discuss critical state of local government finance, over half of principal authorities face effective bankruptcy within the next five years.
- Policy Committee – endorsed a paper to give more “clout” to neighbourhood plans
- Ethical Standards – NALC endorse all key recommendations of a recent report by the Committee of Standards in Public Life, which advocates accountability and high ethical standards in local governance.



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7: Issues raised by Committee members

Monitoring officer - David Nicholson proposed that a working group look into ways to support the monitoring officer by perhaps modifying the existing process of complaints.

ACTION Chair to discuss with Officers of the Committee and report back.

Model Financial Regulations – David Nicholson discussed the merits of the newly launched NALC Model Financial regulations but urged members not to adopt before they have been reviewed and if necessary tailored to suit the size of the council.

NCC Citizen Portal – Colin Wakeling. The NCC website is very difficult to navigate and may stop people from using the have your say Consultations/Petitions .

It was noted that a new website was under construction. It was also suggested to use google or a similar search engine rather than the website search function.

8: Larger Council Forum

Progress was very good and NCC were very supportive – the first meeting would be at County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday 10th July starting at 1:00pm and ending at 3:00pm . - . 16 Town Councils with NALC membership would be invited, they are:

Alnwick, Amble, Berwick, Morpeth, Ashington, Blyth, Choppington, East Bedlington, Newbiggin by the Sea, Seaton Valley, West Bedlington, Corbridge, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Ponteland, Prudhoe

9: Autumn County Conference & NALC AGM

It was recognised that whilst it was a good event it had room for improvement.

Discussion on improvements included:

Dietary

Structure and timings of the day

No last minute changes

Officers in attendance to cover all departments

The need for a working group was discussed.

It was agreed to hold the AGM at the Conference

NOTE – at a meeting of the Town & Parish Council Liaison Working Group on 23rd May it was agreed to form a working group to plan the conference – this would include the NALC Chair and NALC CO.

10:Rob Murfin – no report had been provided by Rob.

11: Any Other Urgent Business

None.

13: Future Meeting of the Committee - Saturday 13th July – 10am - County Hall – Conference room 1