



NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the County Committee held at 10am on Saturday 13th July 2024 at County hall, Morpeth. Northumberland NE61 2EF

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

Present online: technical difficulties prevented colleagues joining online. Cllrs:, Chris Cuthbert, Violet Rook, Liz Dunn, Alex Wallace .

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

1: Welcome.

Cllr John Potts welcomed everyone.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Cllrs: David Hughes, David Woodard.

3: Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th May 2024

All agreed to accept the minute as a true record.

4: Matters arising

- Finance - David N to meet with Margaret to look at priorities of spending and the coming years budget.
- Working with the Monitoring Office – the officers had met and agreed that the CO would speak to the MO – the CO had arranged a meeting in late July but it was unfortunately cancelled. Awaiting a new date.
- ENews – it was agreed that an abridged version of the minutes would be printed in the ENews.

5: Finance

The Financial report was tabled showing the current position.

David Nicholson had not managed to speak to Margert regarding debtors, but would arrange a meeting and include the CO..

6: National Issues

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

- General Election – NALC is actively engaging with the new government, responding to consultations and initiatives on behalf of its members. In a further positive development, Jim McMahon MP, highlighted the government's intent to ensure local government is "modern, efficient, flexible, and diverse," suggesting that hybrid meetings could be beneficial.
- Bills going through – the election had halted progress on Martyns law and other bills
- Policy Work – the ability to reorganise and maximise the use of burial grounds was under investigation – at present this only exists in London.



NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

- NALC published The Joint Panel of Accountability and Governance (JPAG) 2024 edition of the practitioners guide and has launched a survey of what could be changed.
- Website – the testing stage had finished and was ready to launch in Autumn

7: Issues raised by Committee members

None

8: Larger Council Forum

The Chair reported that the Larger Councils Forum had been very well attended with just about every larger council represented.

The venue was in the chamber, whilst not ideal but served a purpose for such a large number. It was hoped that the next meeting would be in Conference rooms 1 & 2, allowing for better interaction and debate.

The meeting was opened with welcome messages from The Leader Glen Sanderson and from our Chair John Potts.

The Kris Harvey, NCC's Finance manager gave a detailed and informative report of the medium term financial position and handled questions from the floor. The Leader was keen to get involvement from Councillors on this discussion and promised to set a date for a follow up meeting where the new budget would be discussed with large and small Town/Parishes in attendance.

Paul Jones and Chris Westerby gave a very interesting highways report with a good deal of interaction with members on ongoing issues, it was not all criticism, praise was given for the volume and quality of the work being carried out.

NALC's CO gave a short presentation on the "civility and respect project" and challenged members to take up the initiative locally.

The forum ended with a Q&A session with the Leader.

Members discussed the merits of the forum and the need for a similar opportunity for smaller Councils. Having papers ahead of the next forum would be better. Future topics were discussed. Members thought it prudent to gather feedback from those Councils that attended – **ACTION** CO to produce a feedback form and send it to Councils.

9: Smaller Councils Forum

It was recognised that there was a need to produce a similar forum but the challenge of numbers needed to be thought through. The five Local Area Committees (LAC) seemed to be the best way forward, the CO had met Cllr Gordon Castle to discuss the LAC, Gordon had mentioned that the LAC was working in some areas but not others and he was open to suggestions as how to improve attendance – the CO had attended the North Northumberland LAC at Rothbury which was exceptionally well attended and ran, he had also attended the Castle Morpeth LAC in County Hall which had been very poorly attended.

ACTION – CO to arrange a meeting with Cllr Castle and Officers.



NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

10: Autumn County Conference & NALC AGM

A working group had met to plan the conference – all the comments from the feedback forms were discussed with catering being the biggest single complaint, other issues included the programme changing on the day and the Q&A turning into a surgery. Iain Hedley would endeavour to find a budget to increase the provision and ensure that dietary needs were met and suitable allergy labelling provided.

Having a discussion paper available ahead of the meeting was suggested to Iain – he would raise this with Phil Hunter.

A further meeting would be held in September.

It was agreed to hold the AGM at 4:30 in the Chamber – this seemed like sufficient time to carry out the business part of the meeting with scope to overrun past 5:00pm. Holding it on the same evening as the Conference should generate a better attendance.

11: Elections – the CO felt that it was important to promote and raise awareness of the role of a Parish and Town Councillor ahead of the 2025 Parish/Town Council elections to help stimulate interest in areas where Councils struggled to get members.

Members were keen to see a training available to new councillors. David F - had offered to rewrite New Councillor training module – he would revisit this and report back.

New Councillor Training was available via Durham ALC Training team and a course was being run in the County on 15th October.

The CO circulated a pack from NALC to promote awareness of being a Councillor – it was agreed to circulate this in early 2025.

12: Town & Parish Council Liaison Working Group – Cllr Isabel Hunter had planned to attend online to assist with this matter but was unable to due to technical difficulties with IT.

13: Any Other Urgent Business

None.

14: Future Meeting of the Committee - Saturday 21st September – 10am - County Hall – Conference room 1

Meeting Closed at 12:25