



**Northumberland Association
Of Local Councils**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

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Northumberland Association of Local Councils

2023-2024

PRESIDENT

Mr David Woodard

Vice Presidents

Cllr David Francis

Cllr Alex Wallace

Cllr Mike Wood

Hon Treasurer

David Nicholson

Hon Auditor

Mr Peter Basnett

County Committee

Mrs M Anderton – East Tynedale Forum	Mr D Nicholson – (Vice Chair)
Cllr P Claridge – Widdrington	Cllr K Overbury - Ponteland & Rural West (South)
Cllr G Curry – Hexham & Hexhamshire	Cllr S Phelps – Dinnington
Cllr C Cuthbert – Prudhoe	Cllr J Potts (Chair) - Blyth
Cllr C Palmer – Amble	Cllr V Rook – Blakelaw & North Fenham
Cllr M Dickson-Green - Bellingham	Cllr A Sambrook – Morpeth
Cllr L Dunn – Ellington	Cllr A Taylor – Rural West (North)
Cllr G Eastwood – Seaton Valley	Cllr S Taylor – Rothbury & Coquetdale
Cllr D Francis – (Vice Chair) Alnwick	Cllr J Tulley - Ashington
Cllr K Grimes – East Bedlington	Cllr P Vaughan - Choppington
Cllr M Greener - Berwick	Cllr C Wakeling – Norham & Islandshire.
Cllr D Henderson - Allendale	Cllr D Wilson - Ulgham
Cllr S Hillan – Seahouses & Belford	Cllr M Wood (Vice Chair) – Greenhead
Cllr A Hogg – West Bedlington	Cllr G Woodman - Newbiggin
Cllr D Hughes - Glendale	VACANY – Mid Tyne

Chief Officer Graeme Popay

Membership shown as at 31st March 2024

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 via our ENewsAdvice 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

On 25th November 2023 I was elected as chair of the County Committee taking over from Cllr Alex Wallace. As everyone knows Alex had been chair of the County Committee for many years and had a wealth of experience, numerous contacts and as a County Councillor a wide range of knowledge of County Council affairs. We have missed his experience and style of chairmanship.

At the same time Tony Hood decided to stand down as vice chair and David Nicholson was elected to join previous vice chairs David Francis and Mike Wood. David Nicholson was later elected as Honorary Treasurer as Gillian Turner had also stood down.

This was also the first full year for Graeme Popay as our Chief Officer and he has also had a steep learning curve to not only make contact with Parish Councils and councillors but also the multitude of officers at NCC and National bodies.

I have not been able to devote as much time to the post as is needed and I have only had brief contact with Andy Dean at CAN but I must thank him and his staff for supporting NALC. We must also thank David Francis for his knowledge and support and in his new role as Vice chair of Members Services at National ALC.

Together with Graeme and the other officers we have been discussing the future Purpose and Direction of the Committee but this still needs more work. A new training programme is also being prepared. We have tried some hybrid meetings with physical meetings and Zoom but they are difficult to manage.

Due to the geography of the county, finding suitable locations is difficult, but NCC have now offered the use of County Hall, which is not convenient for all, but is more central with parking facilities and some local transport.

This year we have agreed to hold two Conferences and this has been well received by members. The "market place" of NCC officers in the County Hall foyer and restaurant have been well used and we must thank Iain Hedley for his work in arranging this. We have also held the first conference for the larger parishes but smaller councils have not been excluded. We would like to see better use made of NCC's Local Area Councils and the Parish Liaison Committee.

We had hoped to hold our AGM in County Hall, prior to the Autumn conference, but could not make all the arrangements in time, hopefully we can do that next year.

We look forward to another successful year of NALC

Cllr John Potts
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 161 local councils in Northumberland and Newcastle, with a further nine 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 but two of 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.

NALC is governed by a County Committee composed of representatives appointed by our member-councils. The chairman this year was John Potts supported by David Francis (Alnwick) Mike Wood (Greenham) David Nicholson as Vice Chairmen – David Nicholson is also fulfilling the role of Hon Treasurer.

2023/204 an overview

The Coronation of King Charles III was a momentous day in the history of this Country, over 20 million watched it live on TV on the 6th May 2023. Street Parties and celebrations organised by Parish, Town and Community Councils up and down the County marked this most auspicious occasion. NALC played its part by circulating guidance and information from the Royal Pageant master Bruno Peek and answered numerous questions relating to funding of benches, trees, beacons and parties!

NALC was privileged to be involved with the interview process for the new CEO and Senior members of the team at Northumberland County Council. We were also involved in the NCC Corporate peer review sessions at County hall, answering questions on local priorities and outcomes, organisational and place leadership, governance and culture, financial planning and management and capacity for improvement. This was a very interesting session led by Officers from other County Councils. Being invited to be involved with interviews and peer reviews can only be seen as an indication of the value NCC sees in its ever improving working relationship with NALC.

The Chief Executive of the National Association of Local Councils Jonathan Owen attended our autumn Conference at County Hall. The day was well attended and very well received, so well that the Leader of the Council Glen Sanderson requested that we make it a bi-annual event and hold a second conference in February which was attended by even more Councillors!

The market place in the foyer of County Hall worked well with officers from various NCC departments and external bodies being on hand to answer questions from our members. Topical presentations in the chamber followed by a Q&A session with

Glen and senior officers of the Council rounded off the evening well. Constructive feedback gathered at the February Conference was very favourable and has helped refine and improve future events.

Training

We have facilitated training members on the following topics:

- Procurement
- Finance for Councillors
- Finance for new Clerks
- VAT for unregistered Councils
- VAT for VAT registered Councils
- Internal Controls
- Budgeting for Clerks and Finance Staff
- Role of the Internal Auditor

We have worked with Durham & Cleveland to provide training on the following topics:

- New Councillor Training
- CiLCA Introduction
- Roles and responsibilities
- Finance and budgets
- Managing meetings

Assistance to member councils

There is no pattern to the volume and variation of requests I receive on a daily basis – suffice to say my knowledge and experience has certainly improved. The help and advice from the National Associations legal department has been invaluable and has no doubt saved our members a lot of money in legal costs, Questions have ranged from: Common land rules, Cemeteries, property, freedom of information, trees, financial issues, employment, HR, legal, Code of Conduct, planning, bus stops, gullies, potholes, highways and standards – never a dull moment!

We have not only supported Parish Councils remotely over the phone and by email we have also attended by invitation several Town and Parish Council meetings up and down the County.

The Association continues to retain the Parkinson Partnership who has assisted Member Councils with a range of VAT issues and several member Council have taken advantage of this free advice, in early 2023 we extended our relationship with the Parkinson Partnership who are now providing a range of professionally led finance courses.

Our Enews has proven a useful communications tool for our membership, a slight makeover and change of style in 2023 has improved the look, the circulation has widened, more clicks recorded on our articles and a subscription link added. I have reached out to various NCC departments in the last 12 months to get content which has further developed NALCs working relationship with the Council.

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 is was elected as Vice Chair (member services) of the National Association of Local Councils in 2024.

NALC's finances

The county committee is pleased to report a modest surplus for the year as recorded in the statement of accounts and balance sheet for the period 2023/2024 contained in the annual report. Your committee, conscious of the financial pressure member councils and households in Northumberland face, is conducting a management service review and will keep any increase in membership subscriptions to the minimum necessary.

CAN hosts and provides administrative support to the county association – our thanks to CAN for their generous support and in particular to Margaret Tweddell who manages our accounts and to our auditor Peter Basnett for his valued advice.

A Personal Note

I'd like to thank the outgoing Chair Cllr Alex Wallace for his wise words and support and thank our new Chair John Potts for his professional stewardship of our meetings. I would also like to extend my thanks to colleagues and friends from Member Councils, the County Committee, national NALC, Northumberland County Council Officers, Newcastle City Council Officers and other County Associations who have supported me this year.

I would also like to thank my colleagues in the CAN Office and a special thank you to Margaret Tweddell for keeping our finances and figures in order.

Graeme Popay

**NALC Chief Officer
14 September 2024**

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NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Statement of Income & Expenditure 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

<u>2022-2023</u>		<u>2023-2024</u>	<u>2022-2023</u>		<u>2023-2024</u>
£	<u>Expenditure</u>	£	£	<u>Income</u>	£
18,538.07	National Association - Membership Fee	17,323.75	58,459.98	Membership Subscriptions	58,459.98
30,000.00	Community Action - Agency Fee	30,000.00	-		-
338.88	Meetings & Events	968.88	542.60	Training Events	542.60
415.00	Miscellaneous	440.00	-	Miscellaneous	-
280.00	NALC Website	327.94	-		-
1,484.99	Parishes Website Portal	1,752.00	5,550.00	Parishes Website Subscriptions	5,625.00
-	-	-	77.61	Bank Interest	654.85
164.99	Publications	-	-		-
13,408.26	Surplus	12,675.34	-	Deficit	-
<u>64,630.19</u>		<u>63,487.91</u>	<u>64,630.19</u>		<u>63,487.91</u>

1. Meetings & Events – Meeting Expenses £105; Zoom £143.88; Online Training £720

2. Miscellaneous - External Consultants (Advice Service)

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024

<u>2022/2023</u>		<u>2023/2024</u>		
£		£	£	£
	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>			
1,965.62	Sundry Debtors	824.18		
52,976.97	Cash on Deposit	66,792.85	56,617.03	
	<u>LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>			
-	Sundry Creditors	-		
0.90	Receipts in Advance	-	-	
54,941.69				67,617.03
	<u>FINANCED BY</u>			
41,533.43	General Reserve - Accumulated Surplus		54,941.69	
13,408.26	- Surplus for Year		12,675.34	
-	- Deficit for Year		-	
54,941.69				67,617.03

MEMBER COUNCILS 2022-2023

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

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

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

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