

**Northumberland Association of Local Councils**

**Minutes of the digital meeting of the County Committee at 10.00 am on Friday 23 April 2021**

Present:

Councillors Barrell, Coates, C Cuthbert, Dunn, Francis, Hillan, Hood, Hughes, Peden, Potts, Rook, Thurgood, Varley, Wallace (Chairman in the Chair), Wakeling and Wood

Mr D Woodard (President)

Ms G Turner (Hon. Treasurer)

Messrs Kirsop and Hedley (Northumberland County Council)

SE Rickitt (NALC Chief Officer)

1: Welcome, apologies for absence, changes to membership and declarations of interest

1.1 Cllr Wallace took the Chair and welcomed colleagues to the meeting.

1.2 The following apologies were noted:

Cllrs Bewley and M Cuthbert

County Cllrs Pattison and Sanderson (Northumberland County Council)

Mrs Anderton

2: Committee Membership and Appointments

The were no candidates for co-option to the Committee

3: Draft minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2021

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2021 were agreed as a true record. The chief officer will make arrangements for these to be signed by the Chairman.

NB: For the items 4-8, please see the Chief Officer's Report for background information, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes

4: Coronavirus

The chief officer updated Members on the court case seeking a declaration that existing legislation provides the power to hold digital meetings. There had been a hearing on 21 April and judgment was expected in the week of 19 April. The Committee continues to support the option of Local Councils having digital meetings.

## 5: The May 2021 Elections

5.1 The chief officer was to seek clarification of arrangements for the counts for contested elections. **Action SER**

5.2 The Committee was concerned that the postal ballots for Local Councils elections had been dispatched in a different envelope than those for the County Council and the Police & Crime Commissioner. The chief officer reported that he had chased up the County Council regarding contested election cost apportionment but had received no response.

5.3 The meeting also discussed the lack of press coverage for these elections and agreed to give more detailed consideration to the issues at a future meeting. It was reported that the BBC funded Local Democracy Reporter had left the local press for a new job and the chief officer will make enquiries to see if there is a replacement. **Action SER**

## 6: The LGA Model Code of Conduct

Cllr Wallace attended a meeting of the County Council's Standards Committee on 22 April 2021 where it had been reported that work was to commence at a regional level on a common code of conduct rather than recommend adoption of the current LGA model code. The chief officer will remind both the City & County Councils of our wish to be involved in such work. **Action SER**

## 7: The Association's AGM

An initial draft of the annual report for 2020/2021 had been circulated and Members gave comments and suggestions for inclusion. It was agreed that a revised draft would be circulated for comments. The Chairman and Vice-Chairmen were authorised to approve the final version for circulation to Member Councils. **Action SER**

## 8: The Briefing Programme for 2021

The Meeting noted the updated report on numbers attending. It was suggested that a standalone Enews be sent out a few days prior to an event and for Councillors to know that they could seek reimbursement of the costs from their Council. The Committee emphasised that all Councils should have a training budget. **Action SER**

## 9: Any other current issues raised by members of the County Committee

The Coastal Communities Conference being held by the national NALC on 27 April was noted especially as it was to include a contribution from County Cllr Pattison.

Other issues had been raised during discussions on previous items.

## 10: NALC Chief Officer Report

### 10.1 – The Death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

The Committee noted the actions taken in relation to the death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. The chief officer reported that he had suggested the national NALC organise a "Lessons Learnt" discussion for County Associations to review advice in connection with the Death of a Senior National Figure.

## 10. 2 Finance

The Committee were informed that invoices for the 2021/2022 subscriptions and website had been emailed to Member Councils. Over £23,000 had already been received by the date of the meeting. The Committee approved the renewal of the VAT consultancy with The Parkinson Partnership.

## 11: National NALC issues

Cllr Francis chairs the national NALC's Policy Committee and drew attention to several items discussed at a recent meeting including

- Support for a campaign to require drive-through takeaways to record the licence number of vehicles on receipts to aid identification of litterers
- To seek a requirement that applications for works to trees protected by a TPO must include photographs
- To collect evidence of difficulties faced by Local Councils when changing their banking arrangements
- To seek view on a consultation potentially allowing much taller telecommunication masts and to take these outside the prior notification process. [The chief officer will draw attention to this in an Enews. **Action SER** ]

## 12: Farewells

Cllr Fred Thurgood (East Chevington Parish Council) said he was not standing in the forthcoming elections. He had enjoyed his time as a Councillor and as a Member of the Committee. He thanks colleagues for their friendship and support.

Cllr Alex Wallace thanked Cllr Thurgood and on behalf of the Committee wished him all the very best for the future.

Cllr Wallace stated that he was not standing as a candidate for East Bedlington Parish Council but hoped to continue to be a Member of the Committee in his capacity as a Vice-President.

## 13: Future Meetings

It was agreed to hold the next formal digital meeting on Friday 11 June 2021 at 10.00 am (the previous week being half-term).

Confirmed as a true record at the meeting on ..... 2021

and signed by the Chairman..... Date.....