

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

**Minutes of the digital meeting of the County Committee held on Friday 23 July 2021
starting at 10.00 am.**

Present:

Councillors Paul Claridge, Graham Curry, Liz Dunn, David Francis, Christine Greenwell, Sylvia Hillan, Tony Hood, David Hughes, John Potts, Violet Rook, Colin Wakeling, Alex Wallace (Chairman in the chair), Deb Wilson and Mike Wood

Also Present

Mr David Woodard – President
Mr Stephen Rickitt – Chief Officer [Actions marked as SER]

Northumberland County Council

Cllr Isabel Hunter
Mr Iain Hedley

The National Association of Local Councils

Ms Jane Moore – part only

1: Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present. The Chief Officer will investigate the apparent inability of some County Council laptops to access Zoom Meetings. **Action SER**

2: Committee Membership and Appointments

The Committee agreed to co-opt Cllr Andy Cochrane (Morpeth TC) and to substitute him for Tom Gillanders as an Association nominee on the County Council's Climate Change Steering Group.

3: Chairing the Committee

Further to the discussion at the last formal meeting, no potential candidates had contacted the Chief Officer and accordingly it was confirmed that Cllr Wallace will remain as the Chair until the first meeting after the AGM

4: Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from

Cllr David Bewley
Cllr Peter Coates
Cllr Bill Crosby
Cllr Chris Cuthbert
Cllr Adam Hogg
Cllr Rachel Locke

Cllr Alan Taylor
Cllr Simon Taylor
Mrs Monica Anderton
Ms G Turner

Cllr Glen Sanderson – Northumberland County Council
Mr Tony Kirsop – Northumberland County Council

Ms Linda Scott – Newcastle City Council
Mr Ian Humphries – Newcastle City Council

5: Style of Meetings

5.1 The Committee considered the information provided in the agenda and after discussion agreed

- a) To continue with digital meetings until Members feel confident enough to resume some face-to-face meetings
- b) The informal digital Friday morning meetings should continue as they had proved their usefulness in having focussed and in-depth discussions, being led by an external speaker

5.2 Various views were expressed about the desirability, or otherwise, of recording formal and informal meetings of the Committee, including whether discussion would be more inhibited or external speakers more reluctant to attend. It was agreed that the Chief Officer should investigate the potential for making such recordings available to Committee Members only on a time-limited basis. **Action SER**

5.3 Members approved the following as topics for in-depth discussions at future informal meetings in the autumn

- Cycle routes
- Borderlands Growth Initiative
- Library provision

6: Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 June 2021

The draft minutes were agreed as a true record and will be signed by the Chairman.

7: Matters arising, including:

- a) Election Recharges – nothing further has been received from the County Council at the date of drafting this agenda
- b) Mobile Food Vans – an informal meeting was held on Friday 2 July. A draft note for Member Councils was with the County Council for comment. **Action SER**

8: The Briefing Programme 2021

8.1 The Committee noted the outcomes of the current programme and agreed that Cllr Francis and the Chief Officer would consider the potential engagement of a national speaker for a Standards Briefing later in the year. **Action Cllr David Francis and SER**

8.2 For similar reasons to those in minute 5.2 above, the Committee concurred with the Chief Officer's inclination not to record briefing sessions, balancing the ability for recording to be widely available against the benefits of candour for those attending a briefing.

9: Finance

9.1 The finance report was approved. The Committee noted that the national NALC was recommending an increase of 1% in their subscriptions for 2022/2023 and agreed to recommend to the Association's AGM that both elements of the Northumberland subscriptions for 2022/2023 should rise by 1%. **Action SER**

9.2 The Chief Officer will email those Councils with unpaid subscriptions on his return from leave in late August. **Action SER**

10: Issues raised by Committee Members

10.1 Parliamentary Constituencies

The Chairman asked if any Member Council had raised the issue of the Parliamentary Constituency Boundary proposals. The Chief Officer reported that no Councils had contacted him following the recent section in the Enews dated 9 June 2021.

10.2 Rail Services in Northumberland

The Committee agreed to express their concerns to local MPS, the Leaders of the City and County Council and the North of Tyne Wear regarding the series of consultations underway with the potential effect of severely reducing rail services for our area. **Action SER**

10.3 Short-Term Holiday Accommodation (SHTA)

Beadnell Parish Council had asked that the Association supports its campaign for SHTAs to be subject to council tax rather than business rates. Details are attached in the paper prepared for the AONB partnership, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes. Some concern was expressed that the paper did not set out HMRC's rules for SHTAs. The Committee noted this was an increasing problem across the Association's Area and the knock-on effects of planning rules deterring new-build SHTAs meaning that previously affordable housing is being marketed and sold as SHTA. The national NALC have been lobbying Govt. but with little success. Subject to the above, the Committee agreed to support the call for SHTAs to be subject to Council Tax. **Action SER**

10.4 Newcastle Issues

Cllr Rook offered to share the papers from the recent Green Summit and reported that the City Council was dropping the proposals for a bus lane across the Tyne Bridge.

10.5 Northumberland Issues

Issues had been raised during the discussion on other matters.

11: The Association's AGM

2021 marks the 75th Anniversary of the Association. The Committee have stated a wish to hold an event to celebrate the work of the parish, town and community councils in our area. The Committee endorsed the recommendation of The President and Chairman that Saturday 9 October 2021 is set as the date and it be organised as a face-to-face event in the Community Centre, Bedlington Station and only go digital if the Covid position seriously worsens. **Action SER**

12: Standards

The Chief Officer reported that was becoming increasingly clear that there will not be a regional model code of conduct. It is understood that the City Council will not be making significant changes to their code, whilst the County Council had yet to consider what changes they may recommend. The Association's wish to be involved has been made to the lead legal officer. **Action SER**

13: The County Council's Town and Parish Council Charter

13.1 The Committee endorsed the following as potential changes

- Making clear reference to Community Councils
- A revision to the introduction
- Deletion of "parliament" from the first bullet point on Effective Joint Working (page 5) and its replacement with "forum"
- An extra item for the County Council under Communication (page 7) to ensure that all NCC Cllrs and Officers are briefed on the role and works of the T&PCs
- Following the licensing discussion, the removal of licensing from the fourth bullet point under Engagement (Page 8)
- The inclusion of an obligation to consult T&PCs if new provision is to be made of the items listed and to pay over a share of any commuted maintenance sum received from developers if there is an item that a new asset is to be maintained by a T&PC Local Services and Assets (page 10)

13.2 Cllrs Paul Claridge, David Francis and John Potts, together with the Chief Officer, were appointed as a group to meet with the County Council to discuss the potential changes.

Action SER

14: National Issues

14.1 Ms Jane Moore from the National NALC joined the Committee for this item. She discussed several of issues with the Committee, including

- Experiences of meeting after "Freedom Day on 19 July, and the emerging problems for Councillors and Councils being notified of potential contacts by NHS Track and Trace. Confusion remains as to what is mandatory and what is advisory for isolation
- The on-going work to upgrade the national website
- The Civility project with the Society of Local Council Clerks
- The proposal for new Unitary Councils in Cumbria and North Yorkshire

14.2 Cllr David Francis offered to provide a written summary on key national issues. A copy is attached to the signed minutes.

15: Any Other Urgent Business

None.

16: Future Meetings of the Committee

The next meeting is held on Friday 24 September at 1000 by Zoom.

Confirmed as a true record

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

DRAFT