

Northumberland Association of Local Councils

Meeting of the County Committee at 10.15 am on Saturday 20 May 2017 at the East Bedlington Community Centre, Bedlington Station

Present:

Councillors Askew, Collins, Dunn, Francis, Hedley, Hogg, Hood, Huntley, Parks, Rook, Wallace (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Wood and Woodard

Mrs M Anderton

Ms G Turner (Hon. Treasurer)

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:

Councillors Barrell (Cllr Huntley acting as substitute), Potts, Sinton, Thompson and Varley.

2: Committee Membership

2.1 The Committee co-opted the following Councillors

- Amble – Cllr Ian Parks replacing Cllr Martin Horn
- Cramlington – Cllr John Collins replacing Cllr Trevor Ambrose
- Glendale – Cllr Rachel Sinton (Wooler) – vacancy at present
- Newcastle - Cllr Violet Rook – Blakelaw & North Fenham – replacing Cllr Colin Forster
- Ponteland – Cllr Alan Varley replacing Cllr Carl Rawlings
- West Bedlington – Cllr Adam Hogg replacing Cllr Keith Dalton
- Volunteer – Cllr Iain Hedley (Glanton) – Glanton is within the Alnwick constituency and Cllr Hedley was therefore adopted as a non-constituency member of the Committee. The Committee may give consideration to recommending that the AGM move Glanton into the Rothbury and Coquetdale constituency

2.2 The Committee noted that the following former members of the County Committee had not stood for re-election or had not been returned as a local councillor, in addition to those minuted at the previous meeting. The Vice-Chairman thanked all for their work, and in particular, to Cllr Todd for his work in chairing the Committee.

- Trevor Ambrose (Cramlington)
- Catherine Seymour (Berwick) *NB: She is now an NCC Cllr*
- Jeff Reynolds (Rothbury)
- Stuart Todd (Newbiggin)

2.3 The Committee agreed that Cllr Wallace would be Chairman until the annual meeting of the Committee and that Cllrs Hood, Potts and ~~Woodall~~ Wallace be Vice-Chairmen for the same period.

2.4 Cllr Hood was nominated as the NALC representative on the CAN Board, subject to the dates being suitable.

2.5 The Chief Officer will circulate a revised membership list once remaining nominations have been received. **Action SER**

3: Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2017

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3.2 Planning Issues – Cllr Francis reported that he had submitted an FoI requested seeking details of the number of pre-planning consultations within his parish (Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland). To his surprise 21 such enquiries had been made, a far higher number than had been anticipated. The Committee agreed that discussions with the County Council's planners must include pressure that such consultations are not routinely treated as confidential with no involvement of the Local Council. **Action SER**

3.3 The Committee were pleased to note the reports that publication of the County Council's formal notices in the Hexham Courant is to recommence.

4: Financial Issues

4.1 The Committee noted the draft accounts for 2016/2017. [A copy is attached to the signed minutes] The Chief Officer reported that further sums were due to CAN for the website/portal work and a final set will be

brought to a future meeting before presentation to the AGM. **Action GT, MT & SER**

4.2 The Chief Officer has yet to arrange the discussion with the Honorary Treasurer to consider financial reporting which may extend into consideration of financial and CRM systems. **Action GT, MT and SER**

5: Chief Officer's Report

5.1 The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer. [A copy is attached to the signed minutes]

5.2 Northumberland Elections – Members were concerned at the administrative arrangements for both the County Council and Local Council counts. The Committee considered that one centre in a large geographical area such as Northumberland is inappropriate and resolved to make representations to the Deputy Returning Officer. The Chief Officer, in his personal capacity as an *Accredited Observer*, was asked to include those views in his informal report to the Electoral Commission. **Action SER**

5.3 The Committee agreed that the informal spreadsheet showing numbers of contest and vacancies should be put on the website. The Chief Officer was asked to circulate Northumberland Local Councils to see how many Councils had more applicants than vacancies when considering co-options. The spreadsheet shows the number of vacancies for each Council as at the date of declaration of uncontested elections. **Action SER**

5.4 Dormant Councils – The Committee endorsed the Chief Officer's recommendation to ask the County Council to conduct *Community Governance Reviews* to see if these Councils should be dissolved. **Action SER**

5.5 The Councillor Census – pressure of work has deferred an analysis. **Action SER**

5.6 Proposed Business Plan – this item was deferred to the next meeting but Members were asked to forward any thoughts on the first draft to the Chief Officer. **Action All**

5.7 Council Tax Referendums – The Committee endorsed the Chief Officer's recommendation that the national NALC be asked to collect national data in a systematic method as it seemed likely that DCLG would return to raising the spectre of Local Council referendums. **Action DF & SER**

5.8 The new website is now live and all Member Councils were asked to contribute items. **Action All**

5.9 County Council Standards Committee – Cllr Francis thought this should be a more formal process than seeking expressions of interest. The Chairman assured that these views would be taken into account.

Action SER

5.10 Other items in the report were noted

6: Newcastle Issues

6.1 The Chief Officer reported that the meeting for those Councils was held on Tuesday 14 March and issues of mutual concern were discussed. Further such meetings will be arranged. **Action SER**

6.2 The Committee was also advised that the City Council planners had agreed to provide training for Local Councils and the Chief Officer will be putting arrangements in hand. Some Northumberland Councils may be interested in attending that training, particularly those bounding the City.

Action SER

7: Northumberland Issues

7.1 Elections – The County Council elections on 4 May 2017 had led to a probable change of administration although their meeting was not until 24 May 2017. The Chairman reported that he had authorised the Chief Officer to seek an early meeting/meetings with members of the new administration Cllr Dunn was congratulated on her election as a County Councillor. **Action SER**

7.2 Northumberland Local Councils are particularly concerned to understand the remit and operation of the proposed five *Local Area Councils* and whether there would be any changes to the joint delivery of local services.

8: County Committee Member's Issues

8.1 Councillor Wood reported that BT had removed the telephone box in Greenhead despite the Parish Council's objection. The Chief Officer will follow this up with the County Council. **Action SER**

8.2 The Chairman reminded Members of the availability of grants under the LEADER LAG scheme. Committee members and the Chief Officer were asked to raise awareness wherever possible. **Action ALL & SER**

9: National ALC Issues

9.1 Councillor Francis had provided the response prepared for the NALC Review which was adopted with thanks.

9.2 The Committee agreed to seek nominations from Member Councils for the national NALC Star Councils’ Awards. At the suggestion of Cllr Francis, the Council agreed to nominate East Bedlington Parish Council for its work on the Community Centre. **Action All & SER**

9.3 Cllr Francis reported that generally the national NALC had been quiet because of the local government elections in England

10: Annual Report

This item was deferred to the next meeting but Members were asked to forward any thoughts on the first draft to the Chief Officer. **Action All**

11: Possible amendment to Local Standing Orders

The Committee endorsed the recommendation to add a paragraph confirming that individual Local Councillors have the right to request items be included on an agenda. [A copy of the report is attached to the signed minutes]

12: Any Other Business

None not noted elsewhere

13: Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 8 July 2017

The meeting closed at Noon.

Confirmed as a true record

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

DRAFTING NOTE - REPORTS TO BE ADDED