Northumberland Association of Local Councils

Meeting of the County Committee at 10.15 am on Saturday 23 March 2019 at the Storey Park Community Centre, Morpeth

Present:

Councillors Barrell, Crosby, Dunn, Francis, Gillanders, Hedley, Hillan, Hood, Hughes, Parks, Potts, Price, Rook, Sambrook, Thurgood, Varley, Wallace (Chairman in the Chair), Wood

Mr D Woodard (President)

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

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and especially Cllr Crosby.

Apologies were noted from Councillors Hogg (Cllr Crosby as substitute), Roughead and Tebbutt

2: Committee Membership

The Committee agreed to co-opt Councillor Peter Coates (Longhirst Parish Council) given his experience as the former County Surveyor.

3: Minutes of the 19 January 2019 meeting

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

4: Financial Issues

4.1 The Committee noted and adopted the financial summary. [A copy is attached to the signed minutes]

4.2 The Chief Officer reported the receipt of two donations and that matters were in hand to collect the outstanding subscriptions.

5: Chief Officer's Report

5.1 The Committee considered and adopted the report of the Chief Officer with the further comments below. [A copy is attached to the signed minutes]

5.2 The Chief Officer and Councillor Francis expressed their concerns over possible changes to the recommended accounting practice and especially its potential effect on joint committees and arrangements. The Chief Officer was asked to seek confirmation from the national NALC that there would be meaningful consultation before any changes are published. **Action SER**

5.3 The Committee reiterated its support for the Borderlands Growth Initiative and welcomed the recent announcements of funding from both governments

5.4 Whilst the Committee's preference remains for a local council seat on the North of Tyne Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the meeting endorsed the Chief Officer's informal comment that "observer status" would be an acceptable first step. **Action SER**

6: Newcastle Issues

Cllr Rook informed members that she would be attending the Police and Crime Commissioner's Age Advisory Committee. She invited any members to contact her direct with any issues they would like raised.

7: Northumberland Issues

7.1 The Chairman, Councillor Hood and the Chief Officer had attended a meeting with senior NCC officers on 21 March 2019 to consider issues arising from the Liaison Working Group on 1 February 2019. All members of the Committee had been sent a note on 22 March, a copy of which is in the annex for ease of reference.

7.2 The meeting, at the suggestion of Councillor Wallace, agreed that its representatives at the follow-up meetings with the County Council should be Councillors Hood, Potts, Wallace and Wood until 31 March 2020 to provide continuity whilst the County Council was setting its budget for 2020/2021.

7.3 Members noted the saving on public toilets being identified for 2010/2021 and suggested the following points to assist

- Business rate relief from 1 April 2020

- The general duties under the Equalities legislation

7.4 The Chief Officer was asked to seek clarification from the County Council that the media announcements of action against dog fouling in cemeteries includes those run by Local Councils. **Action SER**

7.5 The County Council is to reopen its Community Chest in 2019/2020. Whilst Local Councils will not be able to seek funds from it, they can draw it to the attention of Community Groups.

8: County Committee Member Issues

These included

- The need for permission for the removal of hedgerows
- Powers to support youth clubs
- Traffic speeds on main roads and the need for passive reduction measures
- The quality of the County Council's pre-application planning advice
- The use of Crowd-Funding by local Councils

The Chief Officer will follow up these issues and do notes for the Committee and Member Councils as appropriate. **Action SER**

9: National NALC Issues

9.1 Cllr Francis drew attention to the following policy issues considered at the national NALC

a) An analysis of the regard paid to Neighbourhood Plans by planning authorities and inspectors. The Chief Officer will circulate details. **Action SER**

b) A request to MHCLG to confirm that Local Council can give financial assistance to churches

c) A request to MHCLG that funds being made available for bids by principal councils should also be available for applications by Local Councils

d) Research on the precepts levied by Charter Trustees.

e) The national NALC's wish to improve the number and quality of responses to national consultations by getting more information from County Associations and Local Councils. **Action SER**

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10: Safeguarding

The Committee agreed the draft policy with an amendment to include "financial abuse" in the list of types of abuse. **Action SER**

11: Any Other Business

None raised, not noted elsewhere

12: Date of Next Meeting

This will be Saturday 8 June 2019, with future meetings as below

- 7 September 2019
- 28 September 2019 – AGM
- 16 November 2019

The meeting closed at 1200

Confirmed as a true record

and signed by the Chairman…… Date……..

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Annex – email sent 22 March 2019 regarding the meeting with the County Council on 21 March 2019

Cllrs Hood and Wallace, together with David Nicholson & Monica Anderton for SLCC, and myself met

- Rob Murfin – the new Director of Planning
- Paul Jones – Executive Directive
- Greg Gavin – Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Kris Westerby – Highways Deliver Manager.

This note will be expanded upon on Saturday but key points were

Planning

Rob Murfin has worked in a planning authority with local councils. He clearly understands and appreciates our sector.

His aims include

- Involving local councils in considering what types of affordable housing is needed by a community
- Involving local councils in s106 discussion so that there is a real possible of some 106 funds going towards community projects identified by local councils
- The continuing need for briefing for local councillors on the continuing changes in planning
- The need to assist local councils and communities to make comments which are material planning considerations

The meeting commenced the discussion on electronic delivery and it was clear that we were talking to a planner who understands why local councils need paper plans for some applications.

Mr Murfin has been invited to a forth-coming meeting of the County Committee, potentially June 2019.

This is very much the start of a dialogue and there will be further meetings to look at these in more depth.

Events

Paul Jones and Kris Westerby presented this item. NCC are establishing a transition fund for recurring existing events in 2019/2020 to assist in covering the costs of traffic management and post-event litter collection. Details are expected to be circulated shortly to the organisers of events in 2018 and, at our request, will be copied to local councils, either direct or via the Enews.

The driver is not only cost recovery but a review of the appropriate legislation where road closures are needed. There are likely to be more formal orders which require newspaper notices.

I anticipate the fund will award a percentage of costs but with a ceiling on the maximum grant.

Charges will not be levied for Remembrance Day and Armed Forces events. NALC raised Operation London bridge and VE/VJ Days in 2020, together with the way NCC learns of events. Member Councils may be asked to alert NCC to events as not all events are notified to the NCC's Public Protection Dept. as an additional way of trying to ensure that information is received.

Neighbourhood Services

This is led by Greg Gavin. Work will commence on providing local councils with details of the base-line for NCC work, thus enabling local councils to consider whether to do top-up NCC's work.

NCC accept that some local councils and their communities will be content with the base level of work. Most of the largest local councils have arrangements with NCC for extra work to be done, with the local councils making significant payments to NCC.

NCC would like the opportunity for such arrangements to be available to other councils or clusters of councils. They wish to work with NALC on how this might be achieved.

There was a brief mention of the NCC budget saving identified for public toilets in 2020/2021 and this is to be the subject of detailed examination at the next meeting.

Volunteers

Kris Westerby leads on this. NCC would like to work with local councils to encourage community volunteers to carry out some work, for example safe litter picking in some locations, accepting that many communities may already do this. NCC are looking to increase the availability of litter-pickers and other low-cost equipment. Training courses will also be offered, especially on safety.

Earlier in the week MHCLG offered £56k to NCC for working with communities on litter collection and tidying-up high streets and town centres. The money as to be spent by 31 March 2019 or it is lost! Those local councils who have high streets and town centres have already been approached and offered either £4500 or £2500. NCC are using the balance to acquire the low-cost equipment from groups.

Conclusion

A very positive meeting with officers who clearly understand our sector.