

Northumberland Association of Local Councils

An Electronic Meeting of the County Committee at 10.00 am on Friday 24 April 2020

Present:

Councillors Barrell, Bewley, Bowlas, Coates, Cuthbert, Dunn, Francis, Gillanders, Hillan, Hood, Hughes, Potts, Rook, Wakeling, Wallace (Chairman in the Chair) and Wood

Mr D Woodard (President)

Ms G Turner (Hon. Treasurer)

SE Rickitt (NALC Chief Officer)

1: Welcome, apologies for absence and declarations of interest

In opening the meeting, the Chairman welcomed colleagues to the first formal electronic meeting of the County Committee. The weekly informal meetings would continue during the National Emergency. This was the first ZOOM meeting at which the Chairman would act as the Co-host. Colleagues were asked to be patient if technical hitches occurred.

Apologies were noted from County Councillor Pattison and Mrs M Anderton. Cllr Pattison had intended to join the meeting but had been called away at short notice as Tyne-Tees TV wanted to do a piece on the coronavirus community work being done by Newton-on-the-Sea.

2: Committee Membership and Appointments

The resignation of Cllr Andrew Tebbutt (Morpeth TC) was noted and the co-option of Cllr Matthew Cuthbert to replace Cllr Stephen Fenwick (both Ashington TC) was agreed.

3: Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2020

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

3.2 There were no matters arising to consider as actions have suspended during the Coronavirus Emergency.

4: Coronavirus

4.1. The Chief Officer's report gave an update on the work being undertaken by the Association. A copy of the report is attached to the signed minutes.

4.2 The Committee noted that even though the Government expects that most public sector bodies, which are funded through HM Exchequer, will not avail themselves of the Job Retention Scheme (ie 'furloughing'), the scheme is nevertheless open to local councils. The concern for National ALC is the fact that local councils are not eligible for the property-based schemes: Small Business scheme, and Retail/Leisure/hospitality scheme. In other parts of England, some larger Councils face a significant loss of income due to the closure of council-owned facilities and/or loss of tourist related

revenue. The Committee was not currently aware of any Member Council in our area in such a predicament.

4.3 Members were encouraged to provide the Association with details of the work being done by their Councils within their communities as the Association want to record the efforts of Councillors and Staff during the pandemic. It was clear that innovative solutions are being found to meet the needs of parishioners.

4.4 The Committee expressed appreciation to the County Council for its work and especially the speed at which grants had been passed to local businesses. The special issue of Northumberland News was well received.

4.5 The Chief Officer advised members that he would be preparing an advice note for Member Councils on the completion of the AGAR and the Committee supported his efforts in seeking national clarification on how an internal audit could be undertaken in 2020. There is also a possible hint coming through that the elections in May 2021 could be staged rather than all being on 6 May 2021. The Committee are concerned that if the County Councils elections in May 2021 are not held on the same day as the Northumberland Local Council elections, then there could be a significant cost to Member Councils.

4.6 Cllr Wakeling drew attention to Workers Memorial Day on Tuesday 28 April 2020 at 11.00 am.

5: The Annual Report for 2019/2020

The draft Annual Report was approved for distribution to Member Councils subject to proof-reading. The Chairman was delighted to announce that Kim McGuiness, the Police & Crime Commissioner, has agreed to be the speaker at the AGM on 3 October 2020. A venue is yet to be agreed.

6: Financial Issues

6.1 The Committee noted and adopted the unaudited accounts for 2019/2020 contained in the draft Annual Report. Members were advised that there was a likely shortfall in income during 2020/2021 as paid-for briefing/training sessions were currently on-hold.

The Committee authorised the Chief Officer, with the approval of the Chairman and Honorary Treasurer, to pay the national NALC's levy in monthly instalments based on subscriptions received from Member Councils.

6.3 The Committee agreed to renew the VAT advice consultancy with the Parkinson Partnership for a further year.

7: Date of next meeting

It was agreed to continue the weekly informal meetings and the Chairman was authorised to convene the next formal meeting of the Committee as and when circumstances required.

Confirmed as a true record
and signed by the Chairman..... Date.....