



NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the County Committee at 10am on Saturday 25th January 2025, held online due to a severe weather warning.

Present in person: Cllrs: Alex Wallace, John Potts, David Francis, Mike Wood, Alan Sambrook, David Nicholson. Paul Vaughan, Liz Dunn, Chris Cuthbert, Violet Rook, Gwen Woodman, Karen Overbury, David Hughes David Woodard, Sylvia Hillan, Rosemary McKenzie.

Also Present

Mr Graeme Popay – Chief Officer [Actions marked as GP]

1: Welcome.

Cllr John Potts welcomed everyone and thanked them for moving to the inline format at such short notice.

2. Committee Membership

Paper circulated and noted.

3: Apologies for Absence.

Monica Anderton, Cllrs: Alan Taylor, Colin Wakeling, Adam Hogg, Paul Claridge.

4: To elect a Chairman and Vice Chairmen for the forthcoming year.

- Chairman – John Potts
- Vice Chairman - David Francis
- Vice Chairman – David Nicholson

All agreed.

The Chair John Potts thanks Cllr Mike Wood for his many years of service, Mike had decided it was time to stand down as Vice Chair and Vice President. Mike would remain as member for Greenhead until the elections.

5: Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st September 2024

All agreed to accept the minute as a true record.

6: Matters arising

None

7: Minutes of the AGM meeting held on 28th October 2023

All agreed to accept the minute as a true record, with one amendment relating to the Hon Treasurers report. **ACTION CO** to amend minute.



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8: Finance

8.1 - The Financial report was tabled showing the current position. All agreed to accept the report.

8.2 – 2.5% rise in Northumberland ALC affiliation fee was agreed at the AGM – noted.

9: National Issues

David Francis gave a verbal report on recent national issues including:

- National Website – please encourage Cllrs to sign up. The recent issues experienced by Cllrs unable to download certain documents is being rectified.
- New Government Devolution White Paper – increased emphasis on Mayors and Mayoral Authorities.. – devolving power to regional level. – unitary principal authorities across the country - read more here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>
- Progress in lobbying for changes in audit thresholds.
- AGAR – moving to an electronic version in the near future.
- Remote Council meetings - consultation closed at the end of December – it is looking hopeful that the option to attend a Council meeting remotely may return.
- NALC urging the government to introduce a robust standards regime for local government.

10: Issues raised by Committee members

Vehicle activated digital speeding signs maintenance contract - after discussion it was agreed that the CO would contact NCC to see if this was possible.

Defibrillator servicing and locations were discussed – Cllr Mike Wood suggested members should look at the Circuit – see link <https://www.thecircuit.uk/>

Cllr David Hughes raised concerns over the way the LACs were run. This was a shared concern from other members. It was agreed to wait until after the elections to see if the LACs were continued.

Cllr Paul Vaughan, concerned over the lack of enforcement by NCC relating to building sites, in particular trucks lining up and mud on the road – it was suggested that we should ask Rob Murfin to attend to discuss this topic – **ACTION CO.**

11: Training

NALC Officers met with Officers from SLCC to discuss CilCA training for Clerks – it was agreed to continue the module training with Durham & Cleveland which had proven to be very popular with Clerks and SLCC would complement the training by providing experienced mentors.

Cllr David Francis and the CO had delivered introductory training courses aimed at Cllrs – both went down very well, both were attended by a high percentage of Clerks. It was noted that the ENews had advertised the courses twice with very low interest. Numbers increased significantly following a dedicated training email. a shorter, topic specific ENews would be trialled on a fortnightly basis.



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National Planning Policy Framework – it was agreed that the CO would speak to Rob with a view to a presentation. **ACTION CO**

Elections Training for Clerks – NCC have promised to deliver this in early March, dates would be circulated by NCC direct to Clerks shortly

NCC Training Opportunities – The CO had received a link to NCC Councillor training – this would be available for all local Councillors to attend free of charge – agreed to circulate the link to members of this Committee to trial first and then circulated wider after the elections.

12: Constitution of the County Committee

It was agreed to form a working group of Officers to review the Constitution, this group to meet as soon as possible **ACTION CO** to arrange a meeting.

13: 2024 County meetings.

- Saturday 1st March – Online only
- Saturday 12th April – County Hall & Hybrid
- Saturday 7th June – County Hall & Hybrid
- Saturday 12th July - County Hall & Hybrid
- Saturday 20th September – AGM Venue to be agreed
- Saturday 1st November - Online only.

14: Campaigns:

It was agreed that Election costs would not be a campaign, as the opportunity to address this is available via an upcoming meeting with NCC Elections team.

It was broadly agreed that NCC Elections team had endeavoured to keep costs to a minimum. It was suggested by members that other steps could be put in place to reduce the costs further including – any passed on costs should be equitable.

15: NCC:

Charter review – after discussion it was agreed that Officers and any other member interested would meet with Iain Hedley to discuss the review of the Charter. **ACTION CO** to arrange

Conference 2025 – no February conference due to the proximity of elections. Whilst the autumn conference was welcome it was suggested that this committee should investigate a means to deliver a NALC led session for members in winter/Spring 2026.

15: Any Other Urgent Business

None – please contact the CO if you have a topic for discussion.

16: Next Meeting of the Committee – Saturday 1st March 10am Online

Meeting Closed at 12.20