

Northumberland Association of Local Councils

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

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Northumberland Association of Local Councils

2019-2020

PRESIDENT

Mr David Woodard

Vice Presidents

Cllr David Francis

Cllr Alex Wallace

Hon Treasurer

Miss Gillian Turner

Hon Auditor

Mr Peter Basnett

County Committee

Mrs Anderton – East Tynedale Forum
Cllr Barrell (Vice-Chair) - Choppington
Cllr Bewley – Amble
Cllr Bowlas - Berwick
Cllr Coates – Longhirst
Cllr Cuthbert – Prudhoe
Cllr Dunn – Ellington
Cllr Fenwick – Ashington
Cllr Gillanders – Hexham
Cllr Hillan – North Sunderland
Cllr Hood (Vice Chair) – Felton
Cllr Hogg - West Bedlington
Cllr Hughes - Milfield

Cllr Peden – Newbiggin
Cllr Phelps – Dinnington
Cllr Potts (Vice-Chair) - Blyth
Cllr Rook – Blakelaw & North Fenham
Cllr Sambrook – Pegswood
Cllr Stanners – Seaton Valley
Cllr Thurgood – East Chevington
Cllr Wakeling – Norham & Islandshire
Assoc.
Cllr Wallace (Chair) – East Bedlington
Cllr Wood (Vice Chair) - Greenhead

Chief Officer Stephen Rickitt

Membership shown as at 31st March 2020

What we offer

We are an association of local (i.e. parish, town and community) councils, which draws membership from Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. Our overriding aim is to develop and support active and effective local councils. This requires local councils to be aware of local needs and concerns, and to find a way of addressing them, whether by taking direct action themselves or by encouraging others to take the lead. Local councils have unlimited powers to raise money by precepting on the Council Tax, and this is an opportunity which can be used enthusiastically but prudently to support local initiatives and services.

To support local councils, we provide or arrange:

- A regular distribution of topical information by email
- Advice to clerks and councillors, on a wide range of topics: legal, managerial, financial, etc.
- Training: mostly short events, but also support for the CiLCA qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration)
- Accreditation of applicants for the national Local Council Award scheme
- Initial processing of applications for loan consent (MHCLG)
- Access to new opportunities, ranging from insurance policies, equipment schemes, IT solutions
- Advice to community groups on forming new councils
- Assisting in arranging representation on bodies such as the Standards Committees, and the Northumberland National Park Authority.

In addition to providing this direct help, we also undertake policy and partnership work, on behalf of the local councils' sector. This involves monitoring changes, policies and proposals which may impact on local councils, and working to influence the decisions which are made by local government, agencies, and public utility providers. It also means working with other bodies to develop opportunities which can benefit local councils and their communities.

We are willing to assist the formation of new local councils in Newcastle and North Tyneside if local communities so wish.

Although we are an independent body, we also form part of the National Association of Local Councils, from whom we draw specialist support on legal and policy topics, and to whom we pay an annual financial levy.

Chairman's Foreword

I am pleased to be able to report a successful year for the Association. There are now only four functioning councils who are not members. There has been a good programme of events for members.

Our links with the City Council and the County Council remain strong and it is pleasing that links are being forged with the new North of Tyne Combined Authority, as evidenced by the Mayor's attendance at our AGM. Regular meetings with the County Council's officers have assisted Member Councils in finding practical solutions to sometimes long-running issues.

I was optimistic about our future until that latter part of the year when the Coronavirus National Emergency put plans on hold. What did please me was the way that Local Councils stepped up to the mark and assisted their communities. Innovative solutions were tailored to suit the needs of their parishioners. Councillors, clerks, and other staff worked not only in their council roles, but also as individuals. As I write this, minds are already starting to turn to recovery, and I am sure that next year's report will have details of some of the work currently being taken. The Association's work has continued with the use of video-conferencing, a way which in itself presents opportunities for greater engagement with Member Councils in the future.

We were saddened to hear of the death of Ray Butler, a Vice-President of the Association. Ray had been the founding Chairman of his parish council and a stalwart of the Association.

The Association continues to remind the three principal councils, the national park authority, and the combined authority of the role of local councils as there may well be projects for which we are ideal partners.

I would like to thank Stephen, Margaret Tweddell (who keeps the financial records in order) and the other colleagues at CAN for their work, together with Gillian Turner and Peter Basnett (the Honorary Treasurer and Auditor respectively).

David Woodard (President) & David Francis (Vice-President) together with the Vice-Chairmen, Amanda Barrell, Tony Hood, John Potts & Mike Wood are a continuing source of advice and guidance for which I remain very grateful. David Francis also deserves our thanks for his continued service as our representative on the national NALC.

Finally, can I thank my fellow members of the County Committee, both past and present, for their work, friendship, and good humour.

With best wishes for the future

Cllr Alex Wallace
Chairman of the County Committee

Introduction and Summary

NALC is one of the county associations of local councils in England, which together form the National Association. 'Local Council' includes parish, town, neighbourhood, community, and village councils of which there are 162 in our area (Northumberland and Newcastle), although some do not have a functioning local council. There are currently no local councils in North Tyneside.

As at 31 March 2020, all but four of the functioning Local Councils are members of our Association. NALC was formed in the 1940s and for many years received administrative and professional support from CAN (Community Action Northumberland), thus saving on 'overhead' costs, and reducing duplication in the provision of our seamless advisory work to support local communities.

In 2015 a more formal separation of the two organisations occurred, although CAN still hosts the NALC Chief Officer and provides administrative support under a memorandum of understanding now extended until 2021/2022

NALC is governed by a County Committee composed of representatives appointed by our member-councils. The chairman this year was Alex Wallace (East Bedlington) supported by Amanda Barrell (Choppington), Tony Hood (Felton), John Potts (Blyth) and Mike Wood (Greenhead) as Vice-Chairmen

Supporting individual councils

This is the core function of the association. Advice has been given on a wide range of topics such as

- Codes of Conduct
- Procedure at Meetings
- Village Greens and Common Land
- Property Issues
- Finance and Audit
- Freedom of Information, and particularly individuals making many requests
- Powers

Coronavirus

Although arising at the end of our year, this has over-shadowed recollections of the year. The report for 2020/2021 will cover this in more detail but it is clear Local Councils are devoting their time and energies on assisting the communities.

Employment support

Providing Member Councils with support regarding employment issues is a significant role. Whilst in an overwhelming number of Councils there are no employment problems, there are a small number where the employer/employee

relationship runs into difficulties. Details of individual cases must remain confidential, but Councils and their Clerks are encouraged to seek assistance at an early stage.

Financial Advice

VAT continues to raise concerns and, in particular, when a village hall or community group is being assisted by a Local Council. The Association has continued the arrangement with the Parkinson Partnership for specialist VAT advice at no initial cost to individual Member Councils.

Transparency

The Association's website and portal is becoming embedded with more information to assist Councils and Councillors. There are now 61 Council sites on our portal. In 2019/2020, 19,118 users visited the portal sites with 140,849 page views.

Training

During 2019-2020, we held 15 training events attended by 80 Councillors and Clerks. We endeavour to hold training across all parts of the area.

The general offer of training for individual councils which was taken up by six Councils this year. It is a way of Councillors and their clerk/staff to consider improvements to practice and seems to have been well-received

NALC Enews,

The NALC Enews is a weekly email giving brief descriptions of items of interest, with links to more information. At 31 March 2020 there were 502 individual subscribers and we know that many clerks automatically forward copies to all their Councillors.

Working with the City and County Councils

The Association's relationships with the two principal councils have been re-invigorated during the year. Meetings have been held with City Council officers and work is on-going to assist the four member Councils in Newcastle.

The Chief Officer now attends the County Council's Town & Parish Liaison Working Group as an adviser, together with representatives of the Northumberland Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks.

North of Tyne Devolution

The County Committee continues to press for there to be a local council representative, as of right, on the new authority's overview and scrutiny committee. The Mayor was the main speaker at the 2019 AGM, giving a thought-provoking address and demonstrating the synergies with our sector.

Working with the National NALC

Our liaison with the national NALC continues, Cllr David Francis (Newton on the Moor and Swarland) is the Association's representative on the National Assembly and serves on the Policy Committee. We are delighted that he was re-elected as the Chair of the Policy Committee. In his capacity as the clerk to Meldon Parish Council, Stephen Rickitt (the chief officer) is one of three directly elected representatives on the national Smaller Councils Committee.

Planning Matters

Commenting on Development Control issues is regarded by Local Councils as one of their most important functions. Liaison is in hand with both principal councils' planning officers to enhance the training given for Local Councillors. In addition, the NALC Enews draws attention to planning matters on a regular basis.

Standards

Councils await implementation of the recommendations in the 2019 Committee on Standards in Public Life's report on local government ethical standards. Before the Coronavirus National Emergency, the LGA were coordinating the production of a national draft code of conduct.

Brexit

At both national and local level, there has been a watching brief on possible developments. At the time of drafting (16 April 2020) there does not seem to have been any specific changes directed at our sector which do not also apply more widely across the UK.

What has been clear is the reduction in other legislative or policy changes from Whitehall and Westminster, even before coronavirus.

Localisation of Council Tax Benefits

The County Council continues to exercise its power not to pass any of this through to Northumberland's Local Council. Representations continue to be made as does the issue of the retention of the national New Homes Bonus.

Business Plan

In 2017 the AGM agreed an ambitious business plan for the Association during 2018/2023. It has provided difficult targets to achieve and thus demonstrate value for money to the local council taxpayers. It features on the agenda for the AGM.

The Review of County Committee Constituencies

The Working Group met in early 2020 and started work on a report for Members to consider but further work has been delayed by the National Emergency.

NALC's finances

The audited accounts are in this report. We are pleased to report there was another modest surplus in 2019/2020. Training events and parish portals are producing a modest surplus, but other sources of income are always under active investigation.

The Association has recognised the financial pressures on member councils and is keeping subscription increases to the minimum necessary. The proposal is for subscriptions to rise by 3.00% for 2021-2022, in line with increases being imposed by the National NALC.

Congratulations

These go to the winners of our augural Newcastle & Northumberland Local Council of the Year 2019

- Hexham Town Council – winners
- Blakelaw and North Fenham Community Council – joint runner-up
- Longhorsley Parish Council – joint runner-up

A Personal Note

I would like to thank all who have and continue to assist me as the NALC Chief Officer. Naming individuals is always difficult, but I would like to pay special thanks to Cllr Alex Wallace as the Chair of the County Committee, David Woodard as President and Cllr David Francis as the national representative. Their assistance has been, and continues to be, invaluable.

My colleagues in the CAN Office continue to provide support and assistance, as well as acting as good sounding boards for which I am very grateful.

Stephen Rickitt
NALC Chief Officer
16 April 2020

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Statement of Income & Expenditure

1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020

<u>2018-2019</u>		<u>2019-2020</u>	<u>2018-2019</u>		<u>2019-2020</u>
£	<u>Expenditure</u>	£	£	<u>Income</u>	£
16,420.39	National Association - Membership Fee	17,056.79	49,484.54	Membership Subscriptions	51,230.43
30,000.00	Community Action - Agency Fee	30,000.00	-	-	-
847.00	Local Council Review	847.00	1,179.50	Local Council Review	1,179.50
656.65	Meetings & Events	730.56	2,471.14	Training Events	1,329.73
200.00	Miscellaneous	200.00	-	Miscellaneous	81.00
-	-	-	200.00	Donations	200.00
397.94	NALC Website	350.00	-	-	-
2,474.99	Parishes Website Portal	3,582.93	3,975.00	Parishes Website Subscriptions	4,500.00
-	-	-	3.10	Bank Interest	3.08
6,316.31	Surplus	5,756.46	-	Deficit	-
<u>57,313.28</u>		<u>58,523.74</u>	<u>57,313.28</u>		<u>58,523.74</u>

1. Meetings & Events - Room Hire £501.50; National ALC Conference £229.06

2. Miscellaneous - External Consultants (Advice Service)

NORTHUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020

<u>2018/2019</u>		<u>2019/2020</u>		
£		£	£	£
	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>			
440.92	Sundry Debtors	262.38		
14,176.64	Cash on Deposit	<u>20,279.64</u>	20,542.02	
	<u>LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>			
-	Sundry Creditors	168.00		
-	Receipts in Advance	<u>-</u>	<u>168.00</u>	
14,617.56				20,374.02
	<u>FINANCED BY</u>			
8,301.25	General Reserve - Accumulated Surplus		14,617.56	
6,316.31	- Surplus for Year		5,756.46	
-	- Deficit for Year		<u>-</u>	
14,617.56				20,374.02

MEMBER COUNCILS 2019-2020

Acklington	Featherstone	Nunnykirk
Acomb	Felton	Ord
Adderstone with Lucker	Ford	Otterburn
Allendale	Glanton	Ovingham
Alnmouth	Greenhead	Ovington
Alnwick	Haltwhistle	Pegswood
Alwinton	Harbottle	Plenmeller with Whitfield
Amble	Hartburn	Ponteland
Ancroft	Hartleyburn	Prudhoe
Ashington	Hauxley	Rennington
Bamburgh	Healey	Rochester & Byrness
Bardon Mill	Hebron	Rothbury
Bavington	Heddon on the Wall	Rothley and Hollinghill
Beadnell	Hedgeley	Sandhoe
Belford with Middleton	Hedley on the Hill	Seaton Valley
Bellingham	Henshaw	Shilbottle
Belsay	Hepple	Shoreswood
Berwick upon Tweed	Hepscott	Shotley Low Quarter
Birtley	Hexham	Simonburn
Blakelaw & North Fenham	Hexhamshire	Slaley
Blanchland	Holy Island	Stamfordham
Blyth	Horncliffe	Stannington
Bowsden	Horsley	Stocksfield
Branxton	Humshaugh	Tarset & Greystead
Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst	Ingram	Thirlwall
Broomhaugh & Riding	Kielder	Thirston
Brunswick	Kirknewton	Thropton
Bywell	Kirkwhelpington	Tillside
Capheaton	Knarsdale with Kirkhaugh	Togston
Carham	Kyloe	Tritlington & West
Chollerton	Lesbury	Chevington
Choppington	Longframlington	Ulgham
Coanwood	Longhirst	Wall
Corbridge	Longhorsley	Wallington Demesne
Cornhill	Longhoughton	Warden
Corsenside	Lowick	Wark
Cramlington	Lynemouth	Warkworth
Craster	Matfen	West Allen
Cresswell	Meldon	West Bedlington
Dinnington	Melkridge	Whalton
Doddington	Milfield	Whittingham, Callaly & Alnham
Duddo	Mitford	Whittington
East Bedlington	Morpeth	Whitton & Tosson
East Chevington	Netherton with Biddlestone	Widdrington Station & Stobswood
Edlingham	Netherwitton	Widdrington Village
Eglingham	Newbiggin by the Sea	Wooler
Ellingham	Newbrough	Woolsington
Ellington & Linton	Newton by the Sea	Wylam
Elsdon	Newton on the Moor & Swarland	
Embleton	Norham	
Falstone	North Sunderland & Seahouses	

CONSTITUENCIES FOR THE COUNTY COMMITTEE as at 31 March 2020
Subject to review

The following Councils each have a seat on the Committee

Ashington, Blyth, Choppington, Cramlington, East Bedlington, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Seaton Delaval and West Bedlington.

Three seats are allocated for the Newcastle Councils

The remaining seats are allocated as follows using non-single Council constituencies

Allendale

Allendale, West Allen

Alnwick

Edlingham, Eglingham, Longframlington, Felton, Newton-on-the-Moor and Swarland, Shilbottle, Alnwick, Hedgeley, Denwick, Rennington, Acklington, Warkworth, Longhoughton, Craster, Embleton, Newton-by-the-Sea, Alnmouth, Lesbury, Glanton

Amble

Togston, Hauxley, Amble by the Sea

Berwick & Islandshire

Duddo, Kyoel, Ancroft, Lowick, Horncliffe, Ord, Holy Island, Norham, Shoreswood, Berwick upon Tweed

Ellington

Ellington & Linton, Cresswell, Lynemouth

Glendale

Carham, Ingram, Ilderton, Kirknewton, Ford, Kilham, Cornhill-on-Tweed, Earle, Roddam, Bewick, Wooler, Ewart, Doddington, Bowsden, Milfield, Branxton, Akeld, Tillside

Haltwhistle and West Tyne

Coanwood, Plenmeller with Whitfield, Thirlwall, Henshaw, Knarsdale with Kirkhaugh, Hartleyburn, Featherstone, Greenhead, Melkridge, Bardon Mill, Haltwhistle

Hexham and Hexhamshire

Hexhamshire, Haydon, Hexhamshire Low Quarter, Corbridge, Blanchland, Slaley, Hexham, Acomb, Sandhoe, Broomhaugh & Riding

Mid Tyne

Simonburn, Wark, Chollerton, Newbrough, Birtley, Humshaugh, Wall, Whittington, Warden

Morpeth

Stannington, Mitford, Hebron, Hepscott, Morpeth, Pegswood, Longhirst

North Tyne & Redesdale

Kielder, Falstone, Bellingham, Tarsset with Greystead, Kirkwhelpington, Corsenside, Otterburn, Rochester & Byrness, Bavington

Ponteland and Rural West (South)

Stamfordham; Ponteland; Capheaton; Belsay; Whalton.

Prudhoe and East Tynedale

Shotley Low Quarter, Healey, Stocksfield, Bywell, Hedley-on-the-Hill, Prudhoe, Horsley, Henshaw, Ovington, Ovingham, Wylam

Rothbury & Coquetdale

Alwinton, Cartington, Elsdon, Rothley with Hollinghill, Nunnykirk, Hepple, Harbottle, Whitton and Tosson, Snitter, Netherton with Biddlestone, Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst, Whittingham Callaly & Alnham, Thropton, Rothbury

Rural West (North)

Tritlington and West Chevington, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Matfen, Capheaton, Stamfordham, Belsay, Whalton, Wallington Demesne, Meldon, Netherwitton, Longhorsley, Thirston, Hartburn

Seahouses and Belford

Belford, Ellingham, Adderstone with Lucker, Middleton, Easington, Bamburgh, Beadnell, North Sunderland

Widdrington

East Chevington, Widdrington Village, Ulgham, Widdrington Station and Stobswood