

## **CUMBRIA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of CALC's Executive Committee held on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at 10.00 am at the Community Fire Station, Penrith.

#### **PRESENT:**

Ronnie Auld (Chairman)  
Douglas Banks  
Ann Byers  
Leith Hallatsch  
Leslie Johnson  
Brian Kennish  
Keith Morgan  
Rick Petecki  
David Peters  
Geoff Smith  
Margaret Throp

In attendance: David Claxton, Chief Officer, and Samantha Bagshaw.

#### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence were received from Jill Hay, Keith Hitchen, Bob Mather and Craig Nicholson.

#### **MEMBERSHIP CHANGES**

2. The Committee noted the following membership changes since the previous meeting:
  - i) Craig Nicholson (Stanwix Rural PC) had replaced Jocelyn Holland as one of the Carlisle District Association's representatives.
  - ii) Brian Kennish (Muncaster PC) had replaced Dave Polhill as one of the Copeland District Association's representatives.
  - iii) Ron Baldwin, one of the members elected at the 2013 AGM, had stood down as a parish councillor.
3. The Chairman welcomed Brian Kennish to his first meeting of the Committee.
4. It was **agreed** that the Chief Officer would write letters of thanks to Jocelyn Holland and David Polhill and would arrange for the vacancy caused by Ron Baldwin's resignation to be filled by election at the 2015 AGM. It was **further agreed** that the Chief Officer would put an item on the 2015 AGM agenda proposing a change to the constitution so as to make clear that any vacancy for a directly elected member would be filled by election at the next available AGM and that the person elected would serve for the remainder of the normal three year term.

#### **MINUTES**

5. The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

6. Referring to paragraph 19 (Transparency Code), the Chief Officer commented that he had emailed clerks to say that CALC would be happy to host documents on its website to enable parish councils to meet the requirements of the Government's transparency code. There would be a modest charge of £1.50 per document upload. Further details regarding the Government support fund for parish councils were not yet available.

7. On paragraph 22 (Benchmarking Data), the Chief Officer said that the originator of the survey was undertaking further analysis of the responses and a report back would be made when this was available through NALC.

8. On paragraph 3, the Chairman updated the Committee on his business and other commitments which were not likely to conflict with his CALC responsibilities in the foreseeable future. Arising out of discussion it was **agreed** that the Chief Officer would update the CALC list of clerks who would be prepared to assist other parishes on a temporary basis.

## **CHIEF OFFICER**

9. The Committee noted that following interviews on 27<sup>th</sup> May Samantha Bagshaw had been appointed to the position of Chief Officer with effect from 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2015. The Chairman welcomed Samantha to the meeting and the Committee congratulated Samantha on her appointment.

10. The Chief Officer said that he had agreed with Samantha that there would be a three week handover period and he would then formally retire at the end of July although he would be contactable during August to assist with queries if needed. He would also complete a few specific pieces of work during August for which he would submit a claim for the hours worked.

## **UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CUMBRIA**

11. The Chairman reminded the Committee of the discussion on this matter at the meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2015. Since then the Cumbria Leaders Board had discussed the matter further and the item was on the agenda for the forthcoming meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 when the Board was expected to consider different models for more effective and convenient local government in Cumbria. These included unitary local government, the concept of a combined authority and consideration of a new model advanced by government which involved closer co-operation between local authorities in more rural areas.

12. Following discussion, it was **agreed** that in the light of discussion at the Cumbria Leaders Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> July the Chief Officer would draft a survey, in consultation with the Chairman, seeking the views of all parish councils on the future pattern of local government in Cumbria. The draft survey would be circulated to all members of this Committee for comment before circulation.

## **PARISH PRECEPTS 2015/16**

13. The Committee received a note providing a summary of local council precept demands for 2015/16 together with details of the council tax reduction support grant (CTRSG) payments made by billing authorities.

14. Total precept demands and CTRSG payments had increased to £5.40m in 2015/16 from £4.82m the previous year, an increase of £589k or 12.23%. However, the 2015/16 figures included for the first time the precept demands made by the new councils for Penrith and Whitehaven. If the precepts for these councils were excluded, the year on year increase, on a like for like basis, was around £142k representing a more modest overall increase of just under 3%. CTRSG payments by billing authorities had fallen by £43.7k from

£381k to £337k, a reduction of 13%. However, the reduction varied between districts with most maintaining the total payment at the previous year's level.

### **PARISH ELECTIONS MAY 2015**

15. The Chief Officer circulated a summary of the parish council elections in May 2015. 192 parishes had had elections with 1,783 seats to be filled. In the great majority of parishes elections had been uncontested and across the County as a whole the number of vacancies to be filled by co-option was around 19%.

16. On an administrative matter, electoral registration officers had queried whether in the case of an uncontested parish election any useful purpose was served by requiring candidates to complete an expenses return form which in all cases was a nil return. The Committee concurred and **agreed** that the Chief Officer should write to the Electoral Commission proposing that the election rules be changed to remove this requirement in respect of uncontested parish elections.

### **BROADBAND AND MOBILE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**

17. The Committee considered a report from Rick Petecki, CALC's representative on the Connecting Cumbria Partnership Board, concerning progress with the roll-out of superfast broadband and the mobile connectivity project led by Argiva. Appended to the report were the presentation slides used at the meeting.

### **CALC NS&I DEPOSIT ACCOUNT**

18. The Chief Officer reported that further to the decision taken at the previous meeting NS&I were no longer allowing investment accounts to be opened in the name of an organisation. An account could only be opened in the name of an individual. The Chief Officer reported the advice of Bob Mather that opening an account in the name of any individual would be a considerable risk for CALC.

19. It was **agreed** that the Chief Officer, in consultation with the Hon. Treasurer, would seek to identify a savings account paying a higher interest rate than the current HSBC deposit account and which could be opened in the name of the Association. It was **further agreed** that the Chief Officer be authorised to open a suitable account in the Association's name with the agreement of the Chairman and Bob Mather.

### **REPORTS FROM DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS**

20. The Committee received the reports from the district associations.

### **REPORTS FROM CALC REPRESENTATIVES**

21. The Committee received written reports from the Association's representatives.

### **CALC PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS TO 31<sup>st</sup> MAY 2015**

22. The Committee noted the statement of payments and receipts for the period ended May 2015. The Chief Officer said that the two new councils for Penrith and Whitehaven had both joined CALC. He was chasing up the County Council's first half year grant payment.

### **ISSUES BEFORE NALC NATIONAL COUNCIL ON 30<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2015**

23. The Committee received for information a guidance note on submitting motions for NALC's consideration. There were no issues on which the Committee felt it appropriate to take a view ahead of Keith Morgan's attendance at the National Council meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2015

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

24. It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October at 10.00 a.m. at the Community Fire Station, Penrith.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

25. The Committee joined the Chairman in thanking David Claxton for his service as CALC's Chief Officer over the past five years.

26. The Chairman said that he was seeking to persuade Carlisle City Council that parish council representatives should have the right to attend and, by invitation, speak at site visits to consider planning applications. Other members of the Committee were not aware that this was an issue in their district council area. It was **agreed** that the Chief Officer would seek to establish whether the Town and Country Planning Association had issued any best practice guidance on the matter.

Chairman