

Cumbria Association of Local Councils

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of CALC's Executive Committee held on Saturday 24 October at 10am at the Fire and Rescue HQ, Penrith.

PRESENT:

Ronnie Auld (Chairman)

Ann Byers

Leith Hallatsch

Jill Hay

Keith Hitchen

Leslie Johnson

Brian Kennish

Bob Mather

Keith Morgan

Rick Petecki

David Peters

Margaret Throp

In attendance: Samantha Bagshaw, Chief Officer and Councillor Pat Bell, Deputy Leader of Cumbria County Council

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Craig Nicholson and Geoff Smith

MINUTES

2. A minor change to correct the spelling of Arqiva was agreed, otherwise the minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 27th June 2015 were agreed as a correct.

MATTERS ARISING

3. Referring to paragraph 19 (CALC NS&I DEPOSIT ACCOUNT), the Chief Officer asked for volunteers to be cheque signatories on a new deposit account with the Cumberland Building Society, in addition to herself and Jill Hay. Keith Morgan agreed to be the third signatory.
4. Referring to paragraph 12, it was explained that in light of the Cumbria Deal, and in the context of the government's commitment to greater devolution of powers to regions, it was decided that the survey of parishes' attitudes towards different forms

of governance would be put on hold until it was clearer what impact the new deals may have on the county.

BUDGET OVERVIEW FOR 2016/17 – PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR PAT BELL, DEPUTY LEADER OF CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL

5. Councillor Bell explained that the financial background for the County Council had not changed, in fact that the government's determination to deal with the deficit will result in less money for the county council in future. The county council needs to save £80 million over the next three years:

2016/17 £37 million

2017/18 £21 million

2018/19 £22 million

This presents the county council with a number of challenges, given it has already saved £153 million so far. Income will come in through fees and charges, council tax and business rates. It has recently been announced that principal authorities can now keep their business rates, but the county council only keeps 20% of them as the district councils keep 80%. If Cumbria were unitary, they would not be divided up. In addition to these savings, there has been additional legislation and proposals from central government:

- **Tax credit cuts** – many will be worse off, social pressure increases adding to pressure on the county council.
- **Right to Buy** – capping social rents will mean that housing associations will have less money for housing, again putting additional pressure on the county councils who have relied on housing associations to assist them with extra care housing.
- **Living Wage** – there are plans to increase it faster than originally suggested. This is a good thing, but the impact on the county council is that hiring staff will become more expensive and it isn't clear that the government will help fund this.
- **Care Act** – the government again is not saying it will be prepared to fund the costs of some of the measures to help older people in the act.

6. Unusually the Autumn Statement has been delayed until 25 November this year. The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) will also be announced at this time, this means the County Council has had to consult before having formal confirmation of its budget in order to have time for a proper 12 week consultation period. If the settlement in November is worse than expected, the County Council may have to carry out further consultation.
7. In the past, savings have come from reducing employees and changing the management structure. The County now employs 7,000 people (previously 10,000). In two years' time, it will be 5,000. This year the consultation is about delivering

services differently. The County Council wants to have many conversations over the next few months to help people understand the direction they should go in. The Council is planning to deliver more services digitally and to use invest to save schemes for new builds to save money in the long term. There will be a 2% rise in Council Tax, if they didn't do this, they would have to find an additional £3.6 million. The County is also consulting on a Strategy for Care and Support delivered by Adult Social Care 2015 – 20. Councillor Bell explained that once this over-arching strategy is agreed, then the Council will be carrying out smaller consultations within this area. As part of the process, the County are going to arrange a day to market services already in place.

8. Extra Care Housing – people wish to stay in their homes for as long as possible. The County is planning 300 extra units in the next 3 years to assist with this. Care homes are less popular and some of these will close.
9. Fire Review: Risks across Cumbria have declined overall. So the service has to be looked at to ensure that it is being delivered efficiently, this includes proposing the closure of 5 fire stations. All five fire stations are called out 2 or 3 times a month. In Lazonby the fire engine is only available now 50% of the time, so if it is called out it is just as likely to be the Penrith fire engine that attends. It will generate £300,000 savings. The consultation documents are available in libraries and on-line. However, any decisions have to be signed off at national level for the Fire and Rescue Services, so these proposals do meet national guidelines for response times.
10. The main consultation means doing things differently which in practice means local area planning – ie seeing how services are delivered locally and taking into account the local parish councils, district councils, third sector organisations, people in place and buildings belonging to the county before any decisions are taken. Some examples of working differently are that when the library service buses fail their MOT they won't be replaced, so in preparation for this, Dent Parish Council raised money to refurbish its reading rooms and put some books in it and it's open every day. Lazonby library link is open every day that the shop is open. In Shap, the County Council were looking at its buildings and gave the library building to the parish council.
11. 3rd Sector. Cumbria CC has a close relationship with CVS. And the 3rd sector is keen to work with the County Council. So they are getting together, with the parishes too, in Barrow. They are getting in a room together to brain storm to see how they can work together better and deliver services differently. The aim is that this approach will be rolled out across Cumbria. The hope is that parish councils will be part of that conversation too.
12. A number of questions were asked to clarify Councillor Bell's comments.

CALC'S REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

13. Following the resignation of Jocelyn Holland as a member of the Executive Committee, it was agreed that the following fill the vacancies in CALC's representation on outside bodies:
Rick Petecki will be the substitute on Cumbria Leaders Board
Keith Hitchen will be the CALC representative on the Cumbria Rural Housing Trust

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2015

14. The Chief Officer reported back that John Scott from the Hadrian's Wall management board has kindly agreed to be the keynote speaker, but that up until now, no speaker had come forward from the Lake District National Park. Rick Petecki agreed to contact the National Park to discuss the matter. It was **agreed that the Chief Officer** invite the Cumbrian Members of Parliament. Paragraph 11, items 1 to 3 were all agreed. Item 4 was considered under the following agenda item – Review of the Constitution.

REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

15. It was **agreed** that the following amendments would be recommended to the AGM for approval:
- Paragraph 9 (g)** relating to the procedure should a casual vacancy arise on the Executive Committee arise.
- Paragraph 6 (J)** making it clear that emailing invitations to the General Meeting is an acceptable way of contacting members.
16. There was also some discussion of whether there is a form of words that would help mitigate the risk that an office-holder of the CALC executive may not be elected to the executive, therefore leaving CALC without leadership. It was **agreed** that the current wording was sufficiently flexible. However it was felt that there was a lack of clarity in **Paragraph 6 (h)** as it didn't clearly differentiate between the District Associations electing members of the Executive Committee and the how the directly elected members are elected. To this end, the following change was **agreed** for adoption to the AGM:
- 6 (h) (iii)** to acknowledge the members elected to the Executive Committee by the District Association
- (iv)** to elect five additional members directly onto the Executive Committee
17. It was **agreed** to swap items 8 and 9 of the AGM report in light of the above changes to the constitution.
18. It was also **agreed** to recommend the following clarification to **Subscriptions paragraph 5 (c)**:

‘The Association shall collect and pass on the member councils’ annual subscription fees to the National Association of Local Councils’.

DEVOLUTION

19. The Chairman reported that in light of the Scottish referendum, the government resolved to improve governance arrangements in England, this involved giving new powers to local authorities and a transfer of powers to directly elected mayors. This process is now in train, with the North East being the latest region to be awarded a devolution deal, this involves two distinct regions both to be lead by directly elected mayors – Teeside and Northumberland. Cornwall and Manchester have also been given devolution deals. The new Cities and Devolution Bill is currently going through parliament. Cumbria has also put forward a high level devolution proposal. Cumbria Leaders Board is meeting with Lord Heseltine in November to discuss it further.

PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE

20. Keith Hitchen updated the group about the role of Public Health Forums which are now operating in every district. These forums report to the Public Health Alliance who in turn operates under the Health and Wellbeing Board. Keith Hitchen recommended that each district forum should have a CALC Executive Committee member sitting on it and if they are not then should contact their local forum and ask for a seat. He stressed that this is important so that parishes have a voice in public health issues at a local level.

CALC PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2015

21. The Committee noted the statement of payment and receipts for the period ending 30 September.

REPORTS FROM DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS

22. The Committee received the reports from the District Associations. It was clarified that as soon as a District Association appoints a representative to the Executive Committee then they attend – their term of office does not start at the AGM.

REPORTS FROM CALC REPRESENTATIVES

23. **North West Federation of Local Councils:**
Keith Morgan reported that Cumbria had decided to run its own Local Council Award Scheme Accreditation Panel rather than combine with the North West County Associations. This decision was made due to the potential distances people would have to travel and that Cumbria has 8 volunteers to take part in the work, which is sufficient to cover the number of councils taking part in the scheme.

24. **NALC Matters:** Keith Morgan reported on a proposal from NALC to increase their subscription rates this year. They proposed that there should be a minimum subscription to NALC of no less than £33 and no higher than £1750. A number of Cumbrian parishes would be affected by the minimum fee. Keith reported that in light of concerns expressed by county associations, it had been agreed at the NALC finance committee to abandon the minimum fee for the moment and they suggested a rise from 5.5p to 6.5p per elector instead. Keith proposed that CALC supports the proposed increase in NALC subscriptions which was agreed with one abstention.
25. It was further **agreed** that CALC works harder trying to ensure that member councils understand the role and work that NALC carries out on their behalf.
26. An update from by CALC's representative, Rick Petecki on Connecting Cumbria Partnership Board was circulated before the meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE ON FOOTWAY LIGHTING

27. The Chairman explained that the situation in Carlisle district regarding footway lighting is still unclear regarding who will ultimately pay for the renewal of footway lighting in the parishes. The Chairman agreed also that the situation is different in each district and decided that he would return to the subject when more information was available.

NALC MATTERS BEFORE THE AGM ON 28 OCTOBER 2015

28. Keith Morgan reported that there was an opportunity to for Cumbria's larger councils to join NALC's Direct Access Scheme. This is a scheme open to councils of more than 6,000 electors or a large precept than £250,000. The main benefit is that these councils can access legal advice directly from NALC rather than going via the County Association. The Committee approved the recommendation that the larger Cumbrian parishes should join the direct access scheme. Keith Morgan also reported that Worcestershire County Association had put forward the following motions:
 - That NALC should lobby for a change in the law to enable the Power of General Competence to be available to parish councils without the need to meet the current qualifying criteria.
 - That NALC should lobby to simplify the laws that allow parish councils to form clusters.
29. Both motions were supported by the Executive Committee.

CALC UPDATES FROM CHIEF OFFICER

30. The Chief Officer's updates were noted. It was **agreed** that the Chief Officer will write to the Executive after the Local Area Managers meeting to keep them informed of the matters discussed by the group.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

31. It was noted that the next meeting would be held on **Saturday 16 January 2016** at 10am at the Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Penrith.

Chairman