

Annual Report

Cumbria Association of Local Councils

2016



CALC

cumbria association
of local councils

Chairman's Report 2016

Cllr Ronnie Auld summarises another year at the helm.

It is with sadness that I have to report the deaths, during 2016, of Councillors Keith Morgan and Geoff Smith, both were passionate advocates of the parish sectors and were highly valued members of the CALC Executive. Keith Morgan had been a long-standing Appleby-in-Westmorland Town Councillor, Chairman of Eden's Association of Local Councils as well as CALC's National Council representative on our national body of NALC. Keith always carried out his duties in a characteristically thorough and good-humoured way. Geoff Smith had been the Chairman of Crosscanonby Parish Council and the Chairman of Allerdale's District Association where he worked tirelessly for the benefit of parishes in the district. Both will be missed.

2015/16 was dominated by the devastating floods that hit many parts of the county, affecting both town councils and parishes. Parish Councils have been involved in local flood relief and are now making a significant contribution to planning for the future right across the county.

During the early part of the year, immediately following storm Desmond in December 2015, our Chief Officer was involved in many meetings and consulta-



Cllr Ronnie Auld, Dalston PC

tions relating to emergency planning. CALC has been represented on the Cumbria Flood Partnership. This is a body chaired jointly by the Environment Agency and the Flood Minister from DEFRA, Rory Stewart, MP for Penrith and the Border. The Flood Partnership has discussed and contributed to the Environment Agency proposals for future flood management in the three main river catchments, Kent, Derwent and Eden. Recommendations have been made for future flood alleviation in the county. Refer to the Environment Agency website for more information.

2015/16 has seen all areas of local government continue to be affected by a reduction in resources, CALC included. CALC has seen a drop in support grant from the County Council, an increase in NALC membership fees (which is passed

on out of the CALC subscription) and the loss of income from outside consultancies, such as our involvement in MRWS, therefore your Association has been examining other ways to make up for a reduced income. Nevertheless, CALC has also tried to help parishes by freezing their membership fees, at least for the current year.

Parishes are able to precept their communities and will have raised the total Cumbrian parish precept from £5.4m in 2014/15 to £5.8m in 2015/16, a rise of 7.4%. This has allowed our parish members to continue to fund the important work that they have to do, to provide vital services to their communities.

Increasingly, services which have traditionally been provided by County and District Councils, are being devolved to parishes. CALC is playing a leading role providing advice to members who are taking on these additional burdens.

Central government is keen that parishes produce neighbourhood plans, which involve the whole community looking at developing the needs of their own communities. These neighbourhood plans, if accepted, become part of the District Local Plan. Our District Councils are currently at different stages with their Local Plans - Carlisle is close to adoption, Allerdale has still not completed the site allocation section, Copeland and South Lakes both have Local Plans in place and Eden has submitted its final draft prior to adoption. Parishes need to see how they

fit into all of this. A number of parishes in Eden and a few in South Lakeland, moved into the extended Yorkshire Dales National Park, adding another planning authority to Cumbria's mix.

Last year I reported that the Cumbria Leader's Board and Chief Officer's group were engaged in negotiating a devolution deal for the County. This stalled in the early part of 2016. Cumbrian council leaders had reservations about the requirement to form a Combined Authority and arrange for an elected mayor for Cumbria. It is likely that this will return as a consideration in the coming months, although the new national government may not be quite as enthusiastic about the devolution models which were on the table in late 2015.

I would like to thank all the clerks and members in the town and parishes across the county for their continued efforts to improve their communities. There has been again, a great deal of change for local councils to cope with, including new pension obligations, a requirement to build websites (supported by over £20,000 of extra burden funding distributed by CALC) and a the new audit regime. I would also like to thank CALC's staff and Executive for their hard work and contributions to the association over the year:

Councillor Ronnie Auld
Chairman, CALC

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CALC Activities in 2015–16

Rounding up the year for officers and members

Advice Service

CALC is the only organisation giving full-time support to parish and town councils across Cumbria by delivering professional training and guidance. The office in Penrith is open 5 days a week, 9 – 5pm to respond to telephone calls and emails from councillors and clerks. We answer questions on legal, procedural, HR, planning and financial matters. In addition, CALC produces guidance in plain English on new legislation and regulations, ensuring all our members are well briefed to be compliant with the law. We pass on to parishes information from the National Association of Local Councils and, from this year, Cumbria's town councils have direct access to the services that NALC provide – including their specialist solicitors.

Providing this advice service takes up a large proportion of CALC staff time. We try to answer as many queries as possible in a timely manner. If a question requires a legal opinion, we can pass it on to the solicitors at the National Association of Local Councils who specialise in parish law, this year topics have included sub-letting of land, joint burial committees, charitable trustees, riparian rights and code of conduct issues.

Reading and assessing the large amounts of information that is sent to CALC by email is also an increasingly time consuming process. We always evaluate whether information is important for clerks and councillors to receive before we send it on. In an increasingly information-heavy environment, this process is becoming more important.

Communications

As an organisation with 268 members, representing 97% of the county's parishes, communicating effectively with all our members is another vital part of our role.

Each year we produce 10 editions of the CALC newsletter which goes to every parish and town council and parish meeting in the county, giving it a wide reach. It contains a mixture of information on recent changes to legislation, new funding streams, other information of interest to councils. It also has up to date job adverts, quizzes on procedure from time to time and new this year, we have introduced features highlighting the great work that goes on in Cumbrian parishes both large and small.

CALC understands that parish meet-

ings and large town councils have different priorities and now target some information at the larger councils only.

As custodians of the county's parish council database, on behalf of Cumbria County Council, we spend time maintaining an up to date contact list as well as lists of parish councils in each district and the national parks.

The County Council and all the district councils, as well as other organisations in the county with an interest in communities (such as ACT, CVS, Friends of the Lake District) come to CALC as a route to sharing their information with the parish councils and meetings.

Digital Communications

This year has seen an overhaul of CALC's website. The website has been refreshed with help from the communications team at Cumbria County Council. We have taken some of the older information off, changed the design and added some useful new features to the protected members' area – namely a suite of policy templates. These templates are designed to be a starting point for parish councils to take and adapt before adopting. Thank you to those of you who sent in photos. In the end, we didn't have room for all of them, but we will endeavour to swap the pictures around in the new year. Please remember to use the website as your first port of call if you have a question or need some information. If you have any feedback on how we can improve it further, please drop a line to the CALC office as we are always keen to improve it.

CALC's Twitter account is growing slowly but surely, we now have over 100 followers and tweets link to the website home page. Twitter can be a useful tool for finding out news quickly so if you don't follow CALC already, please give it a go.

Training and Development

CALC's role is to develop expertise and professionalism in parish councils. Our training and development programme is central to this.

During 2015-16 CALC delivered 37 de-

Feedback

from Clerks on CALC's Local Council Finance training

'I did find this training useful at the time but now I've gone through our whole year end I realise how truly excellent it was! I don't think I would have managed without it, plus I have successfully re-claimed all of last year's VAT!'

'I didn't realise what I didn't know until I came to this session. Very useful and well explained.'

velopment/training sessions including 13 in-house bespoke courses tailored to individual parish councils. We held 10 Clerk's Forums attended by 48 Clerks. CALC has supported 39 clerks Cumbria to attain the professional qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration) and is currently supporting 5 more clerks over the year long course.

Responding to requests, we invited two trainers from outside the county to deliver courses, one on Code of Conduct and the other on Asset Transfer and Management. Both were well attended and we will be inviting both speakers back to deliver courses in addition to the main programme.

During 2015/16, we have collaborated with District Councils on training to meet the needs of our parishes – this year subjects included website building and planning.

Representing Local Councils

CALC continues to provide the local council view on major issues affecting all or parts of Cumbria. During the year members of the Executive Committee and the five district associations represented local councils' interests on many county and local committees on such topics as housing, transport, planning and broadband.

CALC represents the interests of local councils on the Cumbria Leaders' Board, where the Chairman has a seat, and on the Cumbria Chief Executives Group, which CALC's Chief Officer attends. CALC also organised the election of a member from the 'South Distinctive Area' to the Lake

District National Park Authority in June 2016.

It is CALC policy to actively promote parish councils and we have been delighted to be able to support two new town councils in Penrith and Whitehaven this year. As well as promoting the creation of new councils, CALC's advocacy role is carried out by attending a range of county-wide meetings including Nugen's Moorside project, the National Grid's Northwest Coast Connections, Connecting Cumbria arguing for better rural broadband, Cumbria Flood forum, and stakeholder engagement meetings of the Government's NHS Success Regime meetings and meetings of the Lake District National Park. The NHS Success Regime is a national Government initiative, to help drive improvements in local health services. Cumbria has many challenges in delivering excellent health care, especially given its rural and remote communities. CALC representatives have been continuing to engage with the discussions about future changes ahead of the next major round of public consultation.

Local Council Award Scheme

The National Association of Local Councils promotes the Local Council Award Scheme as a kite mark of excellence for local councils.

We are delighted to announce that Colton Parish Councils is the first council in Cumbria to achieve the Foundation Award. Receiving the award really is an excellent achievement, so congratulations

to all at the council.

We look forward to assisting more councils through the Foundation stage onwards. Please give the CALC office a ring if you want to find out more – or look on the website.

NALC also runs Star Council Awards to celebrate the hard work of parishes up and down the country. There are nine award categories, so we were delighted that at the Awards Ceremony in 2015, Councillor Alix Martin from Alston Moor Parish Council was recognised in the Best Councillor Award category, for the work she has carried out in her Alston parish.

Storm Desmond and the Impact of Flooding

Back in September 2015, CALC produced an article called 'Ready for the unexpected?' It was part of CALC's agenda to promote resilience and emergency planning at parish level.

The article encouraged communities to consider how they would survive the first 48 hours of a serious emergency. It re-enforced advice about setting up a community emergency plan.

Little did we know that almost exactly 3 months later, communities all over Cumbria would be answering that question for real.

December 2015 was the wettest December since records began, with widespread and severe impacts affecting a large number of parishes in Allerdale, Eden, Carlisle and South Lakeland. Copeland and Barrow were largely unaffected.

The scale of the flooding, damage to in-

frastructure, property and general disruption was significant.

In the immediate aftermath of the December storms, CALC was represented by the Chief Officer on the Community Recovery sub- group.

Cumbria has learned through previous flooding events, that duplication of effort must be reduced as far as possible. This helps affected communities and the emergency services trying to deliver support. CALC's first contribution to the disaster was to provide a single point of contact for affected communities – this was often either the clerk or chairman of the parish.

Rory Stewart MP contacted CALC for contacts and this information was shared with him too. The single points of contact were posted on Resilience Direct which is the secure emergency website operated by the County Council's resilience unit so that all agencies could access it. It helped to build a more co-ordinated approach.

Moving forward, CALC's role was to help disseminate information from the Strategic Recovery Groups to parishes in each district as well as circulating messages from the principal authorities. CALC's district associations were also heavily involved in some areas, supporting principal authorities in collating data and co-ordinating support.

It was acknowledged that parish councils were crucial in lending support for the response and recovery process - their contribution was recognised by the principal authorities. Parishes also played a role in communicating the concerns of their community and feeding them back into the recovery process either through the local area team or via CALC and CALC then passed them on to the relevant teams.

CALC continued to disseminate information to parish and town councils via its email database and monthly newsletter. We also circulated information on behalf of a number of other agencies who needed to communicate to our remote and widespread communities.

Devolution and Parishes' Changing Roles

As the budgets of principal authorities continue to reduce, the role of parish and town councils continues to change and CALC has continued the process of supporting local councils through this process. Local councils have been steadily taking on more services and assets over the last five years, this can be seen clearly in the growth of the parish precept across Cumbria:

In 2009/10 Cumbrian parishes precept demand was £3.4 million

In 2016/17 their precept demand was £5.8 million

This change is supported by CALC through on-going and bespoke training addressing more specialist needs and our advice network which is handling increasingly complex queries.

New Audit Arrangements and the Transparency Code

In 2015, the Audit Commission was abolished under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The practical effect of this

for parish councils is that new external audit arrangements will take effect during the financial year 2017/18, although there are reserve provisions to extend the current arrangements if the changes cannot be made in time.

Councils with an annual turnover of less than £25k – the vast majority in Cumbria – will be exempt from external audit from the start of the 2017-18 financial year, but have been subject from 1st April 2015, to the Government's transparency code for smaller authorities. Smaller councils will still be required to appoint an external auditor in order to allow electors the right to make representations in relation to the council's accounts.

The creation of the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd happened at the end of 2015, this company has the powers to appoint external auditors and set the audit fees for smaller authorities from 2017. Parishes were given until 31 March 2016 to choose to opt out of these arrangements.

One of the key requirements of the transparency code for smaller councils is that certain key information relating to the council's business and financial affairs must be published online.

All smaller parish councils who are exempt from external audit must complete and publish an exemption certificate (from SAAA) on their website.

In order to ensure that smaller parish councils comply with the new regulations, the Department for Communities and Local Government made a fund available via NALC, to be distributed by county associations, to parishes to assist those councils to become compliant. It is an extra-burden fund, and as such, gives grants to off-set the cost to councils with-

out access to a publicly available website. It funds the purchase of laptops, scanners, broadband supply (if needed), training, website creation, officer time for uploading and other reasonable costs.

CALC has promoted this fund since it opened in July 2015 and so far has distributed over £20,000 in grants to smaller councils in Cumbria. The fund will continue to operate until 2018/19.

North West Coast Connections

The National Grid's "North West Coast Connections Project" will take power generated in west Cumbria and feed it into the main supply lines for the National Grid. CALC has been monitoring the progress of the project and has been liaising with the Lake District National Park Authority's consultant as well as keeping abreast of the views of the parishes most directly affected.

Earlier this year, National Grid published details of the route corridor it proposes to take forward to the next stage of the development process. National Grid say it has made this decision after carefully reviewing all the comments made by people who took part in the consultation held in autumn 2015 and after considering all the feedback provided by key national and regional groups and organisations.

The selected route corridor is made up of two parts including: a route going onshore north from Moorside to a point on the existing grid network at Harker, near Carlisle; and a route going onshore south from Moorside across the Furness peninsula then under Morecambe Bay, emerging

at the new substation near Heysham in Lancashire.

Parishes are concerned that National Grid's current route suggests that pylons will be placed around the Duddon Estuary and through a large swathe of the Lake District National Park near Ravenglass and Eskdale.

National Grid have been determining the actual path the new connection will take within its chosen route corridor. They have also been considering what mitigation they can put in place, in especially sensitive areas, to reduce or eradicate the impact of the overhead power cables and the pylons that will carry them. Their second stage public consultation begins at the end of October 2016.

NuGen and Moorside Power Station

The NuGen proposal to build a major nuclear power station, Moorside, close to the Sellafield site continued to generate a lot of interest especially from local parishes. CALC was present at NuGen organised meetings, both at officer and councillor level, to present the parish perspective and to be able to report back to local parishes via the district association meetings.

NuGen produced a Feedback Report, based on their 2015 consultation, which details how they will take account of the comments they have received, available on the NuGen Consultation Website.

The Stage Two Proposed Scheme Consultation began in September, when NuGen presented their developing plans for West Cumbria.

National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

All councils that subscribe to CALC automatically become members of our national association – the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). NALC represents the interests of local councils at the national level and continues to be very active in influencing Government thinking about a range of topics including devolution (developing the 'Devo Local' white paper setting out the local council perspective), neighbourhood planning and affordable housing. Under the leadership of its Chief Executive, Jonathan Owen, NALC has continued to develop its communications to keep member councils better informed about national issues.

NALC is the Association's primary source of information and advice on legal matters affecting local councils. We contribute to the policies and priorities of NALC through our representative on the NALC National Council, Rick Petecki.

Regional Matters

The Association continued to participate in the work of the North West Federation of Town and Parish Councils, which shares best practice among the four county associations in North West England, and raises the profile of local councils across district, county and regional boundaries. We also sit on the Northern Group of County Associations.

Business Rates

In October 2015, the government revealed that principal authorities are to keep all £26bn of revenue from business rates.

It is understood that, by the end of the parliament, local government will be able to retain 100% of local taxes – to spend on local services. The government will also abolish the Uniform Business Rate and give local authorities the power to cut business rates to boost enterprise and economic activity in their areas. Local areas that promote growth and attract businesses will keep all of the benefit from increased business rate revenues.

NALC are lobbying for at least some percentage of the business rates to be retained in the parishes sector, arguing that local councils are delivering more services, previously delivered by principal authorities

Membership

The number of town and parish councils and parish meetings in membership of the Association has been maintained. Of the 233 town and parish councils in the county, 227 (97%) are in membership. Over 99% of the electors living in the parished areas of Cumbria are served by a CALC member council or meeting, and over 99% of total local council precepts are raised by CALC member councils.

Precepts

The setting of parish council precepts for 2016/17 continued to take place against a background of the County Council and the six district councils needing to make significant budget savings as a consequence of reduced grants from central government.

The total amount raised by local councils in Cumbria by way of precepts in 2016/7 was £5.8 million, up from £5.4m the previous year, an increase of £404,000, which represents an increase of 7.4%.

Precepts (excluding CTRSG payments) went up to £5.5m from £5.07m in 2015/16, an increase of £443k.

In addition to precept, parishes receive a council tax reduction support grant (CTRSG), this grant is intended to compensate local councils for what was an effective reduction in their council tax base following the introduction of a new funding system in 2013/14. Since CTRSG was introduced in 2013/14 total payments made by district councils have continued to reduce overall although three districts – Copeland, Carlisle and South Lakeland – have maintained the payment level from 2015/16. Cumbria has not, however, faced the situation in some parts of the country where billing authorities have refused to pass on any grant to parishes.

Overall CTRSG payments now represent 5.1% of precept plus grant payments. Where the amount of CTRSG is a high proportion of a council's income – in 13 councils the percentage is over 15%, (which remains the same as last year) - the councils concerned are at greater risk from a reduction or withdrawal of grant

payments. Whilst NALC continues to make representations to Government to require grants to be passed on to parish councils in full, it is also lobbying for a slice of business rates and a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy be passed on to parishes by all principal authorities.

Again, for 2016/17 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government did not set criteria which might prompt a local referendum on a parish council's precept but he did say the position would continue to be kept under review.

District Associations

The CALC District Associations for Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland have continued to meet regularly; some three and others four times during the year, covering a range of topics of interest to local parishes including flooding, emergency planning, devolution of assets and services, National Grid's North West Coast Connections project, broadband, highways, footway lighting, development plans and health and well-being.

Most district associations now hold three-tier meetings rather than meeting separately with the County and the district. Locality working arrangements are continuing to evolve across the County.

CALC continues to convene Parish Forums in which parish councils in the Lake District National Park can come together with the National Park Authority to discuss strategic issues across the National Park and the work of the Lake District National Park Partnership. This year, the

Partnership has been looking critically at how it operates and CALC has been involved in discussions in how to ensure that the value of the Partnership is maximised. As a partner to the National Park, CALC has also been promoting the Authority's bid to achieve World Heritage Status.

Financial Support

Our audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2016 are set out later in this annual report. We would like to thank our member councils for their continuing finan-

cial support for the Association's work through their membership subscriptions. We are also extremely grateful to the following local authorities for their financial support which is greatly appreciated.

- Cumbria County Council
- Allerdale Borough Council
- Carlisle City Council
- Copeland Borough Council
- Eden District Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- Lake District National Park Authority

CALC in Numbers

- 1.** 370,00 people in Cumbria live in parishes that are CALC members.
- 2.** 97% of Cumbria's parish councils are members of CALC.
- 3.** In 2015/16 CALC trained 313 councillors and clerks in a range of subjects.
- 4.** Every year, CALC answers over 2,500 enquiries from parish clerks and councillors.
- 5.** CALC's monthly newsletter reaches over 1000 parish and town councillors.



Who's who in CALC 2016?

CALC OFFICERS (2015–2016)

President	Mr Bob Mather
Vice Presidents:	Miss Jo Clarke
Mr Stan Simpson	
Chairman	CLlr Ronnie Auld
Hon. Treasurer	Ms J Wright
Allerdale District Chairman	CLlr Rick Petecki
Carlisle District Chairman	CLlr Craig Nicholson
Copeland District Chairman	CLlr Keith Hitchen
Eden District Chairman	CLlr David Huxley
South Lakeland District Chairman	CLlr David Peters

CALC STAFF

All CALC staff are employed part-time.

Chief Officer	Samantha Bagshaw
Parish Development Officer	Sonia Hutchinson
Parish Liaison Officer	Claire Rankin
(Carlisle/Eden)	
Parish Liaison Officer	Amanda McCleery
(South Lakeland/Barrow)	
Parish Liaison Officer	Chris Shaw
(Allerdale/Copeland)	

Executive Committee (2015–2016)

In addition to Chairman, President, Vice Presidents, Honorary Treasurer and District Association Chairs:

CLlr Ann Byers	Dalston PC
CLlr Leith Hallatsch	Windermere TC
CLlr Jill Hay	Culgaith PC
CLlr Leslie Johnson	Lakes PC
CLlr Brian Kennish	Muncaster PC
CLlr Keith Morgan	Appleby TC (to April 2016)
CLlr Margaret Throp	Above Derwent PC
CLlr Peter Bales	Workington TC
CLlr Geoff Smith	Crosscanonby PC (to July 2016)



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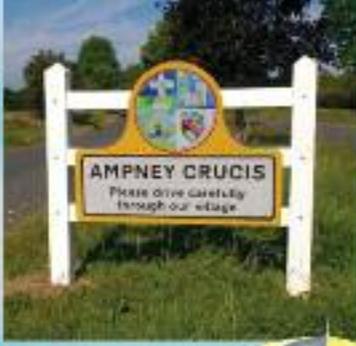
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Accounts 2015–2016

Receipts And Payments Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2016

Receipts	2016	2015
	£	£
Affiliation Fees	50,865	43,915
Sale of Publications	54	561
Sale of Local Council Review	391	471
Local Authority Grants	49,385	48,084
Training	5,192	3,465
AGM	-	245
Deposit Account Interest	45	46
NALC New Council Funding	1,700	5,000
NALC Transparency Funding	28,466	1,495
Sundry Income	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	136,098	103,282
Balances at 1 April 2015		
Deposit Account	82,644	82,598
Current Account	26,771	15,705
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	109,415	98,303
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	245,513	201,585

Payments	2016	2015
	£	£
NALC – Affiliation Fees	16,363	14,238
Publications	357	55
NALC Local Council Review	297	294
Printing and Stationery	426	644
Travel and Subsistence	907	1,317
Meetings	4,921	3,890
Bank Charges	71	71
Salaries and expenses	60,494	57,280
Accountancy Fees	594	588
Honoraria	500	527
Training	4,234	3,097
Sundries	668	186
Insurance	666	662
Fingertips – Agency Costs	6,235	1,385
Conference	793	461
Penrith Town Council Group	87	7,475
Transparency Fund	17,925	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	115,538	92,170
Balances at 31 March 2016		
Deposit Account	32,689	82,644
Current Account	97,286	26,771
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	129,975	109,415
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	245,513	201,585

We certify that the above Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March 2016 is correct and in accordance with the best of our information given to us and as shown by the books. We would note that at 31 March 2016 in addition to the above payments £8,553 was committed expenditure.

Saint & Co, Chartered Accountants, Unit 3, Lakeland Business Park, Cockermouth CA13 0QT

Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) is run by local councils for the benefit of local councils. It assists councils in their day-to-day work and represents their interests.

CALC's aims are:

- Encouraging and advising good practice in local council management
- Increasing the contribution of local councils to community life
- Training and developing councillors and clerks
- Encouraging greater public awareness of the work of local councils

CALC's work is paid for by the subscriptions of its member councils and grants from the principal authorities of Cumbria and the Lake District National Park Authority.



Page layout and typesetting by Chris Bagshaw.
Printed by HH Reeds, Southend Road, Penrith

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