



---

**MINUTES OF THE MEMBERS' MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2019 HELD AT  
THE MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, MAGHERAFELT**

**ATTENDEES**

Aldermen

Michael Henderson MBE (Chair)	Fraser Agnew MBE	Bill Keery MBE
Alan McDowell	Jim Speers MBE	Tommy Sandford

Councillors

Joe Boyle (Secretary)	Martin Kearney (Attendee)	Billy Webb MBE
Ryan Wilson	Dermot Nicholl	Errol Thompson
Victor Warrington	Hazel Legge	Hon Nicholas Trimble
Beth Adger MBE	John McDermott	Rodney Quigley
Clement Cuthbertson	Niamh Doris	Christine McFlynn
Joe O'Neill	Terry Andrews	Robert Burgess
Valerie Harte	Michael Ruane	

Kate Wilson (Admin Assistant)

**APOLOGIES**

Aldermen

Angus Carson (Treasurer)	David Drysdale	Amanda Grehan
Stephen Martin	Tommy Nicholl MBE	

Councillors

Alison Bennington	Paul Hamill	Eddie Thompson
Scott Wilson	Diana Armstrong	Timothy Gaston
Kyle Black	Derek McKinney	Charlie Casey
Dermot Curran	Hugh Gallagher	

The NAC Chairman, Ald Michael Henderson opened the meeting by congratulating everyone on being elected and welcomed new members to the first NAC Members' Meeting for the next term of office, he asked the new members to introduce themselves by giving their name and their council. Following this he handed over to Cllr Martin Kearney, the Chairman of Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) who said:

*"Chairman, Fellow members, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Magherafelt this morning on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council, especially those among you who have travelled far today. Here in Mid Ulster, our priorities have been as diverse and far-reaching as the district we serve, spanning the community, the economy, health and well-being, the environment, and of course unifying staff from 3 long-established councils and a central government department. As we enter into our new council term, improving the outcomes for Mid Ulster's citizens and businesses is once again at the top of the Councils agenda".*

Cllr Kearney went on to talk about many aspects of councils and councillors' roles and the involvement and change that will be required to meet the needs of communities. Before handing over to the NAC Chairman, Ald Henderson, he named some of the local attractions and encouraged everyone to stop a while to within the district following the meeting.

(You can access Cllr Kearney's full welcome speech on the [NAC Website - Meetings Page](#)).

Ald Henderson thanked Cllr Kearney on behalf of the NAC and proceeded with the meeting.

1. Apologies

Those received by phone/email in advance and stated or ticked in the Attendance Book today are as detailed on page 1.

2. Minutes of last meeting

Agreed by all as proposed by Cllr Burgess and seconded by Ald Sandford.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

None.

4. Reports from officers (*Discussion notes and points raised are in italics*)

**Treasurer's Report**

The Secretary, Cllr Boyle welcomed everyone and then advised the current account bank balance on behalf of the Treasurer in his absence.

*A member requested that in future the details of income and expenditure are reported on as well as the bank balance, this was noted for action. Another member asked if all of the councils have paid their annual fees; members were informed that all but three have paid, two of these are in progress and the other is currently being followed up. (Subsequently we have been advised that the final payment has been approved and is being processed by that council's accounts payable department.)*

**Secretary's Report**

LG TG review: We sent a letter to Stephen Reid on 28<sup>th</sup> May, conveying our disappointment at being excluded from this process and requesting an update so that we can keep our members informed. A response has not yet been received.

*The letter was read out by the secretary and the chairman explained the background of this as an update for the new members.*

*To summarise: Mr Reid is the Chairman of the Local Government Training Group (LGTG) review committee; representatives from NAC and NILGA met with him last August and he advised that a plan was being prepared for the review and use of training funds and this would be shared when complete, a follow-up meeting date was arranged for November 2018, this meeting and two further re-arranged meetings were cancelled by Mr Reid; it appears that council CE's have received details of the review proposals.*

*A member asked when the review proposals would have been sent to CE's so that he can follow up with his CE on this, he was advised this happened approximately three months ago.*

Code of Conduct review:

Letters of protest were drafted from a legal perspective and circulated to all councillors on 1<sup>st</sup> May, prior to the election, with a request for them to print, sign and hand in to their Chief Executive when taking up office. All Chief executives were informed of this action. Representatives from each council were asked to assist with circulation of the letters to newly elected councillors that were not on our mailing lists. Our mailing lists were updated in line with the election results and the letters and request were sent again by email to all councillors on 20<sup>th</sup> May. On 4<sup>th</sup> June we requested details from each council, of how many letters had been handed in and at the NAC Executive Committee (EC) meeting it was agreed that this should be discussed by members so that any follow up action can be decided on.

*For new members, the chairman and the secretary provided details on the Code of Conduct review and the reasons that at our last meeting, members had decided that this action was necessary.*

*The Secretary reported the numbers of letters that had been handed in to each council, he said that for this action to be taken seriously members need to get behind it and he appealed to the members present to assist by making others within their councils aware of this initiative. During the discussion that followed there were several explanations put forward as to why some councillors had not yet handed in the letter – some didn't know about it, new councillors didn't understand it and/or didn't feel confident to support it, some intended to do it but simply forgot. It was pointed out that councillors had a lot of paperwork and official documentation to deal with during the weeks following the elections and that the campaign should be promoted further, many members offered suggestions and to assist with this within their council. Agreement was made that the letters should be sent again to all councillors, group leaders within suggested councils and political parties as put forward, and to those who offered to act as 'champions' within their council. A follow-up with Chief executives on the number of letters received will be carried out during July and reported at the next members, meeting.*

New DfC Working Group we have written to Tracy Meharg, Permanent Secretary for DfC requesting that the NAC can be included in the new working group her department is forming in relation to the Code of Conduct review.

*Points made by members and noted from the discussion around this were:*

- *Will the revisions put forward several years ago to be made to Code of Conduct still be relevant and address councillors concerns now?*
- *Northern Ireland is the only region to have a mandatory Code of Conduct for councillors as England, Scotland, Wales and the ROI don't.*
- *The discourtesy to NAC and NILGA by the Ombudsman for cancelling a meeting with them at very short notice with no offer of a future date.*
- *There are two elements of concern – the Code of Conduct review and the way that the Ombudsman's office operates in relation carrying out their work, perhaps there should be a review of the Ombudsman's office rather than the Code.*
- *Some councils are carrying out training courses to provide advice on the Code of Conduct, others have refresher courses for the Standing Orders.*
- *We will be busy over the coming year with continuing our work to progress the Code of Conduct review.*

*The Secretary asked for a note to be made for him to check the review items for the Code of Conduct.*

AGM: The NAC EC have agreed to invite 6 representatives from AILG and LAMA to the AGM as well as the NAC UK representatives who are invited each year. The AGM will be held on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October in the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown.

General: Letters of Introduction have been sent from the NAC to all Government Departments with a request to be included in any relevant consultations and emails were sent to all councillors in relation to:

GDPR fee exemption  
NAC UK Conference on in Southport on 28-30 June  
The 2019 NILGA Councillors Guide

That completes the Secretary's report and discussions.

5. AOB - None

6. Next Meeting Date – Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2019 at 11am, venue to be confirmed, possibly in Mid and East Antrim council area.  
*Subsequently this has been confirmed and the meeting will be held at the Mid & East Antrim Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena BT43 5EJ.*

#### **DECISIONS TAKEN**

- Arrange for an income/expenditure summary to be provided by the Treasurer at future meetings.
- Code of Conduct letters of protest to be sent again to all councillors, group leaders within suggested councils and political parties as put forward, and to those who offered to act as 'champions' within their council.
- Follow-up with Chief executives on the number of Code of Conduct Protest letters received during July and report these figures at the next members' meeting.
- The secretary will check the review items for the Code of Conduct.