



**MINUTES OF THE MEMBERS' MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST 2019 HELD AT
THE MID & EAST ANTRIM CHAMBER, BALLYMENA**

ATTENDEES

Aldermen

Tommy Sandford (SV Chair)	Robert Gibson	Alan McDowell
Jim Speers MBE	Ryan McCready	

Councillors

Joe Boyle (Secretary)	Maureen Morrow (Attendee)	Alison Bennington
Billy Webb MBE	Vera McWilliam	Dermot Nicholl
Diana Armstrong	John Coyle	Errol Thompson
Hon Nicholas Trimble	Beth Adger MBE	John McDermott
Terry Andrews (JV Chair)	Robert Burgess	

Kate Wilson (Admin Assistant)

APOLOGIES

Aldermen

Michael Henderson (Chair)	Angus Carson (Treasurer)	Fraser Agnew MBE
Stephen Moutray	Kenneth Twyble	Jim Rogers OBE
Allan Bresland	Maurice Devenney	Keith Kerrigan
Stephen Martin	Tommy Nicholl MBE	

Councillors

Fiona Ferguson	Eric Harvey	Tracy Kelly
JJ Magee	Dale Pankhurst	Victor Warrington
Danny Donnelly	Timothy Gaston	Niamh Doris
Dermot Curran		

The NAC senior vice chairman, Ald Tommy Sandford opened by advising that he is standing in for the chair, Ald Michael Henderson, who is on holiday. A minutes' silence was then observed in respect of Ald Allan Bresland's wife who has recently passed away. Cllr Andrews proposed that condolences from the NAC should be passed on to Ald Bresland, this was seconded by Cllr Thompson and agreed by all.

The Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, Cllr Maureen Morrow then addressed the delegates, she said it gave her great pleasure to welcome everyone here today and she spoke about the aims of her council to make their area a great place to live and visit. She invited everyone to take a look around the building and town today or re-visit to enjoy all Ballymena has to offer - including the three giant bears which are made entirely of shrubs and plants!

The chair thanked Cllr Morrow and Mid & East Antrim BC for hosting the meeting saying it was a privilege to come here today and he expressed his admiration of the building and the chambers including the technology in use. The meeting proceeded as follows:

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 Thompson and seconded by Cllr Burgess.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

An update on the Code of Conduct was requested and it was stated this would be covered in the secretary's Report

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

The secretary, Cllr Boyle welcomed the new members that are attending for the first time and thanked them for attending, the chair added his welcome apologising to those whose names he wasn't sure of.

Treasurer's Report

This was delivered by the secretary on behalf of the treasurer who is attending a hospital appointment today. He stated the bank balance at 1st June, income received and expenditure during June and July and the closing bank balance at 31st July.

This was accepted by all as proposed by Cllr Adger and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Secretary's Report

LG TG review

We sent another letter to Stephen Reid (SR), Chair of the LG TG on 8th July 2019, this crossed a reply he had sent by post to our previous letter and subsequently a meeting was arranged. The chair, Michael Henderson and I attended the meeting with representatives from NILGA on 7 August. SR outlined the review process and answered questions. Further meeting dates have been confirmed for 23 Oct, 22 Jan and 22 Apr. I asked that if SR is not available to attend that a deputy is arranged to stand in so that future meetings are not cancelled and that was agreed.

Code of Conduct review - Letters of protest

After the last members' meeting in June the letters were sent out 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.

Following this a letter was received by the NAC chair from Tracy Meharg, Permanent Secretary for the DfC in response to the letters of protest and this included a copy of a letter that she sent to all CE's in relation to this.

The secretary then read the letter and provided the background for the new members. He said that a good response had been received in relation to the letters but more are needed and he urged everyone to go back to their council colleagues and check if others have sent the letter in.

When discussed, many members put forward opinions and it was noted that the Amended Code of Conduct should be reviewed and the NAC's views on it shared with the members.

A proposal made by Ald McCreedy was seconded by Cllr Thompson and agreed by all that further details on why members should sign the letter should be circulated to all elected members.

Also on the Letters of Protest, the chair was advised by the NAC UK General Secretary, Cllr Brian Nelson that he had received a telephone call from the NI Ombudsman saying she was disappointed that the NAC were saying that she failed to engage with them. He gave her the telephone numbers for the chair and secretary of the NI region. No contact has been made with them.

It was noted during discussion that the current Ombudsman is leaving the post soon with a replacement taking over and that the NAC has been liaising with Derek McCallan, the CE of NILGA to get a letter sent to both the outgoing and the newly appointed Ombudsman in relation to our grievances with that department and their investigation processes.

Code of Conduct review - New DfC Working Group

We received a reply to the letter we sent to Tracy Meharg asking to be included in the new working group being formed by her department. She has invited NAC representatives to attend a meeting with her officials and they will “set out the evaluation review process and get your initial views on any issues you have with the current legislative framework and resulting practices and procedures”. We have accepted this offer as has Derek McCallan of NILGA and the meeting date is currently being arranged date but is likely to be mid-November.

NAC UK Certificate for Councillors

Information on this was course was received from the NAC UK General Secretary, Cllr Brian Nelson and has been sent by us to all Council CE's and Democratic/Members Services officers.

AGM Update

We have arranged for a guest speaker, Andrea Winders of Disruptieve.com to provide a presentation and there will be representatives from NAC UK, NILGA, AILG and LAMA in attendance. A preliminary notice has been sent to all councillors and full details including a timetable and agenda will be circulated next week. AGM Date Friday 4 October 2019.

The secretary explained the need to tighten up timings at the AGM so that members could benefit from the guest speaker's presentation. He also pointed out the importance of our relationships with the other council/councillor bodies that will be in attendance.

There were questions asked about the election of officers' process and the rotation of committee members in relation to the political parties and the secretary explained this. It was agreed that any changes that members feel should be made to the structure of the committee can be addressed following the AGM.

Sponsorship of Awards

The NAC EC have agreed to sponsor the NILGA Local Government Awards and the Social Enterprise Northern Ireland Awards again this year. The NILGA Awards are now open for entries and I encourage you to participate in our category - The award for Best Initiative by a Councillor/Councillor Group. Details and entry forms available on the NAC Website Home Page.

The secretary stated that further details will be included in the next Newsletter which will be sent to all elected members shortly.

5. AOB

An update on the Severance Pay issue was requested and the secretary explained that without an assembly or minister in place this was at a standstill.

6. Next Meeting Date

The AGM will take place on Friday 4 October in Cookstown

Next Members' Meeting will be on Wednesday 20 November (details of meeting venue to follow)

DECISIONS TAKEN

- Send the NAC's condolences to Ald Allan Bresland on the passing of his wife.
- The amended Code of Conduct document should be reviewed and the NAC's views on it shared with the members.
- A bullet-point list of why the Code of Conduct letters of protest should be signed is to be prepared.
- Continue to liaise with NILGA on sending correspondence to the Ombudsman.
- Review the political party structure on the NAC Executive Committee following the AGM.