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**MINUTES OF MEMBERS' MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2021 HELD AT  
THE GLENAVON HOUSE HOTEL, COOKSTOWN**

**ATTENDEES**

Aldermen

Angus Carson  
Stephen Moutray  
Keith Kerrigan

Bill Keery MBE  
Jim Rodgers OBE  
Michael Henderson MBE

Alan McDowell  
Tommy Sandford

Councillors

Alison Bennington  
Beth Adger MBE  
Christine McFlynn  
Charlie Casey

Joe Boyle  
Timothy Gaston  
Terry Andrews  
Valerie Harte

Victor Warrington  
Niamh Doris  
Robert Burgess

Kate Wilson (Admin Assistant)

**APOLOGIES**

Aldermen

Jim Speers MBE  
Derek Hussey

Allan Bresland  
David Drysdale

Maurice Devenney  
Tommy Nicholl MBE

Councillors

Vera McWilliam  
Eddie Thompson  
Dermot Nicholl  
Stephen McCann  
Peter Johnston  
Michael Ruane

Billy Webb MBE  
Tracy Kelly  
Ruairi McHugh  
Errol Thompson  
Dermot Curran

Darryn Causby  
Dale Pankhurst  
Diana Armstrong  
Hazel Legge  
Hugh Gallagher

1. Chairman's Welcome and Apologies

The NAC Chair, Ald Sandford apologised for his late arrival, and he thanked the Senior Vice Chair, Cllr Andrews for being ready to stand in for him.

The Chair then spoke of hearing the sad news today that Cllr Paul Hamill of Antrim & Newtownabbey Council had just passed away and it was agreed that a sympathy card and condolence letter would be sent on behalf of the NAC Members to Mrs Hamill. The Chair also said that following our last meeting in July, Cllr Junior McCrum of Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council had passed away and a minute's silence was then held as a tribute to both Councillors.

Apologies received by email, marked in the Attendance Book, and as informed today are as listed above. A late apology was noted for the Treasurer, Ald Angus Carson.

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes of the last Members' Meeting which took place on 21 July 2021 were agreed by all, as proposed by Cllr Andrews, and seconded by Cllr Bennington.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Cllr Gaston asked for an update on the grant funding item that had been discussed at previous meetings.

The Secretary, Cllr Boyle explained that a motion proposed by Cllr Gaston and seconded by Ald McDowell was not carried and the amendment that he had put forward to arrange for a Business Plan, as agreed previously by the Executive Committee, was carried, was currently being addressed but unlike Cllr Gaston's motion, it did not have a timeframe attached to it and that there was currently nothing to report and that it could take some time.

Cllr Gaston's response was noted that he was disappointed to hear this and he believes that there has been a level of foot dragging with this matter - the Secretary responded by informing Cllr Gaston that his comments would be recorded and noted accordingly.

Although Officers Reports were not included in the Meeting Agenda for today to allow more time for the NILGOSC Presentation, the Secretary provided a brief update on activities since the last Members' Meeting as follows:

**Secretary's Update**

COVID-19 Grant Funding Criteria

At the last meeting a decision was taken to write to the appropriate Government Department to request a review of the criteria in relation to the COVID-19 funding applications for businesses and organisations. Accordingly, we wrote to the Economy Minister Gordon Lyons MLA, and to Finance Minister Conor Murphy MLA.

We have not yet received a reply from the Minister Lyons, but we did get a very comprehensive letter back from Minister Murphy which shows that he took our request seriously as he provided a four-page response that included details of how unsuccessful applicants can address a ruling if they feel it was not fair. I, as Secretary replied to Minister Murphy thanking him for his response which I will read to you now.

*Cllr Boyle read the letter from the Finance Minister.*

*Later in the meeting a member asked for the letter to be circulated to members and following a point of order raised on this, it was agreed that the NAC will make a request to Minister Murphy for his approval to circulate the letter.*

Long Service recognition

The NAC sent a card and email to Cllr McGarvey of Donegal County Council, wishing him a happy 91<sup>st</sup> birthday and congratulating him on his achievements.

Councillor Equality

Members of the NAC EC met with DfC Officials by Zoom on Thursday 12 August, at this meeting it was agreed that the NAC will form a sub-committee and regular meetings will then be arranged to address the issues that have been raised. The NAC Sub Committee has been formed, which is cross-party and there are reserves in place if a member is unable to attend a meeting, the Chair of the sub-committee is Ald McDowell, and we have requested meeting dates from the DfC.

Hybrid Meetings

I believe that all our members should have access to meetings, and this was discussed by the EC, however it was not possible for this to be arranged for today's meeting and it was agreed that it would not be feasible for the AGM on 15<sup>th</sup> October, however we will investigate it further for the next Members' Meeting in November.

Currently we cannot access council premises for meetings and I'm not sure how long we will have to pay for venues that we previously didn't have to. We must tap into our grant funding to cover these costs, and this is something I always believed would happen and we will keep across this, as an organisation, over the coming weeks and months. We are going to have to arrange Hybrid Meetings as some members aren't comfortable, some are vulnerable, some unwell and unable to travel. The EC are continually discussing this concern and all items discussed by the EC are then brought to the Members. We deal with everything that comes our way with an open door and have this open forum for members to express concerns, our discussions are all about the well-being of our members.

*A member notified that NILGA have held Hybrid Meetings at Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon, Lisburn & Castlereagh, and Antrim & Newtownabbey Councils so perhaps we should be making meeting facility requests directly to the Chief Executives at Councils rather than the Democratic/Members' Services Officers.*

*It was also noted that Mid & East Antrim Council can provide Hybrid Meeting facilities for up to 40 members.*

As the Treasurer, Ald Carson had not yet arrived, the Secretary advised that the Annual Statement of Accounts would be presented at the AGM next month and he stated the importance of getting started with the NILGOSC presentation and handed back to the Chair.

4. AOB - None

5. Next Meeting Dates –

**Annual General Meeting**

10.30am Friday 15 October 2021 at the *Glenavon House Hotel Cookstown*

**Members Meeting**

11am Wednesday 17 November 2021 - *Venue to be decided*

The Chair then welcomed Ms Ruth Benson from NILGOSC thanking her for attending today to provide information on the Local Government Pension Scheme for Councillors. Ruth delivered a presentation including the items detailed overleaf, and she also provided relevant hand-outs.

**NILGOSC Presentation**

- An overview of the Local Government Pension Scheme for Councillors, before and after 2015
- An explanation of the Annual Statement
- An example retirement pension with lump sum conversion options and discussion on the impact that will have on the pension benefits
- Q & A Session

The Secretary thanked Ruth for the information that she had provided which was very interesting and useful for Councillors and this was followed by a round of applause from the NAC Members.

Members were asked to complete the Feedback Forms for Ruth and hand them in when leaving.

**Treasurer's Update**

The Treasurer, Ald Carson joined the meeting at the start of the presentation and when it was completed, he advised the members of the balance held in the current account.

The Meeting ended.

<b>Decisions taken and Actions required</b>	<b>By</b>
Send a condolence letter and sympathy card to Mrs Ruth Hamill from the NAC Officers and Members.	JB
Write to the Finance Minister, Conor Murphy, MLA to ask if we can circulate his response letter to the NAC's request for a review of the criteria in relation to the COVID-19 funding applications for businesses and organisations.	JB
Write to Councils asking if they can accommodate the NAC by providing a meeting room with capability for audio/visual set-up to allow remote access so that Hybrid Meetings can be arranged.	JB