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**MINUTES OF MEMBERS' MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 16 March 2022 HELD AT  
CRAIGAVON CIVIC & CONFERENCE CENTRE & BY ZOOM**

**ATTENDEES**

Aldermen

Bill Keery	Stephen Moutray	Alan McDowell
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Councillors

Alison Bennington	Billy Webb	Joe Boyle
Hazel Legge	Beth Adger	Terry Andrews
Robert Burgess	Charlie Casey	Valerie Harte

Kate Wilson (Admin Assistant)

**ZOOM ATTENDEES**

Aldermen

Frazer Agnew	Kenneth Twyble	Tommy Sandford
Derek Hussey	Stephen Martin	

Councillors

Vera McWilliam	Dermot Nicholl	Diana Armstrong
Errol Thompson	Victor Warrington	Christine McFlynn

**APOLOGIES**

Aldermen

Angus Carson	Jim Speers	Jim Rodgers
Amanda Grehan	Michael Henderson	Tommy Nicholl

Councillors

Tracy Kelly	Dale Pankhurst	Martin Reilly
Timothy Gaston	Dermot Curran	Michael Ruane

1. Chairman's Welcome

The NAC Chair, Cllr Andrews welcomed members to the meeting saying that it is hard to believe that this is the first NAC Members Meeting to take place at a Council in over two years, since Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council hosted us back in January 2020. He thanked Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council for hosting today and asked Ald Moutray to pass on our heartfelt appreciation on to the Lord Mayor, and to his colleagues at Council for their hospitality.

Ald Moutray said *"In the absence of the Lord Mayor, Ald Glenn Barr who is off ill at the moment, I welcome everyone to the Council Chamber today, you are very welcome, and I hope that you will have a very enjoyable time here and enjoy the lunch afterwards. It is very important and it's great to be back to meet in a physical sense again for those that are able to be here today. Thank you Chair"*

Cllr Andrews then spoke of bereavements since the last NAC Members Meeting and offered sincere sympathy and heartfelt condolences, firstly to Cllr Willie Clarke whose mother, Margaret Mary was laid to rest yesterday, Ald Keery whose sister, Joan passed away on 5<sup>th</sup> February, Ald Henderson whose mother, Sadie passed away on 10<sup>th</sup> February, to the family of Mr Christopher Stalford, MLA who passed on 19<sup>th</sup> February, and he said that the NAC had also learned of the passing of Cllr Sean Donnelly on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021. Cllr Andrews said our thoughts and prayers are very much with the families, friends, and colleagues of the deceased.

Apologies that have been received by email, marked in the Attendance Book, and informed today as read by Cllr Andrews are noted on Page 1 of the Minutes. Ald Hussey advised that he would have to leave the meeting early today to attend another meeting in his Council.

## 2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes of the last Members' Meeting which took place on 26 January 2022 were agreed by all, as proposed by Cllr Adger, and seconded by Cllr Burgess. No matters were arising.

## 3. Officers Reports – Treasurer, Secretary and National Chair

The Chair handed over to the Secretary, Cllr Boyle to deliver a report on behalf of the Treasurer Ald Carson.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Cllr Boyle advised the bank balance as taken from the most recent bank statement received in February, he stated that some Councils had informed us that their Annual Subscriptions have been paid and these should appear on the next bank statement.

The Treasurer's Report was accepted by all, as proposed by Cllr Legge, and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

### **Secretary's Report**

#### Bereavements

Unfortunately, and sadly, I start with the bereavements mentioned by the Chair, sympathy and mass cards signed on behalf of the NAC were passed on to Ald Henderson and posted to Alderman Bill Keery and the families of Cllr Sean Donnelly and Mr Christopher Salford MLA. (A card will be sent to Cllr Clarke).

#### NAC NI Newsletter

This was circulated to all members on 15 February 2022, and it contained details and the dates of all our Members' Meetings for 2022 as well as an update on the NAC NI Region's activities.

The NAC NI Region website is also regularly updated, and some new photos have been added to the gallery.

#### Annual Subscription Invoices

These were raised and sent to all councils on 23 February 2022, payments have already been processed by two councils Ards & North Down and Belfast, if anyone has any contact with their officers then perhaps, they could have a word to get payments made, that would be appreciated.

Some councils have provided Purchase Order numbers to enable payments to be processed and/or advised that the invoices are being processed for payment, these are: Causeway Coast & Glens, Derry & Strabane, Lisburn & Castlereagh, and Mid Ulster, so those payments are already in the pipeline.

### Members Meeting Venues

Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council agreed to host this hybrid meeting with a maximum of twenty in-person places. We are communicating with the other councils for our upcoming members meetings and details will be circulated and published on our website as and when venues are confirmed. All delegates were instructed that they would have to respond if they wanted to attend in-person today and extras would have to attend by Zoom. Hopefully, other councils will host us in the future and numbers may not be restricted.

### NAC National Meetings and Conferences

There was a conference held in Glasgow at the end of February with a good turn-out from the NI Region and details of the next conference which is taking place in Scarborough from 8 to 10 April have been circulated to all NAC NI Region members and councils. Cllr Casey, the National Chair, will provide further details from NAC UK in his report.

There was an issue that we had to address here as information was not coming through in time for travel arrangements to be cleared by councils for members who wanted to attend but we have tightened up on that and we are circulating details received from the National Secretary to all NAC NI members now.

### Virtual Meetings Legislation

The NAC sent a letter to The Mayor of LCCC, Ald Stephen Martin, in response to a request received from the council to support the continuation of virtual meetings for councils.

The NAC also provided a formal response to the DfC's Consultation Document on Remote/Hybrid Meetings Legislation for Councils. The NAC response was prepared following input and feedback from EC Members present at our meeting on 7 February 2022.

### Councillor Equality Meetings

This item has been ongoing for a number of years, and we will keep working on it up until the cut-off point for the Assembly elections and hopefully then continue working with the DfC on it following the elections.

Following the last meeting that the NAC had with the DfC officials, a letter was sent to Minister Hargey thanking her for agreeing to a review for councillors and asking if she can sign-off on this ASAP, a reply was received from Mr Carlton, on behalf of the Minister, on 3 February, in which he outlined the next steps in this process.

We have not yet received the Terms of Reference (TOR) draft that he and his colleagues are preparing for consideration by the Minister, and a further meeting with the DfC that was suggested could take place in late February 2022 has not yet been arranged.

We are following up regularly with the Department and sent a letter to Minister Hargey on 14 March, which was copied to her officials. This letter was the outcome of our latest EC meeting, whereby it was agreed that it was disappointing that the meeting promised for late February did not happen and we should write to the Minister to keep her informed of progress. The Minister had said that she wished to be kept informed.

### NILGA

As suggested at our last Members' Meeting, we sent a Welcome letter to the new Chief Executive of NILGA, Ms Alison Allen. Ms Allen responded positively, and she has arranged a meeting with the NAC Chair, Cllr Andrews, and me next week. We hope to build upon the strong and supportive relationship that has been developed with Derek McCallan over the years. We also are keeping in touch with Fiona Douglas, in case members are not aware we invite a NILGA representative to attend our monthly EC Meetings and Fiona their Membership Development Officer, has been joining us, when she is available to give an update on what NILGA are doing. It is useful to have NILGA on board from a Membership Development point of view, when possible, as they are a much bigger organisation, and I would like to keep the partnership in place with the new NILGA CEO.

### **End of Secretary's Report**

There were no questions and the Secretary's Report was approved as proposed by Ald Keery and seconded by Cllr Casey.

### **National Chair's Report**

Cllr Casey said he endorsed what Cllr Boyle said in relation to the National Conference information emails from Cllr Nelson, the National Secretary. However, the problems with receiving emails have now been resolved and we have a list with details of the upcoming conferences for those who want to apply to their councils to attend.

Cllr Casey then spoke about the latest conference in Glasgow which had some very useful workshops including one on getting information circulated from councils and another on empowering women, he remarked on the high turn-out from the NI Region and how we are further advanced in some of our processes here so were able to provide information to councillors from other regions.

On finishing his report Cllr Casey stated that the NI Region may not be represented so well at the next National Conference taking place in April in Scarborough due to canvassing for the Assembly elections.

Cllr Andrews thanked Cllr Casey for the report and said the NI turnout at the Glasgow Conference was impressive. Ald Sandford then thanked Cllr Andrews on behalf of the councillors who were in attendance for the speech he made to our national colleagues and how he conducted himself throughout the conference. Cllr Andrews thanked Ald Sandford and said everyone makes a great team and he is proud to be part of that, everyone who is involved plays a part by working together and being actively involved in their role as councillors.

Ald Sandford said that the Conference reports and documents had not been received from Cllr Nelson as requested and Cllr Andrews said that this will be followed up on and these will be circulated to all NAC Members.

### 4. Any Other Business

Cllr Boyle spoke about the relationship between the NAC and AILG/LAMA, saying it is useful to have meetings to share information and we have recently been in contact with both organisations which has resulted in an invitation from AILG to the NAC Chair and Secretary to attend their Spring Conference which is taking place in Buncrana next week.

Cllr Andrews has confirmed his attendance and Cllr Boyle is still to make arrangements but hopes to attend as this will be a good opportunity to touch base with them again. Cllr Boyle explained that the AILG have already been through a review process which took approximately 8 years, which gives an indication of how long these things can take but we will continue our journey.

A request was made for details of the AILG Conference to be forwarded as some members may wish to attend. Cllr Boyle clarified that it is an AILG Conference for councillors in the South and it may not be open for all, however it was agreed that details of the AILG Conference would be shared with all NAC Members and if they wish to make enquiries with the organisers then arrangements can be made with councils.

Ald Sandford advised that the new Chief Executive of Belfast City Council will be Mr John Walsh.

Cllr Boyle spoke further about the Councillor Equality campaign explaining details and providing information on the journey to date and the process that an NAC sub-committee are currently working on with the DfC. He warned that if there is no government in place then our process will go no further without the sign-off of a Minister.

Ald McDowell, chair of the NAC sub-committee, stated the importance of continuing the process and said that the Minister should remain in place for six months following the election and therefore we will keep working to get the review signed off. There was agreement on this by another EC member.

The issue of pension updates from NILGOSC for those who are not accessing their details online was raised and it was agreed that the NAC will contact them again in relation to this. The benefits of the pension scheme were explained by Cllr Boyle with details of percentages and returns. It was confirmed that members must contact NILGOSC if they wish to receive their Annual Statement by post.

Cllr Webb provided an update on the review of the NAC NI Constitution, saying that a lot of work has been done but more is to be carried out and a further meeting is arranged to continue the process. Legal opinion is being sought on an aspect of it and when it is finalised a special meeting will be called to share the details with members. Cllr Boyle provided a further explanation on how the current Constitution is over 25 years old therefore it is time for a review to update it for future members. Cllr Andrews concluded that the work would continue on this.

Cllr Andrews then thanked the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Lord Mayor, Aldermen, Councillor colleagues and officers for hosting the meeting today, he thanked the staff members for looking after us and importantly the staff that have been in attendance to ensure everything went smoothly on the IT side - Ruth and Danny, he finished by commenting on the high level of facilities available in the Chamber.

#### 5. Next Meeting Date

Our next Members Meeting will take place on Wednesday 25 May 2022 in the Belfast City Council area, venue is to be confirmed.

The meeting ended, see over for Decisions taken.

Decisions/Actions Summary	By
Write to the NAC General Secretary requesting reports from the Glasgow Conference and circulate this to members	JB/KW
Circulate details of the AILG Spring Conference to all NAC members	JB/KW
Contact NILGOSC to request that written statements are sent to members that request them	JB/KW