



**MINUTES OF MEMBERS' MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY 2022 HELD AT
SKETRICK HOUSE, NEWTOWNARDS & BY ZOOM**

ATTENDEES

Aldermen

Frazer Agnew
Alan McDowell
Michael Henderson

Angus Carson
Jim Rodgers

Bill Keery
Tommy Sandford

Councillors

Alison Bennington
Hazel Legge
Terry Andrews
Dermot Curran

Billy Webb
Beth Adger
Robert Burgess
Valerie Harte

Joe Boyle
John McDermott
Charlie Casey

Kate Wilson (Admin Assistant)

ZOOM ATTENDEES

Aldermen

Jim Speers
Keith Kerrigan

Derek Hussey
Stephen Martin

Maurice Devenney

Councillors

Vera McWilliam
Diana Armstrong
Timothy Gaston

Ryan Wilson
Victor Warrington
Dominic Molloy

Eddie Thompson
Andrew Ewing

APOLOGIES

Aldermen

Stephen Moutray
David Drysdale

Amanda Grehan

Tommy Nicholl

Councillors

Tracy Kelly
Martin Reilly
Peter Johnston

Dale Pankhurst
Errol Thompson
Christine McFlynn

Dermot Nicholl
Jonathan Craig

1. Chairman's Welcome

The NAC Chair, Cllr Andrews welcomed members present at Sketrick House and those in attendance by Zoom, he advised that there had been two bereavements since the last meeting, Ald Henderson's wife Arenee sadly passed away on 19 November and Cllr Sean Doran passed away on 26 November. Cllr Andrews said our thoughts and prayers are with Michael, and Sean's family and he asked members to observe a minute's silence in respect of the departed. Following the minute silence, Ald Henderson thanked the chair and members for their kind words, cards and letters of sympathy and support.

Apologies received by email, marked in the Attendance Book, and as informed today are as listed above.

Cllr Andrews advised that there will be a presentation by Legitimate following the meeting today at 11.30am and the agenda has been shortened to accommodate this.

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes of the last Members' Meeting which took place on 17 November 2021 were agreed by all, as proposed by Cllr Burgess, and seconded by Cllr Curran.

3. Officers Reports – Treasurer, Secretary and National Chair

The Chair handed over to the Treasurer, Ald Carson who wished everyone a happy and prosperous new year, he then advised the Current Account bank balance amount from the bank statement dated 13 January 2022.

The Chair thanked Ald Carson and asked if members had any questions for the Treasurer, none were put forward and the Treasurers Report was accepted by all as proposed by Cllr Legge and seconded by Ald Henderson.

The Secretary, Cllr Boyle greeted members in the room and on-line and explained that his report would be brief to allow time for the presentation, then he read his report as follows:

Secretary's Report

Bereavements

In relation to the bereavements mentioned by the Chair, sympathy and mass cards were arranged and sent on behalf of the NAC EC and Members to Ald Henderson and the family of Cllr Sean Doran.

Presentation

The EC have arranged a presentation today which will be delivered by Caoimhe Donnelly, Head of Operations at **Legitimate**, a Belfast based company that have spent the last 18 months working on a platform to help combat disinformation and reduce the ability for people to troll. They have been particularly focused on journalists and politicians who are a focal point for online abuse.

NAC UK AGM

This took place on 26th to 28th November in Lytham Saint Annes and Cllr Beth Adger was appointed as National Vice President and Cllr Charlie Casey was appointed National Chairperson.

There was a round of applause by members for Cllr Casey and Adger.

The UK Conference scheduled for January was postponed but their next conference has been arranged for 25-28 February in Glasgow and details have been circulated to our members and all councils.

NAC NI Members' Meetings dates and locations for 2022

These have been circulated and published, the meetings will be held in hybrid format and advance notice will be sent to Members' Delegates and published on our website.

...Continued over

Councillor Equality Meetings

The NAC Sub-Committee and the DfC Officials have had four meetings since November, and these are on-going. Progress is being made as Minister Hargey has agreed that it is timely for a Review for Councillors to take place.

The DfC Officials have informed us that the next steps will be preparation of the Terms of Reference (TOR) to define what items will be included, arrange for panel members, and the political parties will have to be contacted. This is the start of the journey that we want, and we will have to keep across it and make sure that this important issue is progressed.

Timeframe for completion will depend on whether legislation is required for implementation, but Mr Carleton who is leading the discussions said his target will be May for getting identification of panel members and TOR sign off by Ministers.

End of Secretary's Report

Cllr Andrews asked the Chair of the NAC Sub Committee Group, Ald McDowell for an update on the meetings with the DfC officials. Ald McDowell said that several meetings have been completed and we are working closely with the DfC but waiting for the Terms of Reference to be drawn up and a panel picked. We will be having further meetings and reviewing the terms of reference with the department.

Cllr Andrews then handed over to the National Chair, Cllr Casey for an update. Cllr Casey thanked the members for their show of support to him and Cllr Adger for the positions they have been appointed to. He said that they will be attending a National Executive meeting in Leeds on 7 February and the next UK event will be a Conference taking place in Glasgow on the weekend of 26 February.

Cllr Boyle provided the following details to members on the upcoming presentation and asked them to make use of the Question-and-Answer session that will follow:

“Legitimate are a Belfast based company who have spent the last 18 months working on a platform to help combat disinformation and reduce the ability for people to troll. They have been particularly focused on journalists and politicians who are a focal point for online abuse.

There are currently two full-time and one part-time staff members and they have been funded by Invest NI technology grants. Some of their benefits are:

- A profile to share your updates.
- People can't comment on your posts.
- Followers receive updates via the site and email
- A secure contact form (You can make people verify their identity before contacting you)
- Access to thousands of journalists
- A library of all your posts
- An easy way to create and distribute a newsletter to constituents
- It's FREE and always will be”

Cllr Andrews then asked the Senior Vice Chair, Ald McDowell to take over for the next agenda item and Cllr Andrews, Cllr Boyle and Ald Carson left the meeting room at 11.17am.

4. Executive Committee (EC) Recommendation for increase of Officer Honorarium payments

Ald McDowell greeted the members and said:

“Cllr Boyle made a request to the EC last November for a review of the Secretary’s Honorarium, with a view to it being raised to reflect the demands and responsibilities of the role, based on the following:

- Cllr Boyle has now served as Regional Secretary of the NAC since 2014, which will be 8 years this March that he has held the post
- When Cllr Boyle took over the position, the honorarium was reduced to £6,000 per annum from £8,000 which had been paid to his predecessor for a number of years
- Cllr Boyle is on-call 24/7 as he is available when the office is closed from Wednesday lunchtime until Monday
- During the office hours on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays he spends a lot of time working with Kate on the many issues that we are currently dealing with

This was discussed by the EC at their November and December meetings, and Cllr Burgess proposed that the Secretary’s Honorarium be increased from £6,000 to £8,000 per annum, to take effect from the NAC NI AGM in October 2021 and backdated accordingly, and also that the Chair and Treasurer’s Honorariums should be increased by £500 each, Cllr Adger seconded this proposal. Just for the record, the Treasurer currently receives £2,000 a year and the Chairman receives £1,500 a year.

The EC were supportive of this, and it was agreed by the EC that this would be put forward at the next Members Meeting as an EC recommendation for approval by the NAC Members before being implemented”

Ald McDowell then asked if there were any proposals.

A member explained that normally the EC will make decisions on behalf of the organisation, but this item was being brought back to the members because it is in relation to payments to officers. In the past there was a problem with officer’s payments and therefore it was agreed that any future changes would be brought to the Members Meeting for approval.

Ald Sandford spoke of the amount of work input by the officers, and he put forward a proposal for the Secretary’s Honorarium be brought back up to £8,000 and the Chair and Treasurers Honorariums to be increased by £500. This was seconded by Cllr Adger and agreed by all.

Ald McDowell asked if there were any further comments or questions, none were put forward, he commented on amount of work being carried out particularly in relation to the meetings and activity with the DfC, he then checked and confirmed that the above proposal was agreed by all.

Cllr Andrews, Cllr Boyle and Ald Carson returned to the meeting room at 11.24am.

Cllr Andrews thanked Ald McDowell for presiding over Agenda Item 4 and preparations were made for the presentation.

Caoimhe Donnelly delivered the Legitimate presentation followed by a Q & A Session, details have recorded separately and will be shared with Members.

A member put forward that council chambers should be used for future hybrid meetings due to the quality of their systems which appears superior to the technology used today as he could not always hear the speakers in the room and was unable to see them.

A point of order was called on this by another member who said that the Chair did introduce all the speakers that had contributed today.

Cllr Andrews thanked the member for his comments and feedback and explained that we are constantly in contact with councils on the feasibility of using their facilities for upcoming meetings and members will be kept informed.

A request was made for a Welcome letter to be sent from the NAC to the newly appointed CE of NILGA, Ms Alison Allen.

5. Next Meeting Date

Wednesday 16 March 2022 in the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon area, venue to be confirmed.

The meeting ended.