

CUMBRIA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Annual Report

NOVEMBER
2009

Chairman's Report

It was with some trepidation that I took over from Winston Collinge in January as Chairman of CALC, for under his leadership for the previous three years it had been in a safe pair of hands. We are all grateful to him for all that he did for the organisation, representing CALC not only in the county but also on a regional and national level.

Initially I was overwhelmed by the staggeringly large number of boards, bodies and committees that CALC is asked to send a representative to throughout the county and the North West, however the work of representing CALC is shared by a number of dedicated members of the executive committee, who travel long distances and spend much time preparing for meetings where they present the views of the parish councils. All of their hard work is much appreciated.

As chairman I have very much enjoyed the opportunity of visiting other districts within the county for events such as the presentation to St. Bees parish council of their Quality Parish award. It is hoped that more parishes will follow their example in gaining enhanced status.

Community empowerment has become increasing important over the past year with each of the District Associations approaching the issue of locality working slightly differently but all with a bottom-up approach. CALC has provided support and guidance in helping parishes to work collaboratively to adapt to the challenges outlined in the government white paper. CIEP funding has been obtained by CALC to set up workshops on locality working in two Districts.

CALC has continued to widen the spectrum of courses and training available to Parish Councils including the 'Selectives' range of tailor made courses, thus enabling councillors to enhance their professional skills and thus meet the continually increasing demands for accountability.

During the past year the County Council Highway Stewards scheme has generally been successful, however CALC has recognised that it has pinpointed the need in many parishes for a Parish Steward who could carry out many tasks that could be devolved from District Councils, the proposed Parish Stewards could work where appropriate in geographic clusters.

CALC plays an important role in developing policy and has represented Parish Councils in the consultation for Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS) and has prepared a position statement. It has also approved a Climate Change Action Plan.

Finally, I have been particularly impressed with how much the CALC staff achieve as a small group of dedicated professionals who all work part-time yet provide an excellent service to all of their members. They have managed to keep the organisation on a sound financial footing despite the current economic climate. Above all, they are able to get the voice of the parish councils heard across the county and the North West.

Jocelyn Holland
Chairman

Activities 2008/2009

RESOURCES

Last year was the first full year without the financial resources of the former Quality Parish Development Programme. This has inevitably led to some belt tightening and some contraction of the Association's activities. When Ken Hastings, Assistant Chief Officer, resigned at the end of last year it was considered prudent not to replace him and the responsibilities of other CALC staff were adjusted to fill the gap. Some initiatives that the Association would have liked to progress on behalf of member councils have had to be put on hold for the time being.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

During the course of the year the Government has continued to pursue its 'community empowerment' agenda and the Principal Authorities in Cumbria, with varying degrees of success, have endeavoured to respond. There is now a requirement for Principal Authorities to involve communities in local governance and service delivery in ways that have not been seen before and progress is being assessed by the Audit Commission through the new regime of Comprehensive Area Assessment.

The CALC approach to this subject is set out in the document "Greater Influence for Local Councils – A Call for Action" which was adopted in May 2008. This set out the key actions that need to be taken to enable local councils to achieve more influence – three tier community partnerships; selective devolution; improved dialogue, consultation and engagement; and culture change within the Principal Authorities.

The greatest activity (it is too early to say 'progress') has been in South Lakeland District where the County Council and District Council consulted on proposals to set up 'Local Area Partnerships' across the whole District. Last February CALC arranged a well attended conference to discuss the draft proposals and throughout has endeavoured to advise the two Principal Authorities about the perspectives and concerns of local councils.

Elsewhere in the county, the parish council partnerships in South and Mid Copeland are moving forward, but with some challenges in engaging effectively with the Principal Authorities. In Carlisle, the City Council has been running two pilot schemes in Harraby and Longtown, but at the moment there are no signs of this leading to greater influence for the rural parishes. In response the Chairmen of the Carlisle parish councils are now meeting to map out an alternative way forward. In Allerdale 'locality working' is in the early stages of discussion, building on the experiences of existing and past partnerships in different parts of the District. In Eden, activity so far is based on the Upper Eden and Heart of Eden groups of local councils where partnership working with the County and District Councils is being developed.

Overall progress has been limited during the past year. It seems plain that it is going to be a long, uphill task to secure the greater influence we would like to see for local councils.

PARISH CHARTERS

During the year a Parish Charter with the Lake District National Park Authority was consulted on and adopted and added to the other five Charters agreed last year. The Charters set down agreements between the County Council, the District Councils, the LDNPA and local councils on such matters as liaison, consultation and joint working. They are intended to be the framework within which the three tiers of local government in Cumbria will work together.

Action plans have been developed to ensure obligations are met and a first round of annual monitoring reports were completed. However, the monitoring was not considered to be adequately rigorous in some respects and the District Associations have agreed to a more systematic surveying of local councils' views on the effectiveness of the Charters.

QUALITY COUNCILS

During the year St Bees Parish Council achieved Quality Council status and Keswick was re-accredited (re-accreditation is required every four years). The total number of Quality Councils in Cumbria is now 13 out of 235 councils; this is below the national average. In the absence of Audit Commission inspections, Quality Council status is the only nationally recognised measure of local council performance and is one of the key things the Government and Principal Authorities look for when assessing the capabilities and potential of the parish tier of local government.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

CALC's training activities have continued to develop over the past year with the introduction of new courses on the Internal Audit and Risk Management, in addition to the regular courses for councillors and Clerks, including for the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA). During the year there were 34 separate events and over 300 councillor and clerk attendances, including 'CALC Selectives' which are becoming increasingly popular. 'CALC Selectives' provide on-site training and enable a council to select the precise content of a course which is then delivered on a date and at a venue of its choosing. The events seem to be growing in popularity because they are tailored to the immediate needs of a council and can easily be attended by all members of a council.

Over the past year the Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CIEP) has provided grants to CALC to support our training and development work. This has enabled a new series of events entitled "How Parish Councils Can Win Friends and Influence People" to be designed and delivered by an external consultant. It has also funded some events on 'locality working' and some new incentives to encourage attendance at courses.

REPRESENTING LOCAL COUNCILS

It is an important role of CALC to provide the local council view on major issues affecting all or parts of Cumbria. During the year members of the Executive Committee and the five District Associations represented local councils' interests on many regional, county and local committees on such topics as housing, transport, planning, education, policing, rights of way etc.

In addition, Principal Authorities are increasingly requesting CALC to find local council representatives to attend their committees – notably Standards Committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the County Council's Local Committees. This is a very welcome trend. The time and effort CALC/local council representatives put in is very much appreciated.

"MANAGING RADIOACTIVE WASTE SAFELY" (MRWS)

One of the more challenging representative roles CALC has been asked to fulfil over the past year has been participation in the West Cumbria MRWS Partnership. This Partnership has been set up in response to a national, Government funded, programme to find a site for the geological disposal of higher level radioactive wastes. CALC has been representing the interests of the town and parish councils in Allerdale and Copeland in what is, inevitably, a complex and controversial process. In order to assist the CALC representatives, the Allerdale and Copeland local councils have agreed a Position Statement about MRWS (endorsed by the CALC Executive Committee) which sets out our position on some of the key issues within the MRWS programme.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

All councils that subscribe to CALC also receive membership of our national association – the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). NALC represents the interests of local councils at the national level and continues to be very active in influencing Government thinking about community empowerment and other issues of direct interest to local councils.

NALC continues to be the Association's primary source of information and advice on legal matters affecting local councils. Earlier this year NALC's publication Local Council Review was revamped and an associated on-line bulletin made available to subscribers. At a national seminar held last April proposals were agreed to strengthen working relationships between the national and county associations, particularly through better communications. This Association contributes to the policies and priorities of NALC through our representative on NALC Council, Keith Morgan. NALC's Annual report can be found on the CALC website.

REGIONAL MATTERS

The Association continued to participate in the work of the NW Federation of Town and Parish Councils, particularly in raising the profile of local councils in the minds the new Leaders' Forum - 4NW, the Government Office North West and the NW Development Agency.

ADVICE TO COUNCILS

One of the main tasks of CALC is to provide advice to its members on procedural, financial and legal matters. This is a major area of activity that takes up a large amount of CALC staff time. Advice has been sought on a wide range of topics during the past year, particularly on the Code of Conduct, employment matters, planning issues and 'difficult' members of the electorate.

It is in this area of service that CALC's membership of the National Association of Local Councils is very useful, particularly for legal advice and guidance which can be passed on to our members.

INFORMATION SERVICES

Many of the NALC and CALC publications, leaflets and posters that used to be sent out in the post from the CALC office are now available on the Association's website. As a consequence there are now relatively few requests for information to be posted.

The CALC Circular, which was issued ten times during the year, continued to be one of the Association's main means of communication with its membership. A significant number of individuals in partner organisations are now also on the circulation list.

Information about local councils is regularly requested by members of the public, probably arising from knowledge of the Association's existence through the website.

MEMBERSHIP

There are 221 Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings in membership from 268 parishes in the county. Of the 235 Town and Parish Councils in the county, 211 (90%) are in membership. We now have the position that 98% of the electors living in the parished areas of Cumbria are served by a CALC member council or meeting.

DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS

The CALC District Associations for Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland have continued to meet regularly; generally four times during the year. Joint meetings with the District Councils and the County Council's Local Committees are now an established feature of the annual calendar of meetings.

The Associations have dealt with specific issues and priorities in their own areas and have continued to provide parish representatives on a wide range of local bodies. Some common themes across the Associations have been land registration with the Land Registry, the Parish Paths Initiative, Highways Stewards, wind energy and the maintenance of public conveniences and Tourist Information Centres.

Meetings of the parish councils and meetings in the Lake District National Park, convened by CALC, have now become well established. These meetings focus on topical issues and consider the activities of the World Heritage Site Steering Group and the Lake District National Park Partnership.

Calc Officers 2008/2009

President:	Mr M Redgers, O.B.E., J.P.
Vice Presidents:	Miss Jo Clarke Mrs J Johnstone, O.B.E Mr S Simpson
Chairman:	Cllr W Collinge
Hon. Treasurer:	Mr D Johnson
Allerdale District	Chairman: Cllr A Smith
Carlisle District	Chairman: Cllr Mrs J Holland
Copeland District	Chairman: Cllr K Hitchen
Eden District	Chairman: Cllr W Collinge
South Lakeland District	Chairman: Cllr A Rothwell

Calc Staff

Chief Officer	Guy Richardson
Parish Development Officer	Chris Bagshaw
Parish Liaison Officer (Carlisle/Eden)	Gwen Dumbleton
Parish Liaison Officer (South Lakeland/Barrow)	Amanda McCleery
Parish Liaison Officer (Allerdale/Copeland)	Chris Shaw

(All CALC staff are employed part-time)

Executive Committee 2008/2009

Chairman: Cllr W Collinge

M Redgers, OBE, JP
Miss Jo Clarke
Mrs J Johnstone, OBE
Mr S Simpson
Mr D Johnson

President
Vice President
Vice President
Vice President
Hon Treasurer

Cllr B Wilson
Cllr A Smith
Mrs E Auld
Cllr Mrs J Holland
Cllr K Hitchen
Mr D Polhill
Cllr W Collinge
Cllr K Morgan
Cllr A Rothwell
Mrs C Hayton

Dearham PC
Cockermouth TC
Dalston PC
Wetheral PC
Drigg and Carleton PC
Gosforth PC
Ainstable PC
Appleby TC
Kendal TC
Holme PC

Cllr Mrs J Hay
Cllr Mrs P Dalton
Cllr G Wilson
Cllr V de Quincey
Cllr L Johnson

Culgaith PC
Dalston PC
Lazonby PC
Bothel and Threapland PC
Lakes PC

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2009

	2009	2008
	£	£
RECEIPTS		
Affiliation fees	32,124	46,020
Sundry income	-	3,594
Sale of Publications	206	12
Sale of Local Council Review	915	1,626
Parish Development Programme	53,743	-
Quality Parish Programme	-	93,447
Social and Community Programme	9,366	29,507
Training	6,467	3,247
AGM	460	280
Deposit Account Interest	847	534
	<u>104,128</u>	<u>178,267</u>
Balances at 1st April 2008		
Deposit Account	46,586	16,064
Current Account	<u>15,407</u>	<u>15,773</u>
	<u>61,993</u>	<u>31,837</u>
	<u>166,121</u>	<u>210,104</u>
PAYMENTS		
NALC - Affiliation Fees	11,797	11,467
Publications	123	220
NALC Local Council Review	1,117	929
Printing & Stationery	1,262	1,720
Postage and Telephone	876	1,285
Travel & Subsistence	3,926	3,447
Meetings	3,184	1,660
District Associations	-	400
Bank Charges	67	188
Salaries	28,009	27,054
Parish Development Programme	30,279	-
Quality Parish Programme	-	58,219
Social and Community Programme	12,790	31,228
Accountancy Fees	1,360	588
Honoraria	500	500
Training	8,268	5,488
Sundries	10	2,685
Insurance	748	734
Policy Consultancy	-	299
	<u>104,316</u>	<u>148,111</u>
Balances at 31st March 2009		
Deposit Account	50,427	46,586
Current Account	<u>11,378</u>	<u>15,407</u>
	<u>61,805</u>	<u>61,993</u>
	<u>166,121</u>	<u>210,104</u>

We certify that the above Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2009 is correct and in accordance with the best of our information given to us and as shown by the books.

Saint & Co, Chartered Accountants, Unit 3, Lakeland Business Park, Cockermouth CA13 0QT.

CALC OFFICE

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