

# **CUMBRIA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS LTD**

## **BOARD MEETING**

The meeting of the CALC Ltd Board on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2025 was held remotely via Microsoft teams.

### **Minutes**

Minutes of the CALC Ltd Board Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 10.00am

Present:

Mary Bradley – Chair

Sue Castle-Clarke – Vice Chair Westmorland and Furness

Bryan Craig

Jonathan Davies

Mike Higginbotham

David Wilson – Vice Chair Cumberland Branch

In attendance: Sonia Hutchinson Company Secretary

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Andy Coles, Will Huck, Nick Perie, Andy Pratt and Doug Sim.

#### **2. Declarations of interests**

No declarations of interest.

#### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

The minutes of the meetings held on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025 were approved.

#### **4. Chair Report including NALC overview**

Before commencing on the Chair's report Mary made the following statement: -

I have been lobbied quite a lot by various people on the board to say that they find the board meetings quite challenging and quite difficult. Part of that is because things keep coming backwards and forwards to the board and there is a view that the Board should be sharper and more focused, and be more respectful of everyone's opinions. Everyone is equal and we all have our own different skills that we bring to the Board so going forward the Board meetings need to be more conclusive, more focused and less personal.

#### **Chairs report - NALC overview**

Mary went on to explain that she had circulated a paper which outlines the current position regarding the issues raised by other ALC's, she added that the

matter is now being taken more seriously by NALC and is on the assembly agenda in July, she also pointed out that Jonathan Owen has spoken to all the management board members including Mary and has circulated an email to County Officers which outlines what NALC believe are the issues and solutions, **It was agreed that Sonia will circulate this email to all board Directors.**

Mary did say to Jonathan Owen that the key issue for Cumbria is NALC's constitution and governance arrangements.

A decision still has to be taken on whether or not to invite Jonathan Owen and Justin Griggs to Cumbria for a face to face meeting.

### **Remote working**

Mary then asked Jonathan Davies to explain about another notification that has been received regarding remote working.

Jonathan Davies explained that on the previous Thursday evening. The consultation that has been underway about remote working and proxy voting at Council meetings across all tiers of government has announced that they are going to allow hybrid and virtual meetings to be held by councils but they have not put a fixed timeline on the legislation change yet. They also intend to implement the powers to allow proxy voting at Council meetings across all levels. This may potentially have an impact on CALC resources with regards to councils wanting more information and assistance with technical issues as holding hybrid meetings will be a challenge for a lot of parish councils.

Mary asked Jonathan to take this forward.

**It was agreed that the Communication Subcommittee will have a look at the impact etc. on CALC re the changes to legislation.**

### **Star Council Awards**

The next item that Mary covered in her report was NALC Star Council Awards, Mary suggested that CALC should complete the application for the Association Award. Jonathan Davies informed the Board that Clifton Parish Council are happy to nominate CALC for the award.

**It was agreed that Rachael will take forward the completion of the application with everyone contributing.**

### **Artificial intelligence.**

Mary wanted to point out that within the world of town and parish councils AI is going to have an impact on CALC staffing, business and everything else we do and that the Board will need to keep a close eye on this moving forward. Mary wanted to remind everyone that currently the minutes of any external meetings that CALC representatives attend are being generated by using AI tools. AI is out there and this is just a note to say it is being used and we all need to be mindful of that.

Sue Castle Clarke asked if she could go back to the pre-summit issues. She asked if it would be possible to make some decisions on Cumbria's view to give Sonia a steer at the County Officers Forum.

Mary suggested that she would meet again with Sue and Jonathan to conclude the response from Cumbria and she pointed out that this paper will not just be for the County Officers group but also for the NALC National Assembly.

Sue agreed that she was happy to meet up to look at the paper.

Jonathan asked Sonia what the position was with the County Officers Forum and Sonia explained that at the moment it is being looked at by the working group but that nothing else has been brought back to the County Officers.

Jonathan then suggested that the CALC Board should ask Mary to take a motion forward to the National Assembly. Following a brief discussion Jonathan proposed that the CALC Board should empower Mary as the Cumbria representative on the National Assembly to take forward a motion to National Assembly that **Cumbria Association of Local Councils, Board of directors formally request that NALC with urgency address the disparity between the standing orders of NALC, the Constitution and what is being delivered.** (wording to that effect to be confirmed).

Sue Castle-Clarke supported the motion but asked that it is made clear to NALC that their legal status is also a concern.

**It was agreed that Mary would take a motion to the National Assembly as outlined above and Sonia would arrange a meeting for Mary, Sue and Jonathan.**

## **5. Chief Officer Report**

Concerns were raised: -

1. regarding the timeliness of information contained within the Chief Officers report and following a discussion it was agreed that the Communications Subcommittee will look at a means for sharing information between officers and directors which will enable information contained in such reports to be circulated at the point that the event being reported on happens.
2. Whether or not CALC were being asked to attend meetings as a tick box exercise, it was agreed that this would be discussed during the agenda item covering CALC representation at meetings.
3. LDNPA cluster events, Sonia explained the purpose of these events but made it clear that they will be facilitated by CALC Officers and the invite circulated to directors was to make any directors within the national park aware that these events are happening should they also wish to attend, but directors not living in

the area don't have to attend if they don't feel its relevant to them. The amount of CALC resource used to facilitate these events was also raised with regards to the size of grant that CALC receives from the LDNPA. Sonia made it clear that the CEO at the LDNPA had said that they would support CALC with additional funding and Mary added that this matter would be picked up with them at the annual review once the pilot events provide an idea of what the ongoing resource is going to be going forward.

**It was agreed that the Business and Development Subcommittee will look at what the resource is likely to cost before the annual review meeting with the LDNPA.**

It was also suggested that any director attending a cluster event should generate a report for the CALC Board and the newsletter.

Sonia was also asked to clarify why there was not a grant agreement attached from Cumberland. Sonia explained that confirmation has been received from Cumberland that a grant agreement will be required but to date it has not been received. Sonia went on to add that she and Mary are to meet Colin Cox in the next couple of weeks and it will be raised at that meeting.

## **6. Finance Matters**

- a. Year-end budget Monitoring report from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

The year-end position was noted.

- b. Audited accounts for 2024/2025 – Saint and co report

The audited accounts were noted.

Sonia Hutchinson pointed out to the Board that this was the second year when Saint and Co. has gotten the figures wrong when auditing the accounts. CALC had to correct them before receiving an apology and the correct audited accounts.

**It was agreed that Mary Bradley would write a letter of complaint to Saint and Co requesting compensation and that CALC officers will research and obtain quotes from alternative accountancy auditor providers.**

**It was also agreed that Mary could sign of the audited accounts received from Saint and Co.**

- c. Budget monitoring report for April 2025

The budget monitoring report was noted and Sonia clarified what the latest position was with regards to the monies received from subscriptions to date.

## **7. Strategic Management Plan**

Following a brief discussion it was suggested that the information contained in the diagram could be linked to the CALC website and that the document itself would be an evolving document. **This will be taken forward by the Communications Subcommittee.**

Some concerns were raised that two documents had not been brought back to the board one diagram with just circles and one diagram with circles and sticks showing more detail it was also pointed out that some of the wording had been changed. Following a further discussion **it was agreed that Sonia will forward an email from Sue Castle-Clarke with two versions to David Wilson.**

**It was also agreed that David will relook at the diagram and insert a table into the document with the detail currently contained in the spider diagram. David will then send the final document to all directors for sign off.**

#### **8. CALC subcommittee meetings sign off terms of references: -**

Mary Bradley gave an overview of the current position, thanking everyone that had agreed to sit on a subcommittee. She pointed out that the first meetings had been very productive with each subcommittee agreeing their terms of reference and objectives, she then apologised for not circulating the communication subcommittee objectives with the terms of reference. She went on to add that it had been pointed out at the business and development subcommittee that there was no point in agreeing a large number of objectives that were not attainable within the given resource that CALC has and that each subcommittee will be prioritising the order in which the objectives agreed will be delivered. It is envisaged that the objectives identified by each subcommittee will form the balanced scorecard. Jonathan Davies added that some of the key things that the communication subcommittee will be looking at include a shared platform where all documents between officers and directors can be seen, reducing the need for numerous emails to be sent from officers to directors, website development and outward communication. **It was agreed that the objectives for the communication subcommittee would be circulated.**

**The terms of reference for each subcommittee were approved.**

**It was also agreed that that the business development subcommittee will also undertake an evaluation of the SLA grants received from partners before annual review meetings are held this year for 2026/2027 funding.**

#### **9. CALC Director and staff skills matrix**

The skills matrix was noted.

#### **10. CALC Director representation on external groups**

Following a discussion CALC representatives were agreed for external groups (see appendix 1 attached).

In addition the following topics were raised as ones that CALC should have more representation on:-

GDF

Cumbria Economic Strategy

Road Safety Partnership

Cumbria Pensions Board

**It was agreed to identify the meetings with outside agencies that Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness councils have representation on to see if there are any groups that it would benefit CALC to have a representative on.**

**It was also agreed that the communications subcommittee will look whether or not it is feasible to take CALC director meetings on the road inviting town and parish councils to host them, a couple of times a year.**

**It was also agreed that CALC will just receive minutes for the following meetings: -**

**The Community health and Equality Partnership across Westmorland and Furness.**

**Eden Resilience Group.**

#### **11. Reports from Cumberland Branch and Westmorland and Furness Branch**

The reports from Cumberland and Westmorland Branch were noted and it was pointed out that a representative from Westmorland and Furness council scrutiny committee attended the last Westmorland and Furness Branch meeting about the potential involvement of parish and town councils in the scrutiny committee process, which is something the branch will look at taking forward.

#### **12. Reports from CALC Representatives**

The reports from CALC representatives were noted.

#### **13. Training report April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

The training report was noted. Concerns were raised that a number of delegates were cancelling their attendance at courses and whether or not there could be some financial penalty for no attendance. Rachael Kelly explained that there already is a financial penalty in place in that CALC has a cancellation policy and anyone just not turning up to a course will be charged the full amount.

A brief discussion took place on the kinds of training that could also be offered and Mary pointed out that the business development subcommittee will be conducting a full review of training as one of their objectives.

It was also suggested that CALC could deliver training to other neighboring associations again it was explained that this currently does happen but it is something that could be expanded upon for example wider infrastructure organisations.

#### **14. Next Meeting Date and AGM**

The next meeting date is the 2nd August at 10.00am.

The AGM will be held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October at Braithwaite village hall.

**It was agreed that all directors will be asked via email for suggestions for a speaker for the AGM.**