

**Industrial Communities Alliance
Minutes of Annual General Meeting
and National General Meeting
Friday 11 June 2010
Knowsley MBC**

Agenda item 2

A civic welcome was given by the Mayor of Knowsley, Cllr Diane Reed.

A two minutes silence was observed in memory of those who had been killed in the recent tragic events in Cumbria.

Annual General Meeting

1. Attendance

Cllr E. Watts	National Chair
S. Fothergill	Secretariat
J. Dixon	Secretariat
P. O'Mara	Secretariat
D. Parry	Secretariat
A. Houston	Director, Scotland
P. Slater	Director, Wales
B. Hill	Dover
Cllr S. Manion	Dover & Kent CC
Cllr K. Jackson	Staffordshire Moorlands
J. Daley	Sunderland
Cllr C. Moesby	Derbyshire CC
R. Brewis	Durham CC
Cllr A. Napier	Durham CC
J. Murdoch	Durham CC
Cllr D. Ledger	Northumberland CC
J. Devon	Hon. President
T. O'Connell	Rotherham
Cllr S. Wright	Rotherham
L. Palmer	Salford
Cllr K. Morley	Halton
A. Devaney	St Helens
Cllr J. Kelly	East Ayrshire
Cllr R. McGill	Clackmannanshire
Cllr J. Robertson	Nth Lanarkshire
D. Hewet	East Ayrshire
Cllr M. Grant	Nth Lincolnshire
S. Price-Jones	Nth Lincolnshire
M. Glover	Knowsley
Cllr L. McGuire	St. Helens
Cllr K. Cunliffe	Wigan
P. Greatorex	Observer
Cllr H. Wormstrup	Copeland

Cllr T. O'Neill
S. Melling
Cllr J. Greer
Cllr D. Earl
Cllr W. Eckhardt

Warrington
Wigan
Knowsley
Warrington
Nth Lincolnshire

Apologies

Cllr K. Knight
Cllr D. Grant
Cllr S. Allsop
Cllr M. Graham
Cllr S. Spencer
Cllr I. Auckland
Cllr G. Dunning
Cllr W Ayre
Cllr R. Wellington
Cllr J. Marshall
A. Haille
C. Hunton
Cllr A. Robertson
P. Ansell
Cllr C. Hibberd
D. Hughes
Cllr R. Heron
Cllr A. Laing
Cllr G. Webb
Cllr K. Parry
Cllr V. Tyler
Cllr G. Whelbourn
Cllr S. Bainbridge
Cllr A. Thomas

Doncaster
East Lothian
Derbyshire CC
Gateshead
Derbyshire CC
Sheffield
Redcar & Cleveland
Redcar & Cleveland
Torfaen
Torfaen
Cumbria
Stoke-on-Trent
Fife
Cannock Chase
Kent CC
Kent CC
Sunderland
Durham CC
Northumberland CC
Northumberland CC
Northumberland CC
Rotherham
North Lincolnshire
Neat Port Talbot

2. Chair's Annual Report

2.1. The Chair focused in his annual report on the changed political situation and the challenges ahead as a consequence of the recession and cuts in public spending. He outlined some of the important work that had been done over the last year and emphasised the vital role the Alliance had in facing up to the new challenges and getting the best deal for older industrial communities.

3. Financial report

3.1. The financial position of the Alliance with the provisional outturn for 2009-10, revised budget for 2010-11 was presented to the meeting by the Hon. Treasurer, Cllr Manion.

3.2. It was agreed to note the provisional outturn and adopt the 2010-11 budget. In addition, the Secretariat, in liaison with the Chair and National Executive, was asked to explore options for improving the underlying financial position of the Alliance.

3.3. In discussion, it was stressed that retention of membership and recruitment were a key part of financial stability going forward.

4. Election of Executive members for 2010-11

4.1. The following were nominated and duly elected:

<u>Chair:</u>	Cllr Eion Watts (Bolsover)
<u>Senior vice-chair:</u>	Cllr Terry O'Neill (Warrington)
<u>Vice-chairs:</u>	Cllr Alun Thomas (Neath Port Talbot)
	Cllr Jimmy Kelly (East Ayrshire)
	Cllr Shaun Wright (Rotherham)
<u>Hon. Secretary</u>	Cllr Alan Napier (Durham CC)
<u>Hon. Treasurer</u>	Cllr Steve Manion (Dover & Kent CC)

4.2. Cllr Bob Wellington (Torfaen) had stood down as Vice-chair and the meeting thanked him for his service and efforts over many years.

5. Honoraria

5.1. It was agreed in the present financial circumstances to freeze Honoraria at the 2009 level.

6. Dates of national meetings

6.1. The dates for the 2010-2011 national meetings were agreed. Member local authorities were asked to consider hosting the meetings. Copeland Borough Council offered to host the next meeting on 23 July by which time other venues should be agreed and the details circulated.

7. Affiliation of WOSEF

7.1. It was reported that there was the possibility of a block affiliation to the Alliance from local authority members of the West of Scotland European Forum (WOSEF).

7.2. It was agreed formal discussion should be opened up with WOSEF and that a report on these discussions be made to a future national meeting of the Alliance.

8. Progress report 2009-10

8.1. A progress report on activities in 2009-10 based on the revised work plan of July 2009 was outlined to the meeting. It was agreed to note the progress but, given the changed political and economic situation, it was recognised that priorities may need revision in the coming months.

National General Meeting

9. Minutes of the National General Meeting of 30 April 2010

9.1. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and there were no matters arising not on the main agenda.

10. The new government

10.1. The General Election had produced a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition which presents major challenges for the Alliance. There may be a need for a very different approach to lobbying and campaigning and there also may be different priorities and focus. This agenda item was designed to begin a thorough debate about how the Alliance should operate in the new political landscape.

10.2. In a wide-ranging discussion reference was made to the need to open channels of communication with ministers and senior civil servants and to identify areas of potentially mutual benefit with the new government and, where possible, try to steer the policy direction.

11. Public spending cuts

11.1. The announcement of £6.2 bn cuts in public expenditure in May, to be followed by an emergency budget on 22 June, heralds a very difficult period for public sector spending and employment. The Alliance membership is heavily dependent on the public sector, therefore the potential impact is much greater in Alliance areas. All local authorities are facing severe difficulties.

11.2. Although the overall policy direction of the government was clear, the precise details of how these cuts would impact was as yet unclear. In discussion, comments were made on the quickly changing situation.

11.3. It was agreed that the Policy Advisory Group should discuss the matter as soon as possible and prepare a further report for a forthcoming meeting.

12. Working with MPs

12.1. This item focussed on building relationships with MPs in the new Parliament. It was suggested that a Westminster event in the autumn would help lift the profile of the Alliance in parliament as would activities at Party Conferences. It was agreed to look at organising an event in the autumn.

12.2. The situation with regard to Back Bench MPs Groups was outlined to the meeting. It was decided to support the All Party Coalfield Communities Group and to work more closely with the All Party Steel and Metals Group. It was also decided to seek to establish a new All Party Group in Westminster that would help take forward the Alliance agenda.

13. Worklessness conference

13.1. A one day conference – *Tackling Worklessness in Britain's older industrial areas* – was planned for Sheffield on 13 July. The meeting was updated on the arrangements and Alliance representatives were encouraged to attend.

14. Coalfields Regeneration Review

14.1. The meeting was informed of activities of the Coalfield Regeneration Review instigated by the outgoing government and chaired by Michael Clapham, the former Barnsley MP.

14.2. As well as themed sessions and study tours, the Review team had invited written responses to a consultation.

15. Alliance submission

15.1. Responding to the Coalfield Review consultation comments were invited on a draft Alliance submission.

15.2. In discussion, reference was made to the importance of the Future Jobs Fund and the need for a replacement of some kind now that funding had been curtailed.

15.3. The submission was endorsed by the meeting and it was agreed to circulate it as guidance to Alliance member local authorities.

16. Steel industry

16.1. The UK steel industry had modestly recovered from the low point of the recession. However, the ending of the car scrappage scheme and the cutbacks in major infrastructure projects presented ongoing problems.

16.2. A possible Thai buyer for the mothballed Redcar steel works gave grounds for a little cautious optimism.

17. EU funding

17.1. A position paper on the future on EU funding agreed at the April national meeting had been widely distributed and the key messages were outlined in this agenda item.

17.2. The Alliance Director and Director of Alliance Wales had met with civil servants at Business, Innovation and Skills department (BIS) on 9 June. It was reported to have been a friendly and informative session. BIS appeared to accept that targeted funding was needed but within a thematic framework. There were concerns from the Alliance perspective that the EU 2020 strategy for growth may not take into account the needs of lagging regions and sub-regions.

17.3. It was apparent that the Treasury still needed convincing of the benefit of Structural Funds and BIS officials encouraged the Alliance to lobby the Cabinet Sub-Committee. It was agreed to look at this option.

18. Scotland: recent developments

18.1. The meeting was informed of Alliance activities with regard to the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government. These included a meeting planned for September with government ministers, a Cross Party Group meeting in the Scottish Parliament on 16 June and a seminar planned for November focussing on Regeneration in Hard Times.

18.2. It was noted that the convenor of the Cross Party Group, Cathy Jamieson MSP, had been elected to Westminster and that Rhona Brankin MSP would take over the role from September.

19. Wales: progress towards AMs group

19.1. There had been a full discussion on this at the recent Alliance Wales meeting and preparations were being made to approach AMs in order to set up a group.

20. Annual Conference

20.1. The meeting was updated on the arrangements for the Annual Conference scheduled for 21-23 September in Stoke-on-Trent. Representatives were asked for any further suggestions on speakers or topics.

20.2. In discussion, it was suggested that invitations should be made to senior coalition ministers.

21. Regional reports

21.1. Each region indicated that all relevant business had been covered in the main agenda.

22. Any other business

22.1. There was no further business and the Chair closed the meeting.