

Annual General Meeting

1. Attendance and apologies

Attendance

Cllr T. O'Neill	Senior Vice-Chair
S. Fothergill	Secretariat
J. Dixon	Secretariat
P. O'Mara	Secretariat
D. Parry	Secretariat
A. Houston	Director, Scotland
P. Slater	Director, Wales
Cllr S. Manion	Dover
Cllr W. Eckhardt	North Lincolnshire
Cllr J. Kelly	East Ayrshire
Cllr J. Robertson	North Lanarkshire
Cllr J. Jones	North Lanarkshire
Cllr R. Franklin	Barnsley
Cllr E. Boden	Newcastle-u-Lyme
Cllr R. Goddard	Redcar & Cleveland
Cllr V. Jeffries	Redcar & Cleveland
Cllr M. Grant	North Lincolnshire
Cllr W. Mordue	Doncaster
Cllr K. Jackson	Staffordshire Moorlands
M. Kipling	Durham
R. Brewis	Durham
S. Morley	North Ayrshire
M. Leitch	Glasgow
V. Phillips	Caerphilly
S. Hurst	Wigan
Cllr L. McGuire	St Helens
Cllr K. Cunliffe	Wigan
H. Knowles	Furness Enterprise/Barrow
Cllr P. Greatorex	Copeland
N. Etches	Bolsover
J. Daly	Sunderland
M. Romano	Stoke-on-Trent
D. Crawford	South Tyneside
Cllr E. Malcolm	South Tyneside
B. Hill	Dover

Apologies

Cllr E. Watts	Bolsover
Cllr R. Wellington	Torfaen
Cllr J. Dempster	Dumfries & Galloway
Cllr J. Syne	Dumfries & Galloway
E. Green	Dumfries & Galloway
D. Burns	Dumfries & Galloway
S. Price-Jones	North Lincolnshire
Cllr M. Toner	South Ayrshire
Cllr H. Mirfin-Boukouris	Sheffield
Cllr D. Lonergan	Knowsley
Cllr D. Ledger	Northumberland
Cllr M. Graham	Gateshead
Cllr S. Strachan	Argyle & Bute
Cllr W. Evans	Carmarthenshire
B. McColgan	West Dunbartonshire
Cllr R. McGill	Clackmannanshire
Cllr A. Markley	Cumbria
R. Kojan	Wakefield
Cllr J. Ward	Rhondda Cynon Taff
Cllr B. Thomas	Blaenau Gwent
Cllr S. Bainbridge	North Lincolnshire
Cllr A. Napier	Durham
Cllr A. Laing	Durham
Cllr. D. O'Neill	North Ayrshire
Cllr R. Heron	Sunderland
Cllr D. Wilcox	Blaenau Gwent
I. Wardle	Redcar & Cleveland
A. Skelton	Redcar & Cleveland

2. Chair's Annual Report

2.1. In the absence of the Chair, the Senior Vice-Chair gave an annual report that covered a number of aspects of activity over the previous year and outlined priorities in the context of government policies with a view to formulating a strategy for the Alliance. Comments were also made on retaining membership and potential for further recruitment

3. Financial report

3.1. The Hon Treasurer, Cllr Manion, presented this report. It was agreed to note the provisional outturn for 2010-11 and to adopt the revised budget for 2011-12.

4. Election of Executive Members for 2011-12

4.1. The following were nominated and duly elected:

Chair	Cllr E. Watts (Bolsover)
Senior Vice-Chair	Cllr T. O'Neill (Warrington)

Vice Chairs	Cllr A. Thomas (Neath Port Talbot) Cllr J. Kelly (East Ayrshire) Cllr S. Wright (Rotherham)
Hon. Secretary	Cllr A. Napier (Durham)
Hon. Treasurer	Cllr S. Manion (Dover)

5. Honoraria

5.1. It was agreed to maintain the honoraria payments to elected Executive members at the same level as 2010 – 2011.

6. Dates and venues of national meetings for 2011-12

6.1. The dates of the meetings up until the Annual Conference in September 2012 were agreed. Venues, including that of the next Annual Conference had yet to be confirmed.

7. Towards a new business plan

7.1. Many Alliance representatives have expressed the view over a number of years that annually updated work plan helps keep member authorities aware of the organisation's priorities and actions. Last year, immediately following the General election was period of great flux so a new work plan was put on hold. Now that the government's policies are clearer, the Secretariat suggests it is time to prepare a work plan that responds to the current situation.

7.2. It was agreed that the Alliance Executive should meet to discuss strategic priorities and begin the process.

7.3. In discussion, reference was made to the changes being considered by the Electoral Boundary Commission. It was agreed to monitor this.

National General Meeting

8. Minutes of the National General Meeting of 22 July 2011

8.1. The minutes were agreed as correct record.

8.2. Matters arising: Item 4.3 – Cllr Greatorex asked if the Secretariat had pursued the issue of procurement and the inclusion of social cost in selection criteria for contracts. It was reported that 3 experts on the issue had been approached to speak at the Annual Conference but none were available.

9. Annual Conference: review

9.1. In the present climate of tight financial control on all local authority elected member and officers a new format had been implemented for the 2011 Annual Conference.

9.2. The format was for a free of charge one day conference followed by an Annual General meeting the next morning. Representatives were asked to comment on the format and on the content of the annual conference in the light of the previous day's experience.

9.3. In discussion, all comments were very positive, both on format and content. It was agreed to use the same format for the 2012 Annual Conference.

10. 'Plan B' for the regions

10.1. An alternative plan for the regions had been discussed in some detail by the Policy Advisory Group in early July. A session at the Annual Conference also focussed on the future of the regions.

10.2. The meeting agreed that a strategy paper be drafted, circulated to the Policy Advisory Group for comment and then submitted to the next national meeting in November.

11. European funding

11.1. This item covered both delivery of EU funding in the current round and prospects for funding post 2013.

11.2. A meeting with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was reported on with regard to delivery of the remaining £1 billion in the English regions. Government departments, recognising a potential problem, were conducting a trawl of budgets to find where matched funding might be available.

11.3. In discussion, there was pressure to begin an early campaign, including use of the media. It was agreed to press ahead once up-to-date figures on delivery were made available and the findings of government search for matched funding were known.

11.4. It was also agreed to go ahead with a planned lobby in Brussels.

12. Assisted Area status

12.1. Developments with regard to State Aid rules after 2013 were beginning to gather pace with the UK Government working up a position to be submitted to the EU Commission. The key message for the Alliance is 'so far so good'. It was agreed that an assessment of the Commission's proposals should be made as soon as they are known and to gear up to respond as necessary.

13. Enterprise Zones

13.1. In England 22 Enterprise Zones had been selected by the government. Scotland and Wales were expected to make announcements in the near future. A list of the Zones with the sponsoring Local Enterprise Partnership accompanied this agenda item. The national spread, including many relative prosperous areas,

suggested that geographic re-balancing of the economy was not the main priority for this policy initiative. It was agreed to continue to monitor developments

13.2. In discussion the Stoke-on-Trent representative expressed dismay that there was no new zone in North Staffordshire and it was agreed to explore ways of making representations on this.

13.3. Representatives from Scotland voiced concerns that the Scottish Government were not expected to consult on selection of sites.

14. Localisation of business rates in England

14.1. This issue has potentially a major impact on local authority finances throughout England. It was agreed to continue to monitor developments and consider further actions at a future national meeting.

15. Regional Growth Fund

15.1. Opportunities to bid into the two rounds of the Regional Growth Fund came to and end on 1 July. With the prospect of no further funding for economic development for some years, the July meeting of the Alliance decided to press for further rounds for the Regional Growth Fund.

15.2. At a meeting with BIS civil servants the Secretariat discovered that, although there were no plans to provide further funding, with continuing weak economic growth ministers might be tempted to re-consider.

15.3. The meeting therefore agreed the following actions: for the National Chair to write to relevant ministers; to make representations to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the RGF Advisory Panel; to write to Chairs of LEPs in Alliance areas to ask them to make their own representations; to encourage business organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) to do the same.

16. Steel and related issues

16.1. This report covered: developments with regard to jobs losses in Scunthorpe; recruitment and expected return to full production of the Redcar steelworks now called Sahaviriya Steel Teesside; carbon pricing and intensive energy users. Representatives from Redcar & Cleveland and North Lincolnshire updated the meeting on the latest news.

16.2. A meeting between the Alliance Secretariat and North Lincolnshire Council had now been arranged for 29 September to explore how the Alliance could provide assistance to mitigate the effect of job losses.

16.3. On carbon pricing: Ian Rodgers of UK Steel made a presentation to the Annual Conference which gave much food for thought. In addition, the Secretariat was liaising with the All Party Intensive Energy Users Group to look at options for joint work.

16.4. It was agreed that the next Alliance national meeting in Port Talbot should take the opportunity to hear directly from a representative of Tata Steel.

17. Coalfields Regeneration Trust

17.1. Funding up to £52 million is to be made available for four years for CRT in England. However, the second tranche of funding is contingent on the Department for Communities and Local Government Investment Board being satisfied with a business plan. So far the plan has yet to be submitted by CRT.

17.2. In Scotland and Wales only one year's funding for CRT was announced. Alliance Wales have secured a meeting with the relevant minister in Wales to pursue additional funding. Representatives in Scotland were concerned that the Government may be hard to persuade to continue funding next year.

18. HCA National Coalfields Programme

18.1. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has funding to complete 92 sites leaving 15 sites with an uncertain future. Four of those sites have no funding to develop them. Some 52 of the sites have been transferred from the RDAs back to HCA.

18.2. The Alliance Secretariat has accompanied a senior DCLG civil servant on a visit to the coalfield areas of Derbyshire and this had proved very useful.

18.3. Unfortunately a planned Coalfield Board meeting at DCLG had been cancelled so there was nothing further to report.

19. PROSPECTS project

19.1. A report was received on the most recent seminar which took place in Hungary in the PROSPECTS exchange of experiences project. There were further opportunities for Alliance representatives to attend events leading up to a final conference in September/October 2012.

19.2. In response to a question on the benefits of the project, Cllr Cunliffe for lead partner Wigan MBC, gave a more detailed account of activities.

20. Regional reports

20.1. Each region indicate that all business has been covered on the main agenda.

21. Any other business

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