

**Industrial Communities Alliance
item 2
Minutes of National General Meeting
Friday 15 October 2010
North Lincolnshire Council**

Agenda

A civic welcome was given by the Mayor of North Lincolnshire Council, Cllr Alan Smith.

1. Attendance and apologies

Attendance

Cllr E. Watts	Chair
S. Fothergill	Secretariat
J. Dixon	Secretariat
P. O'Mara	Secretariat
D. Parry	Secretariat
P. Slater	Director, Alliance Wales
Cllr W. Eckhardt	North Lincolnshire
Cllr S. Manion	Dover & Kent CC
Cllr A. Tomlinson	Bolsover
Cllr J. Greer	Knowsley
Cllr L. McGuire	St Helens
Cllr K. Cunliffe	Wigan
Cllr T. O'Neill	Warrington
Cllr G. Whelbourn	Rotherham
T. O'Connell	Rotherham
Cllr S. Wright	Rotherham
Cllr W. Mordue	Doncaster
Cllr J. Kelly	East Ayrshire
D. Hewet	East Ayrshire
Cllr A. Napier	Durham CC
Cllr A. Laing	Durham CC
R. Brewis	Durham CC
J Daly	Sunderland
S. Price-Jones	North Lincolnshire
L. Farr	North Lincolnshire
Cllr S. Bainbridge	North Lincolnshire
Cllr D. Ledger	Northumberland
Cllr M. Salih	Stoke-on-Trent
C. Hunton	Stoke-on-Trent
Cllr K. Jackson	Staffordshire Moorlands
Cllr W. Ayre	Redcar & Cleveland

Apologies

A. Westray-Chapman	NE Derbyshire
Cllr G. Butler	NE Derbyshire
Cllr K. Knight	Doncaster

Cllr D. Grant	East Lothian
Cllr A. Thomas	Neath Port Talbot
Cllr J. Marshall	Torfaen
Cllr R. Wellington	Torfaen
Cllr S. Allsop	Derbyshire CC
Cllr R. McGill	Clackmannanshire
L. Duddridge	Salford
B. Hill	Dover
Cllr C. Hibberd	Kent CC
D. Hughes	Kent CC
Cllr R. Heron	Sunderland
Cllr K. Parry	Northumberland
Cllr G. Webb	Northumberland
Cllr V. Tyler	Northumberland
J. Devon	Hon. President
A. Houston	Director, Alliance Scotland

2. Minutes of the National General Meeting of 23 July 2010

2.1. The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

2.2. Cllr Grant (North Lincolnshire) noted that a decision to publicise national meetings with local media had been acted upon by the Secretariat, but no one had informed the host local authority. This omission was regretted and it was reaffirmed that host local authorities would be kept informed of any press releases associated with national meetings.

3. Westminster events

3.1. This report covered two events in Westminster. The first one had taken place on 13 October and was organised by SIGOMA (Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities) with Alliance support. A verbal report back on the meeting was given. The main speaker was the Shadow spokesperson for Communities and Local Government, Caroline Flint MP. The Alliance National Chair had also contributed.

3.2. The work of the Alliance and SIGOMA closely overlapped with regard to the impact on local economies of the spending cuts. It was agreed to explore ways of working more closely with SIGOMA to maximise the impact on government.

3.4. The second event is planned for 16 November and focuses on *Jobs, Growth and the Regions*. Speakers from the government and opposition front bench had yet to be secured. Alliance representatives were strongly urged to participate and engage with their own MPs.

4. Hard Times briefing papers

4.1. Details of the three *Hard Times* briefings papers and their distribution were outlined to the meeting. Representatives commented on the well produced and succinct format. It was agreed that future briefings should cover worklessness and the White Paper on regional development expected in November.

11. Speaker: Future of the Steel Industry: Richard Adams, Corus

(This item was taken early in the agenda to accommodate the time constraints on the speaker.)

11.1. Richard Adams, Tata Steel Long Products Europe, gave a comprehensive presentation covering: the world economic outlook; Tata Steel Europe concerns and its response; Teesside Cast Products; recent investment announcements. After responding to a number of questions the Chair thanked the speaker for his contribution.

5. Worklessness

5.1. The National Worklessness Forum was an early victim of public spending cuts. However, there are opportunities to pursue the issue of worklessness with the publishing of a report commissioned by the Forum from Sheffield Hallam University.

5.2. Discussions are due to take place between the Alliance Chair, Senior Vice-chair and former Chair of the Forum, Cllr Steve Houghton. It was decided to pursue all avenues to maintain some momentum on worklessness including making use of the forthcoming Sheffield Hallam report.

6. Annual Conference

6.1. The 2010 Alliance Annual Conference had been regrettably cancelled. It had become apparent just two weeks before the Conference that there were not enough delegates to make it viable on this occasion. The decision to cancel was taken after discussions between the Secretariat and members of the National Executive.

6.2. Financial and workload pressures had been a key factor in the significant fall off in delegates expected to attend. This prompted a discussion on the future format of the conference. A number of ideas were aired in discussion and it was decided that the Secretariat should submit an options paper to a forthcoming national meeting.

7. Coalfield Regeneration Review

7.1. The Review had been completed and the government had produced the final report during September. In a media release the minister, Grant Shapps MP, made a number of positive remarks. As a result, there was some cautious optimism about the outcome after the Comprehensive Spending Review. Lobbying was continuing with MPs.

7.2. In discussion, a request was made to thank the Chair of the Review Board, the former coalfield MP Michael Clapham, for his efforts. It was agreed to do this.

8. HCA coalfields site programme

8.1. There is uncertainty about the funding for coalfield regeneration (see item 7) and the future of the Housing & Communities Agency's coalfield sites programme. Of the 107 sites, four have been identified by HCA as having little or no prospect of redevelopment; six have deliverability problems; four sites are under review; two further sites which were part of the Carbon Challenge are also subject to review.

8.2. All sites were named in the report and respective local authorities asked to advise the Secretariat on the latest position and how they wished to proceed. Based on this response, the Secretariat will make representations to HCA.

8.3. In discussion, the example of Snowdown in Kent was raised as a site where local transfer of funds had occurred.

9. Regional Growth Fund

9.1. The Regional Growth Fund appears to be replacing a number of sources for funding for regional development in England as the RDAs are phased out. A government consultation had taken place and the Alliance made a submission and provided information for member local authorities to also participate. In addition, the Secretariat had met with BIS civil servants dealing with the fund and, as result, distributed a further guidance note. Both the submission and the guidance note accompanied this agenda item.

9.2. It was clear that, not only was the fund much smaller than the funding sources it replaced, access by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to the challenge fund may prove difficult without significant private sector involvement.

9.3. In discussion, reference was made to the advantaged position of core cities to draw down the fund and the potential absence of funding for many LEPs. It was decided that further representation about the targeting of this fund was needed.

10. Future of state aids

10.1. This item covered the implementation of grants to business under EU state aids currently implemented as well as preparations for state aid rules beyond 2013. The Secretariat had met with BIS civil servants on 17 September and with other organisations in Manchester on 7 October. A verbal report was made on the situation in Wales and Scotland.

10.2. It was decided that the Secretariat should produce a paper based on the discussions for consideration. It was also agreed to begin to pursue the matter of future rules with the EU Commission.

12. Steel industry: update

12.1. Much of the information in this report had been covered by the speaker from Tata. It was noted that the Tata speaker's concerns about market volatility contrasted with the more positive tone of the written report.

12.2. A Thailand-based steel company (SSI) was in the process of buying Teesside Cast Products with a view to re-starting production early next year. This was welcome news.

12.3. The Teesside regeneration package, with a promise of £60 million from the previous government, had yet to fully materialise. With only £30 million committed, it was decided to prepare to make representations if the remainder became a victim of the demise of the RDAs and Comprehensive Spending Review cuts.

13. Scottish ministerial meeting

13.1. Continued progress in the good working relationship with the Scottish Government was reported to the meeting. This included a recent meeting with two Government ministers in which discussions focussed on town centre regeneration and regeneration funding more generally. Senior civil servants were now discussing issues with Alliance representatives and the next meeting with ministers was planned for early in the New Year.

13.2. Arrangements for the seminar in the Scottish Parliament - *Regeneration in Hard Times* - were also reported on.

14. Affiliation of WOSEF

14.1. The meeting was asked to accept the block affiliation of 12 local authorities in the West of Scotland European Forum (WOSEF). The basis of the affiliation was outlined in detail in the paper. This development was very much welcomed by the meeting and it was decided to ratify the block affiliation on a one-off basis.

15. PROSPECTS project

15.1. Progress of this exchange of experiences project with Wigan as lead partner was reported to the meeting. There were still opportunities for additional Alliance involvement and future events with approximate dates were outlined.

15.2. Cllr Cunliffe reported on the previous two events in Slovenia and Spain. He also informed the meeting that a delegate fee was not required for

forthcoming events for perhaps two Alliance representatives, in addition to Wigan.

16. Regional reports

16.2. It was reported that the Executive had discussed the issue of Secretariat support for the Midlands and South Region. It was decided that for the time being the National Secretariat should take on this role.

17. Any other business

17.1. Cllr Manion (Dover and Kent) brought the meetings attention to a forthcoming anniversary of the Aberfan disaster. Respect was shown in the usual way.

17.2. Nick Dakin, the local MP, had attended the meeting in its later stages. He introduced himself at the invitation of the Chair.

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