

A civic welcome was given by Cllr Lillian Robinson, Chair of North East Derbyshire District Council.

1. Attendance and apologies

Attendance

Cllr E. Watts	Chair
S. Fothergill	Secretariat
P. O'Mara	Secretariat
J. Dixon	Secretariat
D. Parry	Secretariat
Cllr A. Napier	Durham CC
M. Kipling	Durham CC
Cllr D. Ledger	Northumberland CC
Cllr S. Wright	Rotherham
T. O'Connell	Rotherham
Cllr G. Whelbourn	Rotherham
Cllr P. Ansell	Cannock Chase
Cllr S. Manion	Dover DC and Kent CC
Cllr A. Tomlinson	Bolsover
T. Rawsterne	Nottinghamshire CC
Cllr M. Grant	Nth Lincolnshire
L. Farr	Nth Lincolnshire
C. Hunton	Stoke-on-Trent
Cllr L. Wanger	Stoke-on-Trent
Cllr J. Kelly	East Ayrshire
D. Hewet	East Ayrshire
H. Knowles	Furness Enterprise, Barrow
Cllr K. Cunliffe	Wigan
Cllr J. Greer	Knowsley
Cllr R. McGill	Clackmannanshire
D. Crawford	South Tyneside
Cllr T. O'Neill	Warrington
Cllr L. McGuire	St Helens
P. Greatorex	Observer
Cllr J. Bowman	Copeland
Cllr H. Wormstrup	Copeland
J. Khan	Derbyshire CC
Cllr W. Eckhardt	Nth Lincolnshire
N. Etches	Bolsover DC
A. Westray-Chapman	Nth East Derbyshire
L. Watson	Redcar & Cleveland

Apologies

Cllr S. Allsop	Derbyshire CC
Cllr R. Wellington	Torfaen
Cllr J. Marshall	Torfaen
Cllr A. Laing	Durham CC
Cllr K. Parry	Northumberland CC
Cllr G. Webb	Northumberland CC
Cllr V. Tyler	Northumberland CC
B. Hill	Dover DC
D. Hughes	Kent CC
Cllr D. Davies	Cannock Chase
G. Watson	Cannock Chase
Cllr J. Cottee	Nottinghamshire CC
Cllr S. Bainbridge	Nth Lincolnshire
D. Stevenson	Derbyshire CC
Cllr G. Dunning	Redcar & Cleveland
Cllr W. Ayre	Redcar & Cleveland

2. Minutes of AGM and National General Meeting of 3 July 2009

2.1. Cllr Ayre had attended the meeting on 3 July but it was not recorded in the minutes. It was agreed to correct this. The minutes were then agreed as a true record and there were no matters arising.

3. The impact of recession: a new Alliance report

3.1. Steve Fothergill, Alliance Director, gave a presentation on the report: *The Impact of Recession on Unemployment in Industrial Britain*. The presentation included a number of suggestions for distribution and dissemination.

3.2. In a full discussion reference was made to the use of GVA statistics, the effects of aggregated statistics in the new Northumberland and Durham Counties, the expected impact of public sector cuts on employment.

3.3. The strategy for dissemination of the report was agreed and it was decided that the Executive should consider how take forward the policy proposals in the report prior to the next National General Meeting.

4. Short-time working

4.1. At the 3 July national meeting, the Secretariat had been asked to prepare the ground for a campaign on short-time working subsidies. There had been discussions with MPs and with contacts at the TUC. However, as the economic context had changed since earlier in the year with some signs that the worst of the recession was over, the Secretariat asked the meeting to reconsider the plans for a campaign.

4.2. It was agreed that short time working subsidy as a policy option remained a good idea. It was decided, however, not to build a high profile campaign in the coming period but to monitor developments.

5. Steel crisis

5.1. Attached to this agenda item was an update on the current situation in the UK steel industry and a detailed report of the second 'Steel Summit' held on 20 July with the government minister Pat McFadden MP. The crisis in the steel industry had eased but the situation at Teesside Cast Products remained precarious. Job losses at Rotherham were working through the system.

5.2. It was reported in discussion that position at Scunthorpe was now more positive. Comments were also made on the burden of energy costs for UK companies compared with some overseas competitors.

5.4. It was agreed to remain vigilant and to continue to press the government and Corus/Tata to maintain jobs and a viable steel industry.

6. Future Jobs Fund

6.1. After three rounds of Future Jobs Fund awards it was becoming clear the government is going to struggle to deliver on the 150,000 jobs target by next April. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) were keen to work with local authorities to overcome problems. This was the main message from Tony Wilson of DWP at the Alliance Annual Conference.

6.2. In discussion a number of issues were raised. These included: implementation of successful bids; sustainability of the jobs created; the effect of the benefits trap; areas with no matched funding such as Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

6.3. Cllr Watts name had been put forward for the National Worklessness Forum but there had so far been no response and little progress towards convening the body.

6.4. It was decided that the Alliance should continue to press member authorities' concerns with DWP. It was also agreed to continue to seek representation on the National Worklessness Forum.

6.5. The Secretariat was asked to consider organising a workshop to pool experience of implementation of the fund.

7. Skills

7.1. An event in Parliament on low skill adults had now been arranged jointly by the All Party Parliamentary Coalfield Communities Group and the Alliance. The skills minister, Kevin Brennan MP, had agreed to speak on 28 October and Alliance representative were encouraged to attend.

7.2. Skills had been the topic of a meeting at CLG held in September. The Alliance Secretariat had suggested that there would be merit in organising an event to pool best practice. It was agreed that this suggestion should be investigated.

8. Homes and Communities Agency

8.1. This item covered the future of the National Coalfield Programme, Coalfield Action Zones, a National Audit Office Report, the Land Restoration Trust, non-traditional housing and the Annual Members' Forum.

8.2. Discussion focussed mainly on housing, including the National Affordable Homes Programme, the role of Registered Social Landlords and the shortage of council houses.

8.3. The possibility of a reconvened Coalfields Task Force had emerged in discussion with civil servants and it was decided that the Secretariat should pursue this idea.

9. Coalfields Regeneration Trust

9.1 The future of the Coalfield Regenerations Trust (CRT) and prospects for funding after 2011 had been raised at the Annual Conference by the Chief Executive of CRT, Janet Bibby.

9.2. In discussion, Cllr Kelly, on behalf of Alliance Scotland, expressed concern that a decision based in England on the future of CRT funding could have a detrimental impact on Scotland even though the source of funding was a devolved matter. The view from Scotland was that reference to an 'exit strategy' was sending the wrong message to the devolved administrations.

9.3. It was agreed that the Alliance should meet with CRT with a view to preparing a full report to the next National General Meeting.

10. Scottish MSPs group

10.1. It was reported that a Cross Party Group on Industrial Communities was now officially established in the Scottish Parliament with representation from each of the principal political parties. The Convener is Cathy Jamieson, MSP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon in East Ayrshire.

10.2. Discussions on future activities were outlined, including an event in the Scottish Parliament based on the report - *The Impact of Recession on Unemployment in Industrial Britain*.

11. Coalfields Enterprise Fund

11.1. CLG minister, John Healey MP, had announced the extension of the Coalfield Enterprise Fund and the new fund Coalfields Growth Fund at the 2009 Alliance Annual Conference.

11.2. Alliance representatives welcomed the funds and member local authorities were encouraged to make enquiries with Enterprise Ventures.

12. Annual Conference: report back

12.1. A report back on the Annual Conference in Port Talbot was received by the meeting and representatives invited to comment. The consensus was that it was a successful conference with first rate contributions from speakers and everyone responsible for organising and helping with the conference was thanked.

12.2. The overall attendance was a little down on the previous year in line with the trends in recent years. Attendance at the final morning session was disappointing with delegates leaving early, often to travel long distances. It was agreed to look at the structure of the next Annual Conference in this regard. The Executive expect to have an initial discussion on this prior to the next national meeting.

13. Coal Authority

13.1. An officer from the Secretariat had attended the Annual Meeting of the Coal Authority (CA) and a substantial item on the agenda had been liaison between local authorities and the CA on planning issues relating to coal workings and coal deposits. It was suggested to the meeting that a half-day seminar might prove useful towards improving collaboration between the CA and local authorities. It was agreed to explore this idea.

13.2. In discussion, reference was also made to minewater pollution and opencast coal mining.

14. EUR-ACOM Conference

14.1 The Conference was taking place from 18-20 November in Wisla, Poland. There were still places available but this was the last chance to register. Anyone wishing to attend was asked to contact the Secretariat as soon as possible.

15. Venues of forthcoming national meetings

15.1. The venues were agreed and host local authorities were thanked.

16. Regional reports

16.1. Cllr Manion, Midlands Chair, reported on the death of Cllr Carlile from Derbyshire County Council. Respect was shown in the usual way.

16.2. Other regions indicated that all matters had been covered in the main agenda.

17. Any other business

17.1. The Chair reported on ongoing activities with regard to recruitment and retention of membership.