

The meeting was informed of the death of Cllr Graham Phelps from Wakefield. Respect was shown in the usual way.

**1. Attendance and apologies**

Attendance

|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Cllr E. Watts     | Chair              |
| S. Fothergill     | Secretariat        |
| P. O'Mara         | Secretariat        |
| J. Dixon          | Secretariat        |
| D. Parry          | Secretariat        |
| P. Slater         | Alliance Wales     |
| A. Houston        | Alliance Scotland  |
| R. Kojan          | Wakefield          |
| L. Watson         | Redcar & Cleveland |
| M. Glover         | Knowsley           |
| Cllr J. Greer     | Knowsley           |
| Cllr L McGuire    | St Helens          |
| Cllr K. Cunliffe  | Wigan              |
| D. Ivill          | Observer           |
| Cllr J. Bowman    | Copeland           |
| P. Greatorex      | Observer           |
| Cllr H. Wormstrup | Copeland           |
| Cllr P. Ansell    | Cannock Chase      |
| Cllr E. Blake     | Newcastle-u- Lyme  |
| Cllr W. Mordue    | Doncaster          |
| Cllr K. Knight    | Doncaster          |
| Cllr S. Wright    | Rotherham          |
| T. O'Connell      | Rotherham          |
| Cllr T. O'Neill   | Warrington         |
| Cllr K. Rhodes    | Wakefield          |
| A. Dean           | Northumberland CC  |
| Cllr D. Ledger    | Northumberland CC  |
| J. Devon          | Hon. President     |
| Cllr V. Tyler     | Northumberland     |
| Cllr L. Wanger    | Stoke-on-Trent     |
| C. Hunton         | Stoke-on-Trent     |
| Cllr S. Manion    | Dover DC & Kent CC |
| J. Daly           | Sunderland         |
| N. Khan           | Derbyshire CC      |
| Cllr M. Grant     | North Lincolnshire |
| L. Farr           | North Lincolnshire |
| Cllr J Cottee     | Nottinghamshire CC |
| Cllr R. Hignett   | Halton             |
| Cllr A. Laing     | Durham CC          |

Cllr A. Napier  
M. Kipling  
Cllr E. Malcolm  
Cllr K. Jackson  
Cllr G. Gwillim  
Cllr W. Ayre  
S. Hurst

Durham CC  
Durham CC  
South Tyneside  
Staffordshire Moorlands  
Powys CC  
Redcar & Cleveland  
Wigan

### Apologies

Cllr G. Dunning  
G. Watson  
Cllr D. Davies  
Cllr K. Parry  
Cllr G. Webb  
B. Hill  
D. Hughes  
Cllr R. Heron  
Cllr S. Spencer  
Cllr S. Bainbridge  
Cllr W. Eckhardt  
Cllr R. Wellington  
H. Knowles  
Cllr D. Grant  
D. Hewet  
Cllr J. Kelly  
Cllr C. Ross  
S. Kendall  
Cllr P. Molyneux  
Cllr S. Allsop  
Cllr D. Wilcox  
Cllr J. Marshall  
Cllr G. Whelbourn

Redcar & Cleveland  
Cannock Chase  
Cannock Chase  
Northumberland  
Northumberland  
Dover  
Kent CC  
Sunderland  
Derbyshire CC  
North Lincolnshire  
North Lincolnshire  
Torfaen  
Furness Enterprise  
East Lothian  
East Ayrshire  
East Ayrshire  
Sheffield  
Forest of Dean  
Forest of Dean  
Derbyshire CC  
Derbyshire CC  
Torfaen  
Rotherham

## **2. Minutes of the National General Meeting of 16 October 2009**

2.1. Cllr Malcolm from South Tyneside and Cllrs Wilcox and Spencer from Derbyshire CC had attended the NGM but this had not been recorded in the minutes. It was agreed to correct this. The minutes were then agreed as a correct record and there were no matters arising.

## **3. National Worklessness Forum**

3.1. The meeting was informed that the National Chair, Cllr Watts, had been invited to join the Board of the National Worklessness Forum and he was congratulated on this. The Chair gave a report on the first meeting of the Forum.

3.2. After a full discussion on government policies to tackle unemployment, it was decided to ask the Secretariat to provide appropriate officer support to the Chair to help develop an Alliance perspective on the Forum.

#### **4. Future Jobs Fund**

4.1. The Alliance was continuing to promote the Future Job Fund in Alliance areas and had been in regular discussion with senior DWP officials to try to maximise the potential benefits of the fund. A series of briefing notes had been circulated by the Secretariat to help member authorities make successful bids.

4.2. Efforts had been made to improve the delivery of the fund and, in particular, to take more account of long-term jobless rather than young JSA claimants. The Secretariat had attended a best practice event in London on 3 December.

4.3. In discussion, reference was made to the need to monitor progress, the tendency for long-term unemployed to be missed out and the need to share best practice amongst Alliance local authorities.

#### **5. The impact of recession**

5.1. Details of the distribution and dissemination of the Alliance report, *The Impact of Recession on Unemployment in Industrial Britain*, were outlined to the meeting. This included media coverage, request for meetings with ministers, an event in the Scottish Parliament and options for debates in Westminster.

5.2. In addition, consideration was given to the role the Alliance could play to mitigate the effects of the expected cuts in public sector spending and employment. After a full discussion it was decided to keep a close watching brief on developments with a view to taking action if and when appropriate.

#### **6. Steel crisis**

6.1. The circulated report covered steel markets and production as well as planned meetings with government ministers to follow up the *Steel Summits* held earlier in the year. A meeting had also taken place with Corus to look at procurement issues and local authorities' role.

6.2. However, Cllr Ayre (Redcar and Cleveland) informed the meeting that Corus (Tata) had taken a decision to mothball the Teesside Cast Product plant at Redcar with the loss of 1,700 direct jobs and many more indirectly. The meeting offered the Alliance's full support to Redcar and Cleveland and the threatened workforce.

#### **7. National Audit Office report**

7.1. The National Audit Office plans to produce report on the regeneration in the English Coalfields in mid-December. The Alliance Secretariat commented on early drafts of the report. It is expected that the report will be submitted to the Public Accounts Committee in the New Year. The Secretariat was asked to monitor developments and respond appropriately.

#### **8. Coalfield regeneration review**

8.1. Informal discussions about a coalfield review similarly to the 1997-8 Coalfield Task Force had taken place with government and HCA officers. The future of the National

Coalfield Programme under the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), expected cuts in public sector spending and the outcome of the National Audit Office report on regeneration in the coalfields had provided the catalyst for these discussions. The meeting agreed that such a review could prove beneficial and asked the Secretariat to pursue it with government officials.

## **9. Coalfields Regeneration Trust**

9.1. The future and funding of the Coalfield Regeneration Trust (CRT) after 2011 was the subject of ongoing discussions following a presentation by the Chief Executive, Janet Bibby, at the Alliance Annual Conference. A meeting had taken place between three members of the Alliance National Executive and CRT to clarify the position. The Trust was seeking further funding but was obliged to make contingency plans should this not be available after 2011. The situation was further complicated because funding for CRT was a devolved matter. It was agreed to continue close liaison with CRT and provide support where appropriate.

## **10. Skills event: report back**

10.1. A meeting on skills with the minister, Kevin Brennan MP, took place on 28 October and this was reported on. To follow up the meeting the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Coalfield Communities Group, Dave Anderson MP, had written to the minister seeking meetings between the Alliance Secretariat and senior civil servants on skills issues.

10.2. In discussion, representatives expressed disappointment at the Minister's contribution having only attended the meeting for 30 minutes.

## **11. EU funding**

11.1. The Secretariat had been monitoring developments with regard to the future of EU Structural Funds for post-2013. Two members of the Secretariat had attended a RDA convened workshop in London on EU Structural Funds and this was reported on. In addition, a meeting was scheduled with civil servants at the Business, Innovation and Skills Department. The outcome of this would be reported to the next national meeting.

11.2. In discussion, it was commented that it will be the regional structure delivering the funding that will be a key issue. Also Alliance Scotland pointed out that although the Westminster government supported 're-nationalisation' of Structural Funds, the Scottish government had not yet adopted a position.

## **12. Homes and Communities Agency**

12.1. Relations with former English Partnership officers within HCA remained good but the direction of Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in the current economic climate was causing concern. It was reported that the Annual Open Meeting of the HCA had made no reference to coalfield programme and was almost entirely focussed on housing issues.

12.2. Despite a verbal commitment to organise an Annual Forum with the Alliance there had been no progress. It was agreed to continue to push for this event.

12.3. It was also decided that the National Alliance Chair should write to the Chair of the HCA, Robert Napier seeking a meeting to discuss the strategic focus of HCA.

12.4. The housing minister, John Healey MP, had agreed to take a briefing on non-traditional housing in Alliance areas and the Secretariat was in the process of collating information from local authorities with an interest.

### **13. Impact of local government re-organisation**

13.1. The creation of two new unitary county councils in the North East (Durham and Northumberland) impacts on future funding options. Acute localised socio-economic problems tend to be masked in aggregate statistics for counties. This is particularly important with regard to area-based grants such as Working Neighbourhood fund etc. A similar outcome could be expected were other county councils in England to reorganise as unitaries. A paper on the potential impact accompanied this agenda item.

13.2. It was agreed that the Industrial Communities Alliance should support Durham and Northumberland in efforts to ameliorate the effects of statistical aggregation on area-based grants and other forms of funding.

### **14. EUR-ACOM conference: report back**

14.1. A report back was received on the EUR-ACOM conference that had taken place in Poland. It was also reported that EUR-ACOM had been successful in securing an exchange of experiences project, PROSPECTS, part funded by the European Commission (INTERREG IVC). Wigan MBC is taking on the role of lead partner in the UK.

### **15. Alliance website**

15.1. Details of the new Industrial Communities Alliance website were outlined to the meeting.

15.2. In discussion, suggestions were made about possible improvements and ways of making it more effective as a campaigning tool.

### **16. Regional reports**

16.1. North West asked the meeting to welcome a new local authority member, Halton Borough Council, represented by Cllr Hignett. Scotland drew the meeting's attention to the Cross Party MSPs meeting. Wales expressed concern that Blaenau Gwent had withdrawn from membership.

16.2. Other regions indicated that all business had been covered on the main agenda.

### **17. Any other business**

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