

**The Alliance  
Minutes of the National General Meeting  
30 November 2007  
North Lincolnshire Council**

**Agenda item 2**

A civic welcome was given by Cllr Tony Ellerby, Mayor of North Lincolnshire Council.

This was the first National meeting since the death of the former Chair of Coalfield Communities Campaign, Bill Flanagan. The meeting was also informed of the death of two other representatives, Cllr Francis Griffin and Cllr George Tuck. Respect was shown in the usual way.

**1. Attendance and apologies**

Attendance

Cllr J Devon	National Chair
Steve Fothergill	National Secretariat
David Parry	“
Joan Dixon	“
Sam Malusky-Bacon	“
Phil O'Mara	“
Cllr K Sanderson	Barnsley
M Cantor	“
S Price Jones	N Lincolnshire
Cllr M Grant	“
R Egan	“
B Cowley	Knowsley
Cllr J Greer	“
Cllr P Kendall	Allerdale
Cllr T O'Neill	Warrington
Cllr K Cunliffe	Wigan
P Greatorex	Copeland
Cllr H Wormstrup	“
Cllr E Watts	Bolsover
Cllr C Cutting	Derbyshire
D Skinner	“
Cllr K Parry	Wansbeck
Cllr P Ansell	Cannock Chase
Cllr S Manion	Dover
Cllr C Hibberd	Kent
A Forster	Easington
Cllr J Griffiths	Brecon Beacons NP
Cllr G Gwillim	Powys
Cllr J Maitland	Easington
Cllr E Boden	Staffordshire
Cllr J Smith	Northumberland
Cllr A Napier	Easington
Cllr G Whelbourn	Rotherham
Cllr B Mordue	Doncaster
Cllr G Phelps	Wakefield

Cllr K Knight  
Cllr S Wright  
Cllr S Carroll

Doncaster  
Rotherham  
Nottinghamshire

### Apologies

Cllr B Wellington  
Cllr G Carlile  
C Hunton  
G Roebuck  
P Spurr  
Cllr E Rowbotham  
Cllr T Wykes  
Cllr E Blake  
Cllr K Jackson  
Cllr A Whittaker  
Cllr W Pickford  
B Hill

Torfaen  
Derbyshire  
Stoke on Trent  
Bolton  
NE Derbyshire  
Kent  
N Warwickshire  
Newcastle under Lyme  
Staffordshire Moorlands  
Barnsley  
Derbyshire  
Dover

## **2. Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of 19 October 2007**

2.1. Cllr J. Andrew and Cllr C. Hibberd were added to the list of apologies for the October meeting.

## **3. Lottery funding**

3.1. The main focus on this issue had been a Select Committee Inquiry. The Alliance had made a submission ratified by the seven elected National Officers. The submission contained details of the potential losses of lottery money outside of London and, in particular, in older industrial areas and argued for recompense from the disposal of Olympic assets.

3.2. The submission was ratified by the meeting and a discussion took place on how best to maximise its impact.

## **4. Westminster event**

4.1. The meeting was informed of the arrangements for the Westminster event jointly organised with the Labour Back Bench Group on Regeneration. Apart from a presentation by the Alliance, it was expected that there would be contributions from other MPs Groups such as the Coalfield Communities Group and the Steel and Metal Group. Alliance representatives were strongly encouraged to attend and to ask their MPs to do likewise.

## **5. Government review of regeneration**

5.1. Although the Comprehensive Spending Review had set the financial parameters up until 2013, the review of regeneration was ongoing. The Secretariat had met with Treasury officials and there were still issues around scrutiny, accountability and delegation of funds to be resolved. A consultation was expected some time early in the New Year.

5.2. In order to prepare to respond to that consultation the Secretariat suggested that, once the terms of reference were known, a national event could be organised. The purpose would be to help formulate a coherent response on behalf of the Alliance. This was agreed.

5.3. In discussion reference was made to: the role of Regional Ministers, relationships with RDAs, powers of scrutiny, core cities and city regions and the proposed Regional Economic Agencies. There was concern in particular about the involvement of 'principal' local authorities with a marginalised role for District and smaller Borough Councils.

## **6. PSA target for the regions**

6.1. The new Public Service Agreement Target for the regions was now set for 2008–2011. Although there had been some progress, for example the use of a wider range of indicators, the outcome was not all good news. Scotland and Wales were not incorporated into the target and there remained a number of questions about delivery through the RDAs. It was decided to monitor developments.

6.2. In discussion, it was noted that a range of government departments would now be involved and this could provide the opportunity for transport and housing issues to be better addressed.

## **7. Brownfield sites**

7.1. The Secretariat was in the process of developing activity on the issue of previously developed land. This had initially arisen as part of the Steel Action agenda on non-operational land holdings of the major steel producer, Corus. From initial investigations it was clear this was potentially a very important issue for older industrial areas in the Midlands, North, Scotland and Wales, where land values were lower.

7.2. Relationships with DCLG civil servants in charge of brownfield strategy were good as were prospects of further work with English Partnerships. Alliance involvement had been encouraged at meetings between the Secretariat, DCLG and EP.

7.3. It was considered particularly important that equivalent relationships be built up in Scotland and Wales to try to ensure a UK-wide response. A further report would be tabled at the next national meeting in January 2008.

## **8. Remploy closures**

8.1. In addition to the written report, recent developments were verbally relayed to the meeting. The Senior Vice-Chair, Cllr Eion Watts, with officer support from the Secretariat, had met senior managers at Remploy in Coventry. Subsequently, the Minister of State, Peter Hain MP had made an announcement on the revised closure and merger plans for Remploy factories.

8.2. Despite the progress made there was a strong feeling amongst Alliance representatives that the revised plans were still unacceptable. It was decided therefore to write to the Secretary of State expressing continuing concerns.

## **9. Presentation by North Lincolnshire Council**

9.1. A representative from North Lincolnshire Council gave a short presentation on their joint bid to the Big Lottery fund for the *Sustrans* cycle way project. Success in the bid relied on a television audience vote.

## **10. Coalfields Stakeholders Group**

10.1. Two meetings had taken place of the Coalfield Stakeholder Group that had been set up after the English Coalfields Conference in March 2007. These meetings were attended by the Alliance, English Partnerships (EP), Coalfields Regeneration Trust and civil servants from relevant government departments. One of the key outcomes was the setting up of pilot schemes for Coalfield Action Zones. EP had selected four possible locations for pilot schemes in the first instance.

10.2. A number of delegates questioned the process of selection. They asked whether other places could be considered, what criteria was being used to short list and if there was a timetable for the process. It was agreed to bring a fuller report to the next meeting.

## **11. English Partnerships coalfield sites**

11.1. This report covered changes in senior personnel at English Partnerships (EP) in its merger with the Housing Corporation to create the Homes and Communities Agency and the EP Annual Open meeting. A constructive meeting had taken place between the Secretariat, the outgoing and new EP Head of Coalfields. A number of Alliance representatives attended the Annual Meeting and it was reported that the Coalfields Programme featured strongly in speeches and presentations.

11.2. A request was made to look into reconvening the EP Annual Members Forum. It was agreed to do this.

## **12. Housing**

12.1. This item covered the English Partnerships (EP) and Alliance event in Doncaster on 18 October and more recent developments with regard to the new Homes and Communities Agency. It was reported that the EP Chair, Margaret Ford, had given a commitment at the EP Annual Meeting to further work on the housing needs of the North.

12.2. It was decided that pressure should be maintained on EP and its successor body with regard to housing issues and to explore parallel steps in Scotland and Wales.

## **13. Miners' pensions**

13.1. Two officers from the Secretariat had met with the new Chief Executive of Coal Pension Trustees. A request was made by the Secretariat for a meeting between representatives of the Trustees and Alliance elected officers. The Chief Executive agreed to make this request but could not ensure a positive response.

13.2. The expected meeting between coalfield MPs and the Energy Minister, Malcolm Wicks MP was now unlikely to happen. It was therefore decided to initiate some Parliamentary activity on the issue of pension surpluses through an Early Day Motion.

#### **14. Alliance membership**

14.1. Regions had been asked to explore the possibilities of regional launches of *The Other Half of Britain* report with invitations to potential new members. Each region gave an update on their plans to build and consolidate Alliance membership:

14.2. Midlands and South - Nottingham City had been approached and after an officer meeting there were plans to produce a newsletter;

14.3. North East – there were plans for a meeting in the New Year;

14.4. North West – a meeting with Andy Burnham, the MP for Leigh and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, would provide an opportunity in January;

14.5. Scotland – a work plan had been agreed to assist in approaches to potential new members. The revival of the liaison Group with MSPs was important to Alliance Scotland's activities;

14.6. Wales – Raising the profile of the Alliance with the Assembly was a key part of building the Alliance in Wales. The First Minister, Rhodri Morgan had turned down a request for a meeting but had offered a meeting with civil servants. Steve Thomas, head of the LGA in Wales, had attended the last meeting of Alliance Wales in Ebbw Vale.

14.7. Yorkshire and Humber – a meeting was planned for January to be attended by Yorkshire Forward. Unfortunately the Regional Minister, Caroline Flint MP, had informed the Regional Chair that she would not now attend.

#### **15. Regional reports**

15.1. This was dealt with under the previous item on regional activities and membership.

#### **16. Any other business**

16.1. The Chair raised the issue of the long-overdue EUR-ACOM Conference. It was agreed to bring this up with the EUR-ACOM Secretariat, ACOM France.

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