

Northants CALC 77th Annual Conference & AGM: A Day of Insight and Inspiration

On Saturday 5 October 2024, the Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (Northants CALC) held its 77th Annual Conference and AGM at the Moulton Community Centre. The event was a resounding success, bringing together 134 attendees, including 127 registered councillors and clerks representing seventy-six member councils. The day was filled with insightful presentations, important appointments, and well-deserved recognitions.

Welcome and Housekeeping

The day kicked off with a warm welcome from Northants CALC Deputy CEO, Lesley Sambrook Smith, who set the tone for the event. The meeting was chaired by Lynn Lavender, Chair of Northants CALC, who greeted delegates, guests, and sponsors, ensuring everyone felt included and ready for the day's proceedings.

Key Appointments

The AGM saw the reappointment of Jeffrey Greenwell as President for 2024/25. Jeffrey expressed his gratitude and excitement for continuing to serve the Association. Kate Brown Accountant was appointed as the auditor for the year ending 31 March 2025, ensuring the Association's financial integrity.

Eight directors were appointed en bloc for 2024/25, including David Fuller, Kate Houlihan, Lynn Lavender, Greg Lavers, Richard Lewis, Geoff Paul, Mike Scott, and Lynne Taylor. The board also bid farewell to retiring director Peter Allen, who was presented with a gift in appreciation of his service.

Annual Report Highlights

The Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2024 was received and noted. Key highlights included the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026, the launch of a new members' portal, and enhanced member engagement through training and conferences. Despite a small deficit, tight cost control led to a strong financial performance, underscoring the Association's role as a vital advocate for parish and town councils.

Subscription Levels

The board recommended and approved an increase in the Northants CALC membership fee by inflation (CPIH July 2024 – 3.1%) for the year starting 1 April 2025 and ending 31 March 2026. This adjustment ensures the Association can continue to provide valuable services and support to its members.

Engaging Presentations

Danny Moody, Northants CALC CEO, delivered two engaging presentations. The first, "Build-a-Councillor," focused on recruiting better councillors through modern, engaging vacancy notices. Danny emphasised the importance of creating a person specification for councillors to attract a new, professional breed of councillors, ultimately improving the council's efficiency and effectiveness.

In his second presentation, "Empowering Local Voices," Danny highlighted the role of local elections in increasing diversity and strengthening democracy. He discussed the upcoming Local Elections on 1 May 2025, where every seat on every parish and town council in Northamptonshire will be up for election. Danny stressed the importance of contested elections and provided practical tips for promoting candidacy.

Delegates then shared their ideas for how the sector can present itself more positively and how more people can be encouraged to come forward to stand for election in May 2025.

Awards and Recognitions

The conference also celebrated the achievements of various councils and individuals. Brixworth Parish Council was awarded Council of the Year, with Danny Moody commending their recovery and focus on serving the community. The award was presented by Northants CALC President, Jeffrey Greenwell, to the Clerk to Brixworth Parish Council, Josie Flavell, and Administrative Assistant, Gavin Kirkup.

Recognition Awards were given to officers who completed their Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) and to councils and individuals who achieved awards under the Councillor Development Framework (CDF) and Officer Development Framework (ODF). Moulton Parish Council was recognised for achieving Quality Gold under the Local Council Award Scheme, a testament to their high standards of governance and management.

Prize Draw and Closing Remarks

The event concluded with a prize draw, with Sarah Fox from Daventry Town Council emerging as the lucky winner. Lynn Lavender thanked all sponsors, exhibitors, delegates, and the team at Moulton Parish Council for their contributions to the event's success. Lynn also announced that the 78th Annual Conference & AGM will take place on Saturday 4 October 2025, at Moulton Community Centre, encouraging everyone to mark their calendars.

The 77th Annual Conference and AGM was a day of learning, networking, and celebration, reflecting the dedication and hard work of Northants CALC and its member councils. We look forward to another successful year ahead!