

Minutes of the 77th Annual Conference & AGM of the Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils

Held at Moulton Community Centre, Moulton
Saturday 5 October 2024

Item																											
<p>1. Welcome & housekeeping.</p> <p>Northants CALC Deputy CEO, Lesley Sambrook Smith opened the meeting and welcomed delegates. There were 134 attendees in total, with 127 registered councillors and clerks representing seventy-six member councils. The meeting was chaired by Lynn Lavender (LL), Chair of Northants CALC, who welcomed everyone to the meeting, including delegates, guests, and sponsors.</p>																											
<p>2. Appointment of President for 2024/25.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Jeffrey Greenwell be appointed as President for 2024/25. Jeffrey thanked everyone and said that it was a continuing honour and privilege to serve the Association.</p>																											
<p>3. Appointment of Auditor for the year ending 31 March 2025.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Kate Brown Accountant be appointed as the auditor for the year ending 31 March 2025.</p>																											
<p>4. Appointment of Directors for 2024/25.</p> <p>The Appointments Panel recommended the following for appointment at the AGM:</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>No.</th><th>Name</th><th>Qualifying Council</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1.</td><td>David Fuller</td><td>Oundle Town Council</td></tr><tr><td>2.</td><td>Kate Houlihan</td><td>Far Cotton & Delapre Community Council</td></tr><tr><td>3.</td><td>Lynn Lavender</td><td>Ashton Parish Council</td></tr><tr><td>4.</td><td>Greg Lavers</td><td>Silverstone Parish Council</td></tr><tr><td>5.</td><td>Richard Lewis</td><td>Rushden Town Council</td></tr><tr><td>6.</td><td>Geoff Paul</td><td>Moulton Parish Council</td></tr><tr><td>7.</td><td>Mike Scott</td><td>Great Addington Parish Council</td></tr><tr><td>8.</td><td>Lynne Taylor</td><td>Daventry Town Council</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>RESOLVED: That the eight candidates be appointed en bloc as directors for the year 2024/25. LL called upon Jeffrey Greenwell to present retiring director, Peter Allen, with a gift from the board of directors. Peter said that he had enjoyed his time immensely and that clerks and councillors in Northamptonshire were “a brilliant bunch!”. He said that although he is retiring, he will continue to follow the progress of the Association and the sector with great interest. LL welcomed the one new director, Greg Lavers, to the board saying that he had been selected from a very high calibre shortlist of candidates.</p>	No.	Name	Qualifying Council	1.	David Fuller	Oundle Town Council	2.	Kate Houlihan	Far Cotton & Delapre Community Council	3.	Lynn Lavender	Ashton Parish Council	4.	Greg Lavers	Silverstone Parish Council	5.	Richard Lewis	Rushden Town Council	6.	Geoff Paul	Moulton Parish Council	7.	Mike Scott	Great Addington Parish Council	8.	Lynne Taylor	Daventry Town Council
No.	Name	Qualifying Council																									
1.	David Fuller	Oundle Town Council																									
2.	Kate Houlihan	Far Cotton & Delapre Community Council																									
3.	Lynn Lavender	Ashton Parish Council																									
4.	Greg Lavers	Silverstone Parish Council																									
5.	Richard Lewis	Rushden Town Council																									
6.	Geoff Paul	Moulton Parish Council																									
7.	Mike Scott	Great Addington Parish Council																									
8.	Lynne Taylor	Daventry Town Council																									
<p>5. To approve the minutes of the 76th AGM held on 7 October 2023</p> <p>The minutes were approved as a true and correct record of the meeting and were signed by the chair.</p>																											

6. To receive the Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2024

LL commended the Annual Report and Accounts to the AGM, highlighting the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026, launching a new members' portal, and enhancing member engagement through training and conferences. Tight cost control led to a strong financial performance, despite a small deficit. The Association is a vital advocate for parish and town councils, and it continues to work hard on key issues such as funding, devolution, and place shaping.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report & Accounts be received and noted.

7. To determine subscription levels for the year ending 31 March 2026.

The board of directors recommends that the per council element of the Northants CALC membership fee for the year starting 1 April 2025 and ending 31 March 2026 be increased by inflation (CPIH July 2024 – 3.1%) from £193.05 to £199.03. Further, the board of directors recommends that the per elector element of the Northants CALC membership fee for the year starting 1 April 2025 and ending 31 March 2026 be increased by inflation (CPIH July 2024 – 3.1%) from 28.97 pence to 29.87 pence.

Larger councils (10,000 – 30,000 electorate) are charged a fixed fee for membership of Northants CALC. The fee for the year starting 1 April 2024 and ending 31 March 2025 is £3,088.72. A 3.1% increase would take it to £3,184.47. The total fee payable for YE 31 March 2026 will therefore be (£3,184.47 + NALC Affiliation fee). The equivalent fee for super councils (30,000 + electors) would be increased from £5,610.94 to £5,784.88. The total fee payable will therefore be (£5,784.88 + NALC £2,139.00).

Parish Meetings with less than 100 electors AND no precept are offered affiliate membership for 2024/25 free of charge. The maximum fee that any council or parish meeting pays is capped at £1 per elector.

RESOLVED: That the board's recommendations be approved.

8. Build-a-Councillor – Recruiting the Best

Northants CALC CEO, Danny Moody, gave a presentation called "Build-a-Councillor", which set out the premise that there could (and should) be a person specification for a councillor and that parish and town councils can use it to help recruit better councillors. DM said that if a councillor vacancy notice was a boring, stuffy, local government notice then it won't attract good new councillors, whereas a punchy, modern ad, based on the council's design for the "perfect" councillor (which will vary from council to council) would have a better chance of attracting a new, modern, professional breed of councillor. Over time, this will improve the quality of the councillor team and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the council.

9. Empowering Local Voices: The Role of Elections in Parish and Town Councils

DM made a short introductory presentation confirming the upcoming Local Elections on 1 May 2025, where every seat on every parish and town council in Northamptonshire will be up for election. The close of nominations is expected to be on 3 April 2025. Local elections are a vital way to increase diversity, strengthen democracy, and improve community governance. There have been too many uncontested elections in previous years, and it will be a big challenge to encourage candidacy for 2025 due to a drop in volunteering since COVID-19 and the effects of Local Government Reorganisation. DM highlighted the benefits of contested elections, emphasising the importance of a strong mandate and accountability while acknowledging the potential costs and extra work involved.

After the introductory presentation, the discussion was opened to the floor. The comments and representations made by delegates fell broadly into two categories: 1) The reputation/image/standing of the council and of the sector, and 2) Practical hints and tips for how to promote the opportunity to become a councillor at the Local Elections in May 2025.

Several delegates said that parish or town councils should better promote what they do so that potential candidates know that becoming a councillor is valuable and important to the community. It is difficult to attract candidates if the council does not have a good reputation and no one knows what it does. Councils can pick three "wins" from the past year and promote them heavily as a way of "selling" the council as a good, active, and purposeful organisation. Delegates said that the whole sector needs a reboot, citing the name "parish council" as anachronistic and confusing and that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) had a role to play in improving the image of the sector.

Delegates spoke about the need to provide information to potential delegates in multiple formats, including short videos that can be used on websites and social media. The importance and effectiveness of approaching people directly and talking to them about the role of councillor was also highlighted.

After the elections, new councillors could be asked to sign a “contract” that reaffirms the culture of the council and the expectations of new councillors (based on the Build-a-Councillor concept).

At the end of the discussion, LL thanked delegates for participating so enthusiastically and for all the good ideas and thoughts that had been shared.

10. Council of the Year Award

DM read out the commendation for the Council of the Year, which was awarded to Brixworth Parish Council. DM said: *“In every case I can think of where a council has pulled through troubled times, the key ingredients needed were 1) a very competent, knowledgeable, and proactive clerk 2) an engaged, open, and inclusive chair, and 3) and, perhaps most important of all, a proper balance between the two with respect for each other’s distinct role and responsibilities. It’s those three things that have come together so well at this council in recent years and have been the foundations on which the council has been rebuilt. I’m sure it isn’t perfect – no council ever is – but this council has recovered massively and is back to doing brilliant things for its community. It is a council that is once again focused outwardly – focused on what it can do for the people it serves.”*

The award was presented by Northants CALC President, Jeffrey Greenwell to the Clerk to Brixworth Parish Council, Josie Flavell, and Administrative Assistant, Gavin Kirkup with a presentation of a hamper of luxury goodies from Jodie Midlane from key sponsor Wicksteed Playgrounds.

11. Recognition Awards - CiLCA, Councillor Development Framework, Officer Development Framework, and LCAS Awards

LL recognised the officers that had completed their Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) since the last conference:

Firstname	Surname	Council
Carrie	Gardner-Pett	Daventry Town Council
Carrie	Goodridge	Billing Parish Council
Emma	Fontaine	Welton Parish Council
Julie	Thorneycroft	Northampton Town Council
Kathy	Hale	Brackley Town Council
Pat	Bird	Cranford Parish Council
Ruth	Gasson	Moulton Parish Council
Steve	Beech	Raunds Town Council

LL then announced that Moulton Parish Council has achieved Quality Gold under the Local Council Award Scheme. This is the highest level and is testament to the governance, management and very high standard of the council. A small gift was presented by Jeffery Greenwell to the Chair of Moulton Parish Council, Cllr David Aarons, Clerk/Executive Officer, Jane Austin, and Parish Administrator, Ruth Gasson. David Aarons said that he was honoured to have the award, and he formally recognised Jane, Ruth, and Cllr Stephen Fehnert for their hard work in compiling the evidence for the award submission.

LL then recognised the councillors that have achieved an award under the Councillor Development Framework (CDF) – Malcolm Callan, Wootton Parish Council, Stuart Shrubbs, Roade Parish Council, and Vicky Gould, Earls Barton Parish Council.

And finally, LL then recognised the clerks that have achieved an award under the Officer Development Framework (ODF) – Amy Holt, Hartwell Parish Council, Alison Reynolds, Wootton Parish Council, and Vicki Horton, Roade Parish Council.

12. Prize Draw & Closing Remarks

DM asked Peter Allen to draw the winner of the prize draw. The winner was Sarah Fox from Daventry Town Council.

LL thanked all the sponsors and exhibitors, the parish and town council delegates, the team at Moulton Parish Council for hosting, and the staff at Northants CALC for putting the whole event together.

13. Close.

LL announced that the 78th Annual Conference & AGM will take place on Saturday 4 October 2025 at Moulton Community Centre, and she asked people to put the date in their diaries.

The conference closed at 12:56 p.m.

Signed: _____

Date: _____