



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NACO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
held on Monday 5 October 2020 via Zoom commencing at 1015 hours**

Present:

Gill Allwright Retired Civic Officer Treasurer
Jim Babbington Retired Member, Vice Chair
Jackie Cansick Stevenage Borough Council
Christine Christensen, Ipswich Borough Council
Ruth Darby Sandwell Council
Deborah Donovan Peacehaven Town Council
Vanessa Etheridge Sevenoaks District Council
Tracy Frisby N E Lincolnshire Council
Fiona Garth Lewes Town Council
Alex Kowalczyk Former Civic Officer
Penny Harrison Retired Member, Secretary
Margaret Humphrey London Borough of Camden
Liz McCarthy Adur and Worthing Councils
Paul Mayhew Brentwood Borough Council
Paul Millward Nottingham City Council, Chair
Phil O'Brien Erewash Borough Council
Alison Orde St Albans City and District Council
Clare Richardson North Kesteven District Council
Emara Roth Exeter City Council
Derek Scott, London Borough of Havering
Pat Seager Epping Forest District Council Vice Chair
Andrea Thwaite Cheshire West and Chester Council
Irene Webster Retired Civic Officer
Beverley Wilson Retired Clerk to the Lieutenancy

1	Welcome	
1.1	The Chair thanked all for joining in this second meeting to be held by zoom.	
	It was noted that the meeting would be recorded but that in accordance with data protection rules the recording would be deleted as soon as the minutes were written or in any event within 7 days.	
2	Apologies	
2.1	Apologies for absence were received from Jacqui Brazil, LB Southwark, Sue Dunkley, Erewash Borough Council, Gary Clift, Cambridge City Council and Linda McElligott, North Norfolk District Council	
3..	Minutes of last meeting, 16 June 2020, held via zoom – accuracy and matters arising	
	Accuracy:	
3.1	The minutes were approved.	
	Matters Arising:	
3,2	5.2 The situation was unchanged as the Chair said he and Phil had still not yet been able to update the fact sheets but would do so as soon as time allowed.	Paul. Phil
3.3	5.3 A little progress had been made on sending pictures to Pat and everyone was asked to do this as soon as possible. Alison said she had some and would liaise with Pat.	Pat Alison and All
3.4	5.5 Penny had confirmed with Alison that any personal data she held through Survey Monkey had been deleted in line with GDPR.	
3.5	14.1 Phil said he had heard from the underwriters through whom we had taken out our insurance that the company we were with were no longer providing the type of insurance we hold and they were actively seeking an alternative. This would have to be in place by the time the current insurance runs out in the middle of November. The Treasurer was authorised to pay such an insurance provided there was not a substantial difference to the current price. If there was she should discuss it with the Chair and Vice Chairs.	Phil Gill
3.6	15.1 There had been no further action on Local Training Events mainly due to the pandemic	
3.7	21.5 The possibility of holding hybrid meetings had been discussed at the last meeting and Phil had been asked to investigate. Phil said that it seemed to be quite complex and there were several problems associated with it. This was endorsed by several members of the Executive.	

4.	Chair's Report	
4.1	The Chair said he was sorry about his input to NACO this year. Life has been frantic and overwhelming, and having listened, as he prepared his report, to a press conference from the Government Advisors, he was no doubt that his input to NACO this year will continue to be paltry. Most of his NACO work had been done at weekends in the last couple of years, but now he just caught up with work and sleep!	
4.2	He went on to say that when the Executive met by zoom in June even he was of the opinion that by the Spring of next year there was a good chance that NACO would be able to have a face to face Training Event. He felt we were now looking a second wave from Covid in the face and that during this meeting the Executive would be planning the next few months in a very different format from the past.	
4.3	Although he had had very little involvement with the day to day running of NACO during the past few weeks he had been involved in one or two significant matters which were now separate items on the Agenda.	
4.4	Finally, he said, he wanted to thank the other Officers for making sure that NACO has continued to flourish and grow even with such an absentee Chair!	
5	Treasurer's Report	
5.1	The Treasurer presented the 2019 end of year accounts which are shown at Appendix 1 and said that these had yet to be audited but that this would be done very shortly.	
5.2	She also presented a general report and Income and Expenditure Accounts for the two November Training Events and these are shown at Appendices 2, 3 and 4 respectively.	
5.3	The Executive noted that we were holding money as credits towards future training costs on behalf of delegates who were to have attended the cancelled Training Event in March 2020.	
5.4	It was agreed that after deduction of the above money and sums to be paid for insurance and the website in the next few weeks the Association was financially stable.	
5.5	Alison also reminded the Executive she was holding money on behalf of the Association for payment to Survey Monkey when it was next required.	
5.6	Gill said that she had been in contact with the bank to enable Pat and Tracy to have access to the accounts and to be able to operate them on-line. Pat and Tracy said they would communicate direct with Gill to see what information was required from them at the earliest opportunity.	Gill Pat Tracy
5.7	There were still outstanding invoices in respect of the Training Events in November and Gill said she had asked Margaret to help her to telephone the authorities involved.	Gill Margaret

6.	Secretary's Report	
6.1	The Secretary said she was very pleased to report that membership over the past 12 months has increased by over 24%. There were now over 925 members.	
6.2	She had incorporated the work of the Membership Secretary with that of Secretary in 2015 and first reported the numbers to the Executive in September 2015 when there were 367 members. By the time the Executive met in Canterbury in 2017 there was a membership of about 560. In two years that grew to 745, an increase of 185 but in the next 12 months that has grown by a further 180. This, she said, was a reflection on how much NACO is valued and the speed at which it is now growing.	
6.3	Since the Executive met in the summer it has become increasingly obvious from the queries being sent to NACO that members are concerned about how they proceed in both the Covid and post Covid periods. Thanks to Phil she had been able to distribute advice to members which from the correspondence she received they find extremely helpful. She went on to say that there has been increased use of the message board where members are exchanging views on how to work. As often as possible she referred members to the message board.	
6.4	The distribution of newsletters is obviously very important to our members and it is clear that each time one goes out there is a rush of new members and she believed this is through word of mouth from existing members saying how useful a newsletter has been.	
6.4	She had been looking in particular at the balance of membership and have asked that this be brought up as a separate item on the Agenda.	
6.5	As usual she has continued to answer all queries received from members over the past few months and forward them to the best qualified person to respond as well as dealing with the normal NACO Secretary's duties.	
6.6	Thanks were expressed to the Secretary for her work.	
7	Training Report	
7.1	Christine said she had not mentioned at the last meeting that Irene had been to a Training Day run by Councillor Skills just before lockdown and reported back.	
7.2	Christine gave a report, attached to these Minutes as Appendix 5, on the situation regarding training and the possible ways forward in the climate which now existed.	
7.3	She said she had written to Ronnie and Marilyn with the idea of moving to a virtual model and had asked for their thoughts. She had heard from them that they were not equipped to undertake this but would still like to undertake face to face training and did have one authority who would be running their course in the Spring of 2021. They asked to be kept informed of anyone who wanted a face to face training event and also asked to learn the outcome of this meeting and Christine said she would do this.	Christine

7.4	There was discussion about the method by which virtual training would be delivered, ie Zoom or MST Teams, as there were advantages and disadvantage in both. No conclusion was reached.	
7.5	It was agreed to put together a structured outline for on-line training which could include localised training. A Training Sub-Group of Christine, Irene, Penny, Phil and Tracy was appointed and which would report back to the Executive at the earliest opportunity.	Christine Irene Penny Phil Tracy
8.	Website	
8.1	This continues to work well.	
8.2	It was agreed that if a photograph of the zoom meeting could be taken this should go on the website. Pat said she had taken some pictures during the meeting and she would forward these to Penny to go on the website.	Pat Penny
8.3	Phil was asked to look into the possibility of putting videos on the website and he said he would take advice on this.	Phil
9.	NACO Training Event and AGM 2021	
9.1	During part of the discussion on this item the Chair had to leave the meeting for a short while on business and in his absence the Chair was taken by Vice Chair, Pat.	
9.2	It was agreed that all Training and General Meetings for the foreseeable future would have to be virtual.	
9.3	It was agreed that in place of the planned two-day training event which was to have been in Birmingham in March 2021 and included the AGM, a one-day virtual Training Day would be held.	
9.4	Pat was asked that she inform Anne Kennedy in Birmingham of this decision and Pat confirmed by the end of the meeting that she had done this.	Pat
9.5	The virtual Training Event would be held on 24 March 2021 which was the first of the two days on which the 2021 Training Event was to have been held.	
9.6	Alex said she had attended some virtual conferences in recent months and recommended that the production of the on-line training should be undertaken by a specialist company.	
9.7	In view of the fact that, although the Executive was very experienced at delivering the contents of the Training, they had no experience of running a virtual Training Event on this type and it was agreed that a professional organisation be appointed..	
9.8	Although it would be relatively expensive to appoint a firm in this way because it was an on-line event other expenses which were normally associated with a Training Event would not be incurred.	
9.9	Alex was asked to contact a firm that could arrange such an event and report back as soon as possible.	Alex
9.10	There were basically three parts to the organisation of an online Training Event – Content, Technology and Administration.	

9.11	Content - The Sub Committee would put together a programme which hopefully would include a keynote speaker along workshops and include the AGM. The workshops could include an update on OLB and a look forward to the Platinum and other Anniversaries, Performance Management within the Civic Office, the Relationship between the Civic Head and the Civic Officer, Remembrance Day in the future and how to create a Green Civic Office.	
9.12	The Budget and Delegate Rate for the event was discussed and these are shown at Appendix 6.	
9.13	It was hoped that the lower delegate rate would enable NACO members from authorities with smaller budgets to attend.	
9.14	NACO held credits on behalf of delegates who had been due to attend the Training Event in March 2020 which had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. The Executive noted that this could mean that some authorities would register more delegates for the virtual event as the fee was considerably lower. It was agreed that there would be a special offer if 3 delegates from the same authority attended.	
9.15	The Treasurer would continue to refund any sums held on behalf of previous delegates or hold them as a credit against future training, whichever was preferable to an Authority.	Gill
9.16	The question of the method of delivery, be it by Zoom or MST Teams was raised and it was agreed this would be discussed with the production company.	
9.17	Tracy would liaise with the members of the Sub Committee to organise a virtual meeting as soon as possible to take the matter forward.	Tracy
9.18	The aim was to announce the event by the end of October and launch the "brochure" by the end of November.	
9.19	A Training Event Sub Committee was created and this consisted of Tracy (Sub Committee Co-ordinator), Alex, Jim, Pat, Penny and Phil.	Tracy Alex Jim Pat Penny Phil
10	Exec Members delivering multiple workshops – ownership of material and fee to be paid from income derived	
10.1	Phil presented a report which is shown in Appendix 7 and it was proposed by Paul Mayhew and seconded by Christine that his recommendations were accepted. This was agreed unanimously.	
10.2	A Sub Committee of Pat, Andrea, Christine and Ruth was appointed to develop the initial model as recommended in the report. Phil would be available for consultation.	Pat Andrea Christine Phil Ruth

11.	Civic Office of the Year Awards 2020	
11.1	At the last meeting of the Executive it had been agreed that the 2020 Awards would reflect the situation that Civic Offices are in because of Covid. A Report on the format of the 2020 Awards by Pat, Christine and Penny is attached at Appendix 8.	
11.2	Christine presented the Report and the Executive accepted it in principle but agreed that rather than have two separate categories all entrants be asked to make a two-part submission.	
11.3	Part 1 would consist of information showing how the Civic Office responded to working during lockdown.	
11.4	Part 2 would consist of information showing how the Civic Office is looking forward to keeping Civic Heads relevant to the community as local authorities move forward whilst keeping within changing guidelines.	
11.5	It was agreed that submissions could either be in writing or by video or a combination of both.	
11.6	The best submission in either Part 1 or Part 2 would each receive a prize of £500.	
11.7	Christine would, as usual, Chair the panel of Judges which would consist of herself, Alex, Christine, Emara, Pat, Paul Mayhew and Tracy.	Christine Alex Christine Emara Pat Paul Mayhew Tracy
11.8	Emara said she had access to some guidance on the production of videos in this sort of situation and would send it to Christine.	Emara Christine
11.9	It was important to explain when launching the scheme that it is the content which is being judged and not the quality of any production and also that the judges do take the size and type of the authority into consideration when making their assessments.	
11.10	Christine, would revise the report and discuss the new criteria with the Judges and Penny prior to launching the scheme during the week commencing 2 November with submissions to be received by the end of January 2021.	Christine Alex Christine Emara Pat Paul Mayhew Tracy Penny
12	Communications Officer's Report and items for future Newsletters	
12.1	The Communications Officer said that, since the Executive last met in June, 4 newsletters had been distributed.	
12.2	It was agreed that a second newsletter with suggestions about how to mark Remembrance Sunday should be sent out hopefully by 9 October.	Phil
12.3	A further, more general, newsletter would be sent out shortly after this and would contain the first information about the virtual Training Event in March and the upcoming launch of Civic Office of the Year.	Phil

12.4	It was felt that with the move to virtual Training it would be appropriate for the newsletters to contain videos and Phil said he would investigate the possibility of having a You Tube Channel.	Phil
13	Business Plan	
13.1	The current Business Plan which had been distributed to the Executive prior to the meeting was discussed and it was agreed that only an addition to Priority 1 of the “development of on-line training” along with some very minor amendments was needed to make it suitable for the next 3 years.	
13.2	Phil said he would go through the document and make the necessary amendments before uploading it to the website.	Phil
14.	Membership Statistics	
14.1	The Secretary said she had been analysing some of the statistics to be gained from the membership database and her Report is at Appendix 9.	
14.2	She asked they felt this was a useful tool and if she should continue.	
14.3	It was agreed the information was useful and if and when the Secretary had time she should continue to extract this.	
14.4	It was agreed that as there was now such a high proportion of members who were classed as “Parish” it would be a good idea to split this between Town and Parish on the membership form. Penny would organise this.	Penny
14.5	The Secretary said she would try and work through the current membership and work out which authorities are towns and which are parishes so there is a better idea of the split.	Penny
14.6	She was also asked if she could look at the geographical regions represented by members of the NACO Executive to see if there are areas from which future members of the Executive should come.	Penny
15.	Update on OLB and transitional arrangements	
15.1	A newsletter written by Jim had been circulated to all members in August concerning OLB during covid.	.
15.2	A front page for the website should be prepared by Jim and Penny for use when necessary.	Jim Penny
16	Proposed NHS Social Care & Frontline Workers Day – 5 July 2021	
16.1	The Chairman referred to the correspondence he had with Bruno Peek and which had been circulated to the Executive but which the Secretary was asked to recirculate.	Penny
16.2	He asked the Executive to ratify his decision that NACO would support Bruno’s endeavours to have a national day in recognition of the work undertaken by staff in these categories during the pandemic.	
16.3	The Executive was happy to endorse the Chair’s decision.	
16.4	The Chair reminded the Executive that Bruno had asked for photographs and members were asked to send suitable ones to Penny.	Penny and All

16.5	The Chair was asked to remind Bruno that it might be nice to include pictures of Civic Heads other than just Lord Mayors or Mayors.	Paul
17	Date and Venue/Type of next meeting	
17.1	It was agreed that the next meeting would have to be by Zoom and this would be on a date in January to be agreed by the Chair, Vice Chairs, Secretary and Alex and should be in the 2 nd or 3 rd week of January 2021.	
18	Thanks to Host	
18.1	The Chair thanked Phil for the use of his zoom business account	
19	Any Other Business	
19.1	A general discussion was held around the problems of marking Remembrance Day this year and several suggestions were put forward.	
19.2	Phil said he would include these in the newsletter planned for later in the week.	Phil
19.3	Both the Chair, Paul, and Vice Chair, Pat, thanked members of the Executive for the good wishes they had sent them when each had recently reached a certain age of seniority!	

The meeting closed at 1330

Penny Harrison,
Secretary,
NACO

June 2020

APPENDIX 5

Report relating NACO Training & Councillor Skills (Item 6)

2020 has been an unprecedented year for everyone with our personal and working lives affected by the Coronavirus pandemic in ways we never imagined. And looking forward it is likely the virus will continue to affect our daily lives for several months and possibly years to come.

The past few months have pushed us all into embracing new ways of working, staying home, using virtual tools and social media. We have learnt to become “virtual” savvy, learning new skills where necessary to continue to deliver services for our Civic Heads and local authorities.

As we all know, NACO training became a casualty of the pandemic with the cancellation of our NACO’s Training Day in March and only one Councillor Skills Seminar being delivered on 12th March at Bradford, before lock down occurred.

But perhaps there are some positives to come out of this situation? Could now be the time to consider how we continue to deliver relevant and appropriate training to our members and Civic Heads going forward. Could our training be delivered more effectively and more locally using “virtual” skills?

Some thoughts for discussion:

- NACO members have the knowledge and skills to be able to provide our Civic training.
- Training could be targetted, relevant and appropriate for today’s Civic Office, Civic Head and local authorities, especially as we move forward and out of the pandemic.
- Training could be “specialised” and help to provide more localised networking.
- Training could be time-limited and bite-sized.
- More people might attend if they didn’t have to travel and give up a whole day.
- It would need to be costed appropriately, but the hosts would still benefit.

Finally, I have written to Ronnie and Marilyn with the idea of moving to a virtual model and have asked for their thoughts.

I look forward to discussing these ideas with you at our Executive Meeting.

Christine Christensen
Training Officer
October 2020

APPENDIX 7

Executive Members delivering multiple workshops – ownership of material and fee to be paid from income derived (Item 10)

BACKGROUND

Throughout our 25-year history, much of the training offered to our members has been delivered by other members, usually experienced through years as a practitioner, or with a particular interest in an area of civic work.

These sessions (almost exclusively workshops at annual training days) have been written and delivered without payment, other than attendance expenses.

At those training days we issue questionnaires, asking if workshops might be worth running on a regional basis. Whilst the response may often be yes, NACO has yet to devise a methodology to deliver repeating workshops.

In October 2017, this executive approved, in principle, a model for regional presentation of the Performance Management workshop, running on a semi-commercial basis, to provide a fee to the workshop leader and income to any hosting authority. NACO would have derived no income, as this is a similar model to that used by 'Councillor Skills' over the past decade or so.

In the event there was no take-up when the idea was promoted in the newsletter, so the model was never tested.

In other agenda items at this meeting, there will be consideration of how to manage our Training Day and AGM in the virtual world and how to deliver future training sessions in that same environment. We might expect an increased interest and attention in online training, as it is more accessible, particularly to small authorities with slim training budgets.

A PROPOSAL

Whilst keynote speakers can deliver to dozens or even hundreds of delegates through Webinar technology, which includes a text format Q&A function, there is a big challenge to retain the interactive nature of our most successful workshops. In the virtual world workshops work best with small numbers, so delegates have an opportunity to talk to the workshop leader and fellow participants.

To achieve this the workshop may have to be delivered on multiple occasions, which greatly increases workload for the workshop leader stretching the goodwill, which gets us through our annual events so inexpensively.

An obvious example of such a workshop might be Operation London Bridge updates, which seem perennially popular with our members.

The subject knowledge is concentrated in one executive member (Jim) and it might need delivering 10-15 times each time there is a significant update. It could even be done on a county-by-county basis, so over 50 opportunities. Is it fair to ask Jim, or anyone else on a different topic, to do that without some financial reward?

Because the hosting is done online, there are no venue costs and there should be an opportunity for NACO to make income over and above the payment of a fee to the workshop leader. There would be administrative costs as there would be delegate fees to levy and collect and, to maintain confidentiality, time spent on registration and checking in of delegates, to create a more secure environment than that which we are using for today's meeting.

It would be beneficial for us to trial workshop models in the coming months - before we attempt a complex, potentially large scale, multi-workshop, webinar keynote and AGM at our Training Day next March.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That we approve trial workshops, delivered online, with a delegate fee, payable to NACO, from which a fee is paid to the workshop leader and to whoever takes on the additional administrative role.
2. That a subgroup be established to include a minimum of one Vice Chair, the Training Officer and two others, to develop the initial model, for live testing before the end of the year.
3. That the subgroup report back with recommendations as to the ownership of workshop material and intellectual copyright (NACO or the workshop author/leader)

Philip O'Brien
Communications Officer
October 2020

APPENDIX 8

Report relating to the Civic Office of the Year Awards 2020 (Item 11)

2020 has been an unprecedented year for everyone and officers working in Civic Offices have faced challenges which none of them had ever really envisaged.

The Award for 2020 was discussed at the meeting of the Executive held June 2020 and it was felt that in the circumstances the Civic Office of the Year Award, which it had been agreed would run every 2 years with the 2020 Award being the first one to be run on a biennial basis, would be specifically aimed at how Civic Officers responded to the 2020 difficulties.

Pat Seager, Christine Christensen and Penny Harrison were asked to report to the Autumn meeting of the Executive with proposals as to how the 2020 Awards should be run and have the following proposals:

There should be two Awards for 2020 –

- the first Award would be for the Civic Office which came up with the most innovative ways of working remotely during the pandemic
- the second Award would be for the Civic Office which tells us how it is looking forward to keeping Civic Heads relevant to the community as local authorities move forward in a world is very changed.

Each Award should receive a £500 prize. (As there was no prize in 2019 because the Awards were to become biennial a total of £1,000 for 2 years seems appropriate).

Certificates for Highly Commended could be awarded but that there should be no restriction on the numbers of these for each Award – there might be none or there could be several depending on what the Judges felt.

The scheme would be launched around the beginning of November and entries need to be received by the end of January. Those entering would be asked to explain what they have been doing or planned to do on no more than 10 pages of A4.

Although the idea was that the award would be made to coincide with the year we have a 2 day event as things now stand it is not known when this will happen again so the Executive may feel it appropriate to make the Award remotely.

We are suggesting that there should be different Judging Panels for each Award and that as before Christine should act as the Co-ordinator.

Christine Christensen
Penny Harrison
Pat Seager

October 2020

APPENDIX 9

Membership Statistics (Item 14)

I started looking at some of the statistics in August following an exchange of emails with Sue Dunkley who was keen to encourage her local colleagues to join.

I emailed her as follows:

So far as your point about encouraging parishes and town councils is concerned it is very variable around the country. We actually have 893 members at the moment and of them at a quick count, which had to be manual as the words Parish and Town come up as much as three times in the details of a member, we have 236 members from Charter Trustees, Towns and Parishes which is approaching 40 % of the membership which is astonishing and actually makes me think we should focus a bit more on them.

I frequently find that if one parish in an area joins then the others follow suit - I had 6 from the West Midlands region join in quick succession the other day.

I had some discussions a week or so ago with Dianne Dorrell from Shropshire who was asking about the towns in Shropshire and, of the eight major towns, 6 are members.

I wonder if, rather than saying we need to encourage parishes in particular, we should look at the balance of our membership and see where we think we need to encourage. I could prepare a breakdown showing which regions and which types of authorities are represented in those regions. Some areas might need to encourage parishes which seems to be the case with Erewash whereas others might find we are light on Boroughs for example. There is definitely a herd mentality because, for example, I had a new member from Carlisle the other day and 10 minutes later I had an application from South Lakeland which is also in Cumbria.

I just checked and we have 92 members who have said they come from the East Midlands but that may not be absolutely accurate as I have found that some people do not know which area they come from as sometimes I know they have given me the wrong region or I have even had 2 members from the same authority join on the same day but say they come from different regions.

I analysed our membership as follows:

Members by type of authority

Unitary	73
Metropolitan	53
County/City	159
Borough/District	346
Town/Charter Trustees	100
Parish	151
Retired	9

Again, I should say there might be some inaccuracies in that because people from the same authority do not always give the same information.

Having got the above information I used the East Midlands area as an example and extracted the following:

East Midlands

92 Members of which

6 represent Unitaries

15 represent County/City

53 represent Borough/District

17 represent parishes (which includes towns)

Unitaries:

Leicester, Nottingham, Peterborough, Rutland

Cities:

Derby, Lincoln,

Counties:

Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire

From this I could see at a glance that there were only 17 parishes/towns which is 18%, much lower in that region than the overall 40% of membership.

I looked on Wikipedia and there are 35 towns listed in Lincolnshire alone. We are clearly light on towns in Lincolnshire for example.

I am wondering if we need to ask our new members to be more specific when they join as to the type of Authority. Currently Parish covers Towns as well and I think that should be broken down on the form.

I am currently going through our membership to try and split towns and parishes.

Does the Executive feel analysis like this is a useful tool?

Penny Harrison
September 2020