



**MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC OFFICERS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD WEDNESDAY 24 MARCH 2021
DURING A WEBINAR HOSTED BY NACO**

Present: Approximately 220 Members of the Association

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 No apologies had been received

2. Minutes of the AGM 2019

2.1 The minutes of the Association's AGM held 8 March 2019 in the City of Wolverhampton were approved as a correct record.

2.2 It was noted that there had been no AGM in March 2020 as the event had been cancelled because of the pandemic.

3. Chair's Report

3.1 The Chair presented his Reports for the year 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 both of which had previously been made available to those in attendance and which are attached to these Minutes at Appendix A.

3.2 There were no questions and the meeting agreed to note the Chair's Reports.

4. Secretary's Report

4.1 The Secretary's Report for 2019-2021 had previously been made available to those in attendance and which is attached to these Minutes at Appendix B.

4.2 There were no questions and the meeting agreed to note the Secretary's Report.

5. Treasurer's Report

- 5.1 The Association's Balance Sheets for the accounting years ending 31 December 2019 and 31 December 2020 had been made available to those in attendance. A note would be placed on the website stating that if other members wished to view these they should contact the Secretary.
- 5.2 The accounts showed that the Association was financially stable.
- 5.3 It was anticipated that the Training Event would make a profit which would ensure that the Association would continue to be financially stable.

6. Co-option of Members to the Executive Committee 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

The Chair reported that, at a meeting of the Executive held in June 2020 following the cancellation of the AGM which should have been held in March 2020, Emara Roth had been co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee.

7. Amendments to the Constitution 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

- 7.1 There had been no amendments during the past two years.

8. Membership Fee 2021-2022

- 8.1 It was proposed by the Chair, and seconded by Pat Seager, that the Membership Fee for the ensuing year should again be nil.
- 8.2 The proposal was agreed unanimously.

9. Election of Executive Committee 2021-2022

- 9.1 The Secretary reported that the following nominations had been received:

Gill Allwright, Retired Civic Officer
Jim Babbington, London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Jacqui Brazil, London Borough of Southwark
Christine Christensen, Ipswich Borough Council
Anita Cund, City of Wolverhampton Council
Ruth Darby, Sandwell Council
Deborah Donovan, Peacehaven Town Council
Sue Dunkley, Erewash District Council
Vanessa Etheridge, Sevenoaks District Council
Tracy Frisby, North East Lincolnshire District Council
Fiona Garth, Lewes Town Council
Penny Harrison, Retired Civic Officer
Margaret Humphrey, London Borough of Camden
Alex Kowalczyk, Former Civic Officer
Liz McCarthy, Adur & Worthing Councils

Linda McElligott, North Norfolk District Council
Penny Macdonald, Cambridge City Council
Paul Mayhew, Brentwood Borough Council
Paul Millward, Nottingham City Council
Phil O'Brien, Erewash District Council
Alison Orde, St Albans City & District Council
Clare Richardson, North Kesteven District Council
Sandra Robinson, Belfast City Council
Emara Roth, Exeter City Council
Derek Scott, London Borough of Havering
Pat Seager, Epping District Council
Andrea Thwaite, Cheshire West & Chester Council
Irene Webster, Retired Civic Officer
Beverley Wilson, Retired Clerk to the Lieutenancy

- 9.2 The Chair proposed that the nominations be approved en masse and this was agreed.
- 9.3 The meeting agreed that the 29 nominations should be appointed as members of the Executive Committee 2021-2022.

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 There were no items of business received within the prescribed 14-day period of notice.

Penny Harrison
Secretary
NACO
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01553 760961
March 2021

APPENDIX A



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC OFFICERS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 24 March 2021

Chair's Report for the year ending March 2019

What a year it has been for NACO. There were plenty of times when I regretted my throwaway line which I gave delegates when I wandered into Jim Babbington's workshop in Wolverhampton in March last year to find he was only on Day 2 and there were only 20 minutes of the Session left. I said we needed a 1-day Training Event on this subject. The response was amazing and before we left Wolverhampton we were planning to put one on. We had even been offered a venue, Birmingham Council House, in which to hold it.

After considerable discussions between members of the NACO Executive as to possible dates we found a date which suited us all. We then approached various agencies to see if they would agree to become involved and speak to the delegates. We had a slow start with them but suddenly they were really keen to be involved.

In July we were able to offer a Training Day to our members in the coming November and within a couple of days it was sold out and we were being asked to put on a second date. Again, there was much discussion as to venue and we eventually settled on Southwark. This did mean quite a lot of work moving as many delegates as possible who lived South of the Thames and around London to the Southwark event so that there were more spaces available for those who found it easier to get to Birmingham.

Both dates were, I believe, a great success and certainly that is the feedback we received from many people. The involvement of the Cabinet Office in particular has meant that NACO's profile within Government and beyond has greatly improved. I am very grateful to all our members who responded to the Survey that the Cabinet Office asked us to send out a few weeks ago.

Your Executive Committee met three times, in Grimsby in July, Sandwell in September and in Southwark in January. One of the highlights for us was that the meeting in Sandwell took place on a farm run by the local authority and we were able to make the acquaintance of some rather lovely alpacas! It's not all protocol and precedence at NACO meetings...

The first role of a new Executive is to appoint its officers and at the Grimsby meeting it was agreed that the system of having two Vice Chairs was working well and would continue. We also appointed a Deputy Treasurer, Tracy Frisby and changed the title of one of the roles from Press Officer to Communications Officer to reflect more accurately the role.

At Sandwell we concentrated on seeing how we could run the 1-day Training Events which I have mentioned, as this would be the first time we had put on an event covering only one subject. We also put together ideas for the Training Event in Southwark this month.

By the time we met in Southwark in January we had done a lot of work behind the scenes and were happy that we were on the right track for the Annual Training Event. The numbers who had already booked were very pleasing as we had wondered if there would be a lack of support because of the 1-day events.

We were even able to take the decision that we did not need to advertise the Training Event any more as we anticipated that we would meet the capacity provided in Southwark and this proved to be the case with all places taken by mid-February.

The Executive Committee is recommending, later in the agenda, that the membership fee should remain, once again, free. The Association's finances remain healthy and the current Executive Committee is focused on ways of engaging and supporting those working in civic office, rather than charging membership fees. The events we hold are, in my view, very good value for money, especially in comparison with similar events.

The website, I'm pleased to note, continues to be well maintained and clearly used by members. I believe that the Members' Forum is also increasingly being used but as always if there is something you feel too sensitive to put on this do send your query to the Secretary who will do her best to get answers.

I do want to thank all the members of the Executive Committee for their time, hard work and contribution to the successful running of NACO. I am sure that, when I proposed in 1997, that we set up NACO, I had absolutely no idea of how far we would come in the intervening years. There are a handful of founder members still on the Executive but it is important that our membership realises that in the course of the next few years they will probably not remain as members and new blood is needed to carry NACO onwards in this new decade. Please do consider standing as a member of the Executive.

For us to continue we need to provide the members with the assistance they need. Please always feel free to approach members of the Executive telling them what is required or what the problems you have are. We will always try and help.

I have often been concerned that NACO has moved slowly but even I, the most cautious of people, believe that the Association is now very well established with a good reputation nationally.

I'm afraid that this report is rather shorter than usual (hurrah, I hear some people say) but coronavirus is taking up much of my working days – a useful recognition that we run NACO on goodwill and that we may not be perfect but we are trying.

Paul Millward
Chair,
National Association of Civic Officers
March 2020



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC OFFICERS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 24 March 2021

Chair's Report for the year ending March 2020

Introduction

I'm pleased to report that today's AGM is the 22nd in the history of NACO. But for COVID-19 it would have been our 23rd!

The Association continues to flourish – our membership continues to rise, our events in London and Birmingham regarding a particular national event were very successful, our finances are healthy and today's Training day has attracted record numbers. Our work with Government departments and other agencies is well regarded and our members rely on our advice and guidance on many occasions. Our survey on OLB preparations was well received by the Cabinet Office.

We also welcome today representatives of other organisations with which we share an interest – John Austin, Chair of the Association of Democratic Support Officers and Adam Tregoning, Prime Warden of the Guild of Mace-Bearers. Our Association can only benefit from sharing information and experience with others.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee has met on three occasions since the cancelled 2020 AGM (17th March) with these meetings being held by Zoom on 16th June 2020, 5th October 2020 and 13th January 2021. The meetings have been very well attended and have shown one of the benefits of remote meetings. However, in due course, the Executive Committee will have to decide on the relative merits of face to face, hybrid and remote meetings. The minutes of the meetings are available on the NACO website (www.naco.uk.com). However, should any member wish for an e-mail or 'hard' copy to be sent to them they can do so by contacting the Secretary, Penny Harrison, by email: info@naco.uk.com or by phoning me.

Because of the cancellation of the 2020 AGM, the then existing Executive Committee continued in place. The office-holders for 2019-20 also continued in post in 2020-21. We co-opted Emara Roth, Exeter City Council to the Committee as she had already been properly nominated for the 2020 AGM. We were able to welcomed Andrea Thwaite. Chester West and Chester Council to her first meeting in June.

As ever, we really do encourage members of NACO to join the Executive Committee if they can. We are also keen to ensure a general mirroring of our membership, both gender wise and geographically on the Executive Committee. Some work on the geographic areas in which the Executive is under-represented has been undertaken and we continue to work to be truly national association. Our plans to ensure complementary structures in Scotland and Wales have, by necessity, been put on hold but I'm sure the new Executive will look at this project again in due course.

A refreshed Business Plan was considered, and approved, by the Executive during the year and is available on the website. We took out Public Liability Insurance for our events, and did consider event insurance, but found the latter prohibitively expensive for our needs.

Changes to the constitution

The Executive committee may vary the constitution during the year but such variations require retrospective approval by the membership at the next AGM. However, the Executive Committee have not made any such changes in 2020/21.

Membership Fee

The Executive Committee is recommending, later in the agenda, that the membership fee remain FREE for 2021-2022.

The Executive Committee debated this issue and has concluded that there are sufficient funds to make this gesture for the eleventh year running to members and their councils in these times of financial hardship. The Treasurer's report will show that the finances of the Association remain healthy. The administration costs of the Association are minimal. However, any work arising from meetings undertaken by any Executive Committee member is refunded where necessary. We seek neither to build up a 'cash fund' to spend on large initiatives nor to fund a 'giveaway'. The only income we derive is from Conferences, Training days and some sponsorship monies. The Executive's aim has been to spread influence and assistance rather than make money. I have always been cautious about the use of member's fees and the long-term viability of the Association. The Association is well placed to weather the current financial situation and it is our intention to be there for our members. My personal view is that the Association needs to have sufficient reserves to fund any losses from a 'disastrous' conference/training event. Last year's Training day and AGM cancellation could have tested our financial position, but I am grateful for quick work by Jacqui Brazil, Southwark LBC, who mitigated most of our financial commitments. The constitution requires us to have a positive bank balance at the end of each accounting year.

Membership

The membership of the Association continues to grow and this matter is covered by the Secretary's report.

Training Events and AGMs 2020 and 2021

As you will have seen from my 2020 Chair's report, we had lined up an exciting day of events in Southwark. As the Executive Committee tracked the growing pandemic last February and March I was hopeful that we could still meet. However, as the reality of last March grew, it became clear that we shouldn't meet – a decision that, in retrospect, appeared even more correct than it did at the time. The virus was out of control in London, and although that was not publicly widely known at the time, I'm glad we didn't expose our members to the virus.

Initially, the Executive were keen to see our proposed 2021 event to be held in Birmingham as planned. However, by our October meeting we knew we had to consider an alternative delivery model, which resulted in today's (24 March) one day on-line event. Such events, basically, consist of Content, Technology, and Administration. We could 'do' Content and Administration but were unsure how to produce professional, slick 'Technology'. Alex Kowalczyk, one of the long-standing Executive members, put us in touch with Cartwright Communications and, after negotiation, we agreed to Cartwright undertaking the 'technology' aspect of the day.

I am usually heavily involved in the planning and running of these events, but was unable this year to do so. A sub-group of members, led by Tracy Frisby, have met frequently to ensure that Content, Technology and Administration all come together for the event.

The Executive was conscious that many councils had already funded their delegates for the cancelled 2020 event, and, in the hope that we would avoid a massive amount of financial work to being undertaken by members of the Executive who are, of course, volunteers, we suggested that those delegate fees be rolled-over for the 2021 event. Most councils agreed. The fee for today's event is considerably lower than our normal events (and most people agree that our conference fees are low in comparison to virtually any other similar event) but NACO will make a profit from the event. Please remember, such events are our main source of income, so it is important that we do make a small profit from our activities.

Civic Office of the Year

The Association has been pleased to continue the Civic Office of the Year Awards. However, due to the unprecedented year for everyone working in civic office, officers have faced challenges which none of them had ever really envisaged. The Executive considered that the awards this year should reflect that challenge and so the 2020 awards are in two parts – one award would be for the civic office which came up with the most innovative ways of working remotely during the pandemic and the other award for the civic office which had planned for ways of keeping Civic heads relevant to the community as councils move forward in a very changed world. Each prize is of £500 and it is possible for the prizes to be won by two different councils.

Once again, I thank Christine Christensen, of Ipswich Borough Council, for coordinating the Awards and for those who agreed to be on the judging panel.

One of the primary aims of NACO has been to ensure that Civic heads remain relevant to the works of their council and this year and future years will test that relevance. I haven't seen the entries as I write this, but I know that civic officers across the country have been working hard to support their Civic head and NACO will share the best ideas in the entries with our members.

Website

The website continues to run efficiently, thanks to the excellent hosting by Purple Spider and those members of the Executive who understand the 'back end' of websites. We took the decision to enter a monthly fee arrangement with Purple Spider, rather than a fee per activity. Whilst we haven't reached the slickness of some web operations we try to automate as much of our administration as possible. It seems to be working, but then again, I don't really understand these things...

Newsletters and initiatives

At each Executive meeting we plan the contents of our, ever frequent, Newsletters. However, some issues arising between meetings that many people are asking questions about and we do our best to give some guidance or ideas in extra editions of the newsletter. We do get much positive feedback about these newsletters. My thanks to Phil O'Brien who writes the majority of their contents.

NACO has an enviable role in having access to the majority of civic offices in the country and thus other organisations often wish to work with us to promote their initiatives. You will undoubtedly be aware of the work of Bruno Peek and of his many excellent events. This year, NACO has agreed to promote Bruno's latest initiative, the NHS, Social Care and Frontline Workers Day on 5 July 2021.

Guidance on the Death of a Senior National Figure

Following our two OLB events in London and Birmingham in 2019 we had hoped to refine and promote our advice further. However, with the advent of COVID-19, and the myriad of issues that created with councils existed plans we gave some generic advice should plans be needed to be implemented during the pandemic. Official advice, quite rightly, wasn't forthcoming even though we believe it exists and would be circulated at the appropriate time. Once the pandemic has subsided, no doubt NACO will continue to update its advice and share that with our members. As ever, my thanks to Jim Babbington who leads on this issue for us.

Training

Sadly, training has taken a back seat this year but it remains absolutely at the forefront of the objectives of the Association. We look forward to promoting training, as soon as we can.

Thanks

I would like to thank all the members of the Executive Committee who helped during the past year.

The past 12 work months have been like no other in my lifetime. I am sure that members will appreciate that it is, in normal circumstances, difficult to drive the work of the Association forward whilst also holding down full-time jobs but this commitment became increasingly difficult over the past year. Because of my 'day-job' I have had very little time to undertake NACO work. Fortunately for me, others have stepped up magnificently and continued to do the work I would have done.

I have said often at Executive meetings and at AGMs that I was looking to stand down as Chair. I have been Chair of NACO for 22 years and have chaired Civic Groups for 29 years. I (and our Vice Chair Pat Seager) had a significant birthday last year which almost certainly heralds impending retirement in a few years' time. After this year, it is obvious to all that we have very good members on the Executive and it is time for one of those to take the Association forward. I hope the Membership will have me on the Executive Committee as I would like to continue to help the Association grow. I believe that I will leave the Association in a strong position, but it is now for others to take it forward in whatever direction they feel necessary. I will leave the post of Chair with immense gratitude to the Association for allowing me to shape and define modern civic advice and I have thoroughly enjoyed the camaraderie, friendship and, sometimes, sheer fun of the Executive. Having the Black Dyke Band play at our Bradford Conference Gala Dinner in 2007 was a proud personal moment for me.

Whilst I normally try to avoid individual thanks, it would be remiss of me if I didn't thank our tireless Secretary, Penny Harrison, for keeping the show on the road whilst I sat in my spare bedroom for a year working (in safety) on COVID-19 matters. I, for one, will be participating in the NHS, Social care and Frontline Workers Day on 5th July to say 'thank you' to those who have been at the risky end of COVID-19 work.

My final thanks should be to all our members who enthusiastically and generously make NACO something worthwhile.

Paul Millward, Chair, National Association of Civic Officers
Nottingham
February 2021

APPENDIX B



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC OFFICERS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 24 March 2021 Secretary's Report – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

What an incredible two years it has been for NACO. In March of last year I had prepared a report to go to the AGM which reflected on the incredibly busy year 2019-2020 had been for NACO when we had in addition to our regular Training Event, which we just ready to run in Southwark on 17 March 2020, we had also run two special Training Days in Birmingham and Southwark and had a high increase in the membership.

Just after my report was finished to be presented to the aborted AGM which should have been held on 17 March 2020 we reluctantly took the decision that we had no option but to postpone the event and were under the impression that we would be able to rearrange the event to be held in September or October and even started looking at dates. I know many of you like me were relieved we took the decision as we had difficult choices to make, in many cases because we had family members who were particularly vulnerable.

Then the world changed and the result was that 2019-2020 and 2020=2021 were both extremely busy years for NACO but in very different ways.

The unprecedented demand for the special Training Event which we originally organised in Birmingham in November 2019 following the regular Training Event we had held in Wolverhampton in March of that year quickly became oversubscribed and we had to organise a second day which was in Southwark. Both these days involved a lot of organisation and I am most grateful to Anne Kennedy in Birmingham and Jacqui Brazil in Southwark for their help and co-operation in the preparation of these days.

I certainly felt that I had only just finished tidying up the loose ends for the two Special Events when we had to launch our electronic brochure about the Annual Event which was to take place on 17 March 2020. Our systems had been tried and tested over the past 12 months and I think each time we have been able to improve a little. Certainly, we very pleased with the response we received to our putting information for delegates on the website rather than providing them with a pack of paper when they arrived. The response we received was basically that no one complained! We planned to do this again last March and it would have avoided the necessity for 3 or 4 members of the Executive to have to spend a whole afternoon putting the packs together.

The postponement of the Training Event meant that much of the first few weeks of 2020-2021 I spent unravelling arrangements which had been made for the Training Event. During that time and really over the whole of the past year I have been actively engaged in responding to many delegates who raised questions about ways of working in such very differing circumstances

In my report dated March 2020 our membership had been steadily increasing and I was very pleased to have reached what was then an all time high of 850. However, at times during the past year I have reported to the Committee that I expected to see either little increase or even a drop in membership

because of the pandemic and the fact that I believed civic staff might not be replaced or even made redundant. However, I am pleased to say I was proved wrong and we are still attracting many new members and our numbers now stand at just short of 1000, an increase of nearly 17% in the last year. We must be doing something right. *At the AGM itself the Secretary was able to say that the membership then stood at more than 1000.*

The NACO Executive has had, like everyone else, to adapt to a new way of working and we held our meetings via zoom. This has proved to have advantages and disadvantages. We have been able to have a much larger proportion of the Exec members present at meetings because there is no travelling or overnight stay required but we know that many of our better ideas and problem solving has come from face to face discussions in a social setting. We felt the way forward was to set up sub-committees to deal with different aspects of NACO work and I was appointed to both the NACO Training Event Sub-Committee and the Training Sub-Committee. Working via zoom on these has certainly been beneficial because in the past if we did have a Sub-Committee on any subject most discussions were held via email. The ability of being able to talk face to face even if it is via a screen cannot be over emphasised.

When the Executive met in June it accepted that there was no possibility of the 2020 Training Event and AGM taking place in the Autumn and that we should look towards running the normal Biennial Training Event which was planned for Birmingham in March 2021. We did note that should this not be possible we would look at running a virtual Training Event and AGM. Come October and we met virtually again and by then we knew that we were looking at a virtual event and appointed the Training Event Sub-Committee to see how to put such an event on. My involvement in this and the administration of the Event along with the AGM has kept me busy ever since but as one of my colleagues said that because I am treated as vulnerable and have been confined to the house for 12 months "this has saved my sanity". I am grateful to NACO for that.

In the report I would have given 12 months ago I said we had been able to improve our communication system with members and this proved its worth when the General Election was called just before Remembrance Sunday and we were able to send out advice within a few hours about the problems this caused. Not only did we prove that we had got the communication system right it also showed what NACO could do for its members. I am so thankful that we had got this communication system working because we have been able to keep in touch with members and provide help, advice and information on a regular basis and never has it been as important as during the past 12 months. From the responses I have seen I know these newsletters have been appreciated. I do believe that we are communicating well with our members and I must pay tribute to our Communications Officer, Phil O'Brien, who has proved to be an excellent choice in that role.

Keeping in touch with our members all over the country over the past year has indeed been so much more important than in the past. I have always enjoyed the interaction with you all but this year to hear how you are all coping and being able to help you either myself or by finding someone else with the appropriate knowledge has been so important.

Like everyone else NACO faces new challenges in the coming 12 months, particularly in relation to setting up new methods of responding to the wants of our members but also because our Chair for over 20 years, Paul Millward, has said he definitely will not allow his name to be put forward again as Chair, though he has said he will accept a nomination to the Executive Committee. Paul's role of Head of Resilience in Nottingham has meant that for the past 15 months or so his life has hardly been his own and he keeps apologising for how little he has been able to give to NACO during that period. However, I know he has somehow managed to keep an eye on what we are doing and when asked for anything has always responded as quickly as possible and provided wise, thoughtful and considered advice when needed.

NACO owes Paul an enormous amount and it is now difficult to imagine what would have happened if he had not had the vision to start the Association in 1999. Like Paul, I am a founder member of the Association and have worked with him for all that time, but even more closely since I became, first Minutes Secretary and then combined that role with the role of Membership Secretary and these two roles have now been incorporated into General Secretary! I believe it to have been an honour to work with Paul for NACO and I know the Association will be sad to see him leave his role as Chair.

However, NACO will move on and I am sure we will be able to appoint a new Chair who will guide us through these challenging times.

Penny Harrison
Secretary
NACO
March 2021

NACO AUDITED ACCOUNTS

The Audited Accounts for the years January 2019 – December 2019 and January 2020 – December 2020 are available to members who should contact the Secretary at

secretary@naco.uk.com