

# WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2009 AT NEWBROUGH TOWN HALL.

### 1 Present

Vicky Robson, Ponteland Memorial Hall; Geoff Truckle, Slaggyford Community Hall; Irene Boyles, Slaggyford Community Hall; Robert Philipson, High Forest Community Centre, Sinderhope; Jim Brown, Kirkwhelpington Village Hall; Murray Somerville, Kirkwhelpington Parish Council; Harry Scott, Otterburn Village Hall; Micheal Elphick, Slaley Commemoration Hall; Keith Robson, Slaley Commemoration Hall; Norman Hooks, Stocksfield Community Centre; Beth Gascoign, Stocksfield Community Centre; Malcolm Caisley, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall; Melvyn Whatmough, Gilsland Village Hall; Daina Linnett, Humshaugh Village Hall; Valerie Bell, Haydon Bridge Community Centre; Pat Johnson, Newbrough Town Hall; Dennis Peel, Wylam Institute; Sue Nicholson, Wylam Institute; Adrian Hinchcliffe, Newton and Bywell Community Hall; Mike Wood, Greenhead Village Hall.

In total there were representatives present of 15 Community Buildings.

In addition the following were present:

Louise Currie, Community Action – Northumberland; Melanie Hall, Community Action – Northumberland; Kashaf Bashir, Northern Utility Consulting Brokerage Ltd.

### 2 Apologies for Absence

Sue Richardson, Whalton Village Hall; John Stevenson, Reed Hall, Bellingham; Jackie Scrowther, Ovingham Reading Room; Hazel Chalmers, Ovingham Reading Room; Marion Brown, Old School, Ovingham; Edwin Symm, Newton Men's Club, Liz Stewart, Greenhead Village Hall.

### 3 Welcome

Mike Wood the Chair of the Consortium welcomed everyone to the Consortium's first Annual General Meeting. He thanked Pat Johnson and the Trustees of the Newbrough Town Hall for allowing the meeting to take place in their Hall. He said that the report on the year would be presented by the Secretary covering the activities of the period since the inaugural meeting in May 2008, and the accounts. Mike Wood also explained that the Treasurer was not present due to illness, but was now recovering.

### 4 Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting Held 14 May 2008.

The minutes were approved and there were no matters arising.

### 5 Notes of the Special Meeting

The notes of the Special Meeting held on 13 May 2009 were noted and received.

### 6 Annual Report and Accounts

The Annual Report had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda for the meeting. The Secretary, Adrian Hinchcliffe, presented the report to the meeting. He expressed thanks to the retiring officials and members of the Management Committee who had got the Consortium off to a good start. Thanks were also expressed to Alan Hedley, Louise Currie and Jane Hart of Community Action-Northumberland for the assistance given to the Consortium throughout the first period. The Membership of 47 was referred to with the objective of signing up the remaining 12 to 15 Halls that had not joined. Communications with members is primarily through electronic means and the developing web-site was referred to as an important tool for the future of the Consortium. The financial benefits negotiated for members had been very successful so far and more possibilities were being pursued. The Consortium had lobbied on behalf of members on a number of issues and investigated several requests to identify information on legal standards and technical points relating to Halls. A special general meeting had been held in May 2009 on energy saving, renewable energy and funding. The accounts were healthy. £470.00 had been received in subscriptions, running costs amounted to £132.32 leaving a balance in the bank of £337.68.

For the future the Management Committee had come up with a vision for community buildings. It saw them as the hub of rural communities offering, social, health, education, sport and business activities which in turn helped to ensure the sustainability of the communities. Buildings of such importance should offer high standards and quality and be exemplars in things like energy efficiency, renewable energy and ICT, places that local people were proud of. It was not known how the Halls of Members related to this vision therefore

it was suggested that one of the priorities for the Management Committee in the coming year was to conduct a survey of member Halls. This would look at the state of the buildings, usage, support and financial health. The information from this survey would enable the Consortium to set its priorities for the coming five years.

The Consortium's programme for the coming year was therefore suggested as, continuing to negotiate financial benefits, development of the web-site and the instigation of a survey of Members. The meeting supported this programme.

## **7 Election of Officials and members of the Management Committee**

### **(a) Chairman**

Mike Wood had been nominated as Chairman and was elected unanimously.

### **(b) Secretary**

Adrian Hinchcliffe had been nominated and was elected unanimously.

### **(c) Treasurer**

Liz Stewart had been nominated and was elected unanimously.

### **(d) Management Committee**

Malcolm Caisley, Michael Elphick, Keith Robson and Norman Hooks had been nominated and were elected. Further nominations were requested but none were forthcoming.

## **8 Cutting Your Energy and Telecommunications Costs**

Kashaf Bashir the Managing Director of Northern Utility Consulting Brokerage Ltd ,who had recently been appointed as the Energy and Telecommunications Broker to the Consortium, addressed the meeting.

He said that currently he was seeing a slight downward trend in electricity prices and due to the purchasing power of the Consortium he was currently able to negotiate prices around the 7p per kilowatt hour (kwh). For high users in excess of 50,000 kwh per annum it would be less than this. Of the contracts he had negotiated for the Consortium one had benefited by a 60 percent reduction and another a 9 percent reduction. He said that it was essential to give a notification of change within the period specified by the contract and it was important to note that this period differs from supplier to supplier. He advised that it was very important to take regular meter readings to ensure that the billing is correct. The lowest prices were obtainable with payment by direct debit.

In dealing with two Members he had found that the supplier needed a credit vet to be carried out. With village/community halls being charities, it was a requirement for one of the officials to undertake a credit vet. Contracts are available for one, two or three years but at the moment he is only recommending one year.

Kashaf also referred to the gas market and the telecommunications market. Kashaf is to launch a new company called 'Verve'. This will negotiate the lowest possible prices for electricity, gas, broadband, mobile phones, conferencing systems, data networks and web site development. The new company will also act as a supplier as well as a broker.

Kashaf urged members of the Consortium to give him a call to see what prices he can negotiate. The information he requires is the reference numbers from the electricity bill the annual usage and the type of metering.

## **9 Licensing of Village Halls**

Louise Currie of Community Action-Northumberland gave a talk on the licensing of village and community halls for regulated activities and the sale of alcohol. She also covered the licences required for the Performing Rights Society (PRS Licence) and Phonographic Performance (PPL Licence). Louise produced a handout which was circulated to all those present and will be circulated to all Members.

## **10 Thanks**

There was no other business. In closing the meeting Mike Wood thanked Kashaf Bashir and Louise Currie for their presentations and again gave thanks to Pat Johnston and the Trustees of Newbrough Town Hall for hosting the meeting.