

## NAEPP AGM 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010 Annual Report

### Introduction

This is a brief report from the Executive to the Membership to provide an overview of progress over the last year. This is the first such report we have produced and is necessarily brief. But members can follow developments in NAEPP in much more detail by reading the minutes of the Executive Committee and other documents loaded onto the website.

The papers for the Executive Committee meeting of the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2010 can be found at <http://www.naepp.org.uk/library-item/naepp-exec-papers-meeting-2010-02-24> (available to full members and subscribers only). These papers contain amongst other things

- a detailed membership report and analysis
- a financial report
- updated budget for 2009-10
- budget looking forward for 2010-11
- an admin report

### Membership

1. The last year has seen a substantial amount of work devoted to trying to clean up the membership list. (The problem is that we are rarely informed when people move out of empty homes work to other posts or organisations).
2. Despite this clean-up, which involved both removing inactive accounts completely and downgrading non-paying Corporate Members to Associate status, there has been a welcome growth in the number of practitioners having accounts on the website and also in the number of Corporate Members and other full members.
3. The number of “active” accounts rose from 262 in February 2009 to 306 in February 2010. That number has since risen to over 330.
4. We do not have historic records for the total number of separate organisations involved in NAEPP (including Individual Members) as that analysis was not carried out until recently, but the total in February 2010 was just over 200.
5. That sounds quite healthy but it is still the case that a very significant number of local authorities are not represented and are therefore out of the loop - not receiving newsletters or notifications and possibly unaware of our existence. We aspire to have a representative from every local authority belonging to NAEPP.
6. As part of the advertising for the May National Conference we sent out emails to all English and Welsh authorities that were not members of NAEPP. However many of the addresses we obtained were generic customer support addresses and we don't know how many emails will have got through to practitioners. A small handful of authorities have since joined though.
7. There have been two key further initiatives on membership this year. Firstly we have created the option of **Collective Membership** allowing forums with five or more members to join at a discount if they join collectively. The discount is 10% for unitary authorities and 40% for districts. So far, Cumbria (5 authorities), Lincolnshire (5 authorities) and Sussex (13 authorities) have taken advantage of this opportunity.

8. Secondly, we have created the **Subscriber** option. This simply grants access to the information library (and notifications and newsletters) and is available to non-practitioners, or to practitioners who cannot persuade their authorities to pay for something called “membership”. Take-up so far has been slow but it is early days.
9. We encourage Associate Members who are not able to persuade their authorities to join NAEPP as Corporate Members to explore the option of subscribing to the extensive resources that NAEPP provides via the Subscriber option.

## Finance

10. The Accounts for 2008-09 can be found on the web-site at <http://www.naepp.org.uk/library-item/naepp-accounts-2008-09> . The Accounts for 2009-10 have yet to be finalised.
11. Income has increased somewhat with growing membership but so has expenditure in 3 main areas:
  - costs of 0844 numbers, PO box and printing
  - increased subsistence and travel expenses for David Gibbens now he is no longer able to reclaim from his employer
  - a larger amount (but not proportion) of money going to pay for the running of the organisation.
12. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, NAEPP had cash in the bank of £7,641.26. However, there are outstanding liabilities which will reduce this amount once invoices have been received and paid. The Conference is expected to nett around £1,300 for NAEPP. The Budget for 2010-11 (in the [Executive papers](#) referenced above) remains probably the best indication of our financial position. This shows a projected balance at the end of March 2011 as £4,918. That is a slight reduction in the balance compared with the long-term
13. The question remains, how do you run a credible and effective organisation on an annual income of £7,500 or less? We think we are doing a pretty good job in the circumstances but it would help if we could secure another income stream. More income would give us a bigger margin to play with over and above what is needed for keeping the organisation running day-to-day. thereby allowing us to develop more resources of value to practitioners.
14. Financial procedures have been tightened up and internet banking allows scrutiny of the bank accounts by any of the nominated cheque signatories.
15. David Gibbens, who took on the Treasurer role when NAEPP first established full independence from the Empty Homes Agency back in 2003, has now stepped down and the role has been taken over by Sue Haigh.

## The Executive

16. The Executive has become much stronger over the last 18 months or so. We have been strengthened by a new influx of regular attenders - namely Matt Smith from the West Midlands Empty Property Officer Group, Alan Broadbent from the Greater Manchester Empty Property Forum (and HMO Network Steering Group), Sue Haigh (South West Empty Homes Forum) and Darryl Lawrence (Rochdale Housing Initiative). More forum representatives and other interested people are also starting to come on board.
17. Consequently, all 3 meetings in 2009-10 were well-attended. Moreover, our July 2009 meeting included attendance by two CLG reps. Our February 2010 meeting was

attended by a representative from LACORS. David Ireland of the Empty Homes Agency always attends if possible (which is most of the time).

18. We have been sad to say farewell to **Jez Mason**, of Derby, a long-term stalwart of the Executive over several years, representing the East Midlands Empty Homes Forum. Not only that, **Nick Caprara** of Pathmeads Housing Association (ex LB of Harrow) is standing down as Chair after a 3-year stint which has seen dramatic and positive changes in NAEPP. And regrettably, **Graham Everett** of Watford BC is also stepping down as Vice-Chair. Graham has done sterling work over many years, chairing many Executive meetings and taking a hand in the development of the BVPI64 Guidance, among other things. **A heart-felt thanks to a trio who have done a great deal to keep NAEPP going over some of its most difficult years.**
19. There have been two key changes in how the Executive operates over recent months. **Firstly** we are trying to do more routine business by email so that the meetings can focus on more interesting and strategic matters. **Secondly**, we have set up **sub-committees** to deal with the business. So the detailed discussion is handled by fewer people and the full Executive is only called on to vote on final proposals where the sub-committees don't have authority to act independently.

## Progress over the Year

20. Our [Guidelines for Monitoring Empty Homes Interventions: A Standard Approach for Local Authorities](#) were the subject of some discussion and amendment during the summer before the final version was agreed at the last Executive meeting in February. We will now be promoting the need for all local authorities to report on their empty homes work using the standard reporting methodology we have agreed.
21. The website has been upgraded and there has been a significantly greater amount of activity on the forums. More people now receive "notifications" so they are kept in the loop. The website upgrade is only about half-way through but other matters have once again occupied the foreground.
22. We produced our proposals for a [national Empty Homes Initiative](#) which were endorsed by the Empty Homes Agency. This is our "big idea" and despite the emphasis on localism in current politics we believe it is an idea that can be effectively promoted. It is about filling a policy vacuum rather than building a bureaucracy. It is also about organising public sector interventions in a cost-effective way, getting the best out of national, regional and local tiers with mutual support between all of them.
23. The *Guardian* newspaper gave us the platform of a [Response item](#) to promote this idea - our first "official" appearance in the national press and we hope the first of many opportunities to get our messages across.
24. We started to beef up our offering of materials to help empty homes practitioners, including:
  - a substantially updated [Briefing Paper](#) on Flat Conversion Allowances
  - [NAEPP Strategy Toolkit - analysis of HSSA data: long-term private sector vacants as a percentage of all private sector vacants](#)
  - [NAEPP Strategy Toolkit - analysing council tax data](#)
25. For the General Election we produced a [detailed analysis](#) of the policies of the main parties. We'll use this as a platform from which to build our response to the new situation following the establishment of the coalition government.

26. Additionally, we are now producing weekly news summaries (eg [News summary - week ending 2010-04-25](#)) culled from the internet and tagged up with the localities to which they relate.

27. There has been a certain amount of outreach work including:

- a meeting with Shelter England and pre-publication comments on their policy briefing on empty homes
- attendance at the LACORS Private Sector Housing Policy Forum
- presentations have been given by NAEPP at the West Midlands Empty Property Officer Group and two ShelterCymru forums in Wales
- a meeting with Jon Fitzmaurice of Self-Help Housing
- participation at the Bristol Empty Homes Summit.

28. All-in-all, we think this has been one of the most successful years to date. We hope you agree.

David Gibbens, Secretary, for the NAEPP Executive.

14<sup>th</sup> May 2010