



## **National Federation of plus Areas**

### **9<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting** **74<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference**

**Held at the Oak Hotel, Hockley Heath on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

The Deputy National Chairman Matthew Dickinson opened the meeting at 10.10 asking the Conference delegates to be upstanding for: - National Chairman – Michael Clarkson, - Honorary General Secretary – Erica Knight, - National Finance Officer – James Oliver, and Vice Presidents Francis Wallington and Gerry Edwards.

#### **1. Chairman's Welcome to Delegates**

National Chairman Mike Clarkson welcomed the delegates to the conference and thanked them for taking the time to attend the NAGM, he said "it is a very important day for those concerned and hope we have a good and interesting lively debate". He also thanked everyone who has taken the time to organise all the different functions and events over the past year. Also he thanked all the organisers of all weekend events i.e. WASH 2014, Brean, Anglesey, Pow Wow, West Kent Plus, Stevenage Plus, Lincs Quest (Geoff and Liz Buller)

There was a minute's silence for Plussers who sadly passed away.

#### **2. The Presidential Address by Vice President Gerry Edwards**

"It is nice to see everybody, I would have loved to have seen some new faces but unfortunately had not got that situation but welcome to the AGM, this is a super location and Corinna has done a wonderful job getting a location as good as this. I mentioned when I got here yesterday how wonderful the weather was. "Sunshine and Blue Sky", we have actually got a winner"

"It's a Wonderful day! Today is about making decisions, There is a lot that needs doing if this Federation is to survive and to work. We need a lot of head scratching, a lot of thinking, lots of coffee drinking and lot of drinking. I have mentioned to members that we need to come up with ideals that will see the Federation through for many years. We have talked about this every year that we are at the edge of despair and we are not, as certain groups in the Federation are growing

very strongly, so we must be doing something right, what we need to do is to sell ourselves better and find a structure that will support the Organisation.

We can see all round the country there are lots and lots of Social Groups i.e. Social Buddies, Meet Ups just 2 examples that are based in London and there are many examples all over the country, we need to find something that is going to compete with them. I really hope with all the motions on the Agenda and working between those Motions that you are going to come up with something that will work. One thing to ask is to respect when the person next to you might be wrong, you don't tell them that.

Whilst we actually have good debates without being heckled; it is easy to get sucked into a hole of despair or feel unloved. We don't want that.... Hopefully, there will be passionate speeches from everybody. In addition, would be really good if everybody in the room got up and spoke, even if it's just for one minute. You have a passion for Plus and you have come here for a reason and it is getting things done. I would hate you to leave today with something on your chest which you have not said, which could be the one thing which makes the whole thing click. So don't let the same people say things time and time again, if you want to say something, just get up and say it. No one will laugh at you, we all take this very very seriously, and it is a serious occasion.

I would like to engender the spirit of debate that we had a Pow Wow and bring it out here today, but please all of you join in the Conference or AGM as it is nowadays, but please join in. Never be afraid to ask if you don't understand. Please don't boo people you don't agree with, there may be people who are a bit nervous and guests who have not spoken before or have not spoken much, please also applaud everybody who comes up to speak.

Here's to a great conference!

### **3. Election of Tellers**

#### **3.1 Nomination of Two Volunteers from the Observers**

Rhianna Louise Wright – Barnet Plus

Richard Thomas – HLM

#### **3.2 Determining Voting Strength**

25 increased to 26 due to Mike Shapcott (Hillingdon Plus) arrived late.

### **4. Election of Ballot Counters**

#### **4.1 Nominations of two Volunteers from the Observers**

Victoria Schwimmer – Hillingdon Plus

Lucy Smith – Barnet Plus

## 5. Apologies for Absence

Tina Bunyan – Didcot Plus

Lisa Heaton – Sutton Coldfield Plus (running late)

## 6. Acceptance of Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting at The Beverley Hotel on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2014.

### 6.1 Points of Accuracy

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Plus) questioned about getting to the bottom of 12.3 re wording, was someone going to listen to recording of the last minutes.

Matthew Dickinson (NTAC), reach consensus because it was a 50% vote, vote to investigate rather than to actually implement anything. Also it is down as a 50% motion once amended so it couldn't be constitutional being 50% don't know if anyone has any different recollection.

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Plus/Audit Examiner) - We would have to vote on the amended minutes

Voting on the amended minutes:

For 19

Abstain 5

Against 1

Minutes Accepted.

## 7. Matters arising thereon

Kath Good (Abingdon Plus Delegate) - Breakdown of the NEC Expenses.

James Oliver (National Finance Officer) agreed there would be a breakdown.

Katie Hawkins (Audit Examiner/Barnet Plus) - If you see the Audit Report; you will see, there is a "breakdown by post".

Francis Wallington (Vice President and Lichfield Plus Observer) - He noted the absence from Anglia and South East Area apart from Kings Lynn, is there another Anglia and South East Area Group in the room and could Kings Lynn give a quick pre-say of what ASEA are doing and why they are absent. Paul Catterwell (Kings Lynn Delegate) - As far as they were aware, the last time they went to an Area Meeting which was last summer because of the distance to travel, Anglia and South East Area had around £8,000.00 in their account and believe they have about 68 members, that is as much as I could say and it is not as accurate as it should be.

Steve Rolfe (South Bucks Delegate) – Joe O’Sullivan debts, are we ever going to get it cleared up. James Oliver (National Finance Officer) - will be processing a Money Line Claim hopefully in a week or so, to chase the debt. Steve Rolfe (South Bucks), it has gone on for about 2 years and probably not worth chasing it now.

James Oliver (NFO) – as least try and see what happens if we present Joe with a formal claim for the Money Line debt.

Steve Rolfe – Could we at least guarantee it can be sorted out by the end of this year. James quoted it will be sorted out.

James will have the claim done by the end of March.

## **8. Presentation and Acceptance of the Federation’s Reports for the year 2015**

### **National Chairman’s Report**

Erica asked “Are there any questions on the National Chairman’s Report”

Steve Rolfe (South Bucks), thanked Mike for 2 wonderful years as National Chairman, and is sorry to see you go.

**Honorary General Secretary** – No questions

**NEC Administrator** – No questions

**NTAC Report** – No questions

### **Southern Area**

Adrian Barnard – Didcot Plus – knows there are 5 groups last year but seem to remember that Reading Group had no members and this year Reading group still have no members, is it time to think about closing Reading group down.

Nicky Rolfe – Southern Area Chairman – the only reason kept Reading open, we are and still getting enquiries, unfortunately having trouble keeping coming when we do actually need them. And to let members through, it was important to keep it open.

**Midland Report** – no questions

For – 23

Abstain – 3

## **9. Presentation and Acceptance of the Federations Accounts for the year 2015**

Gary Schwimmer – Hillingdon Delegate – I’m not the brightest at accounts but can someone explain with the current assets, such as SADY Loan why do we owe Corinna £250.00 and the Turkey 2011 and the Plus Spring Holiday – I don’t understand it.

James Oliver – National Finance Officer – SADY Loan actually the value of SADY Bank Account not Loan, Turkey 2011 is money owed by Joe O’Sullivan, Brean is the value of the Brean Bank Account.

The Federation’s Accounts were voted on and accepted.

### Auditor’s Report

Mike Shapcott – South Bucks Delegate – on NEC Expenses it shows £148 for meetings, when look at the sheet it is actually says £461.36, it does not give actual details how the £461.36 is made apart from the meetings which is the £148. The budget £800, then the £461.36 was the actual, so the difference was £336.64.

Katie Hawkins – Independent Examiner - £461.36 which Mike mentioned was a figure on one of James’s spreadsheets for the Budget that is actually been amended because that had included £725 that Gerry did not get paid for travel expenses until this year so should not have been included in last year’s figures, which brought that down to £454 which comes under Note 8. The total of £599 includes various travel, stationery and other expenditure so you have got a breakdown under Note 8.

Richard Thomas – HLM – on behalf of the Observers Table, we are trying to go through the figures and “Can I ask a really simple question, did the Federation make money or lose money last year, if so how much, cause I can’t work out those figures at all, it varies between £300 - £4,500, if so did we make money or lose money and how much.

James Oliver – NFO – if you did not take the SADY loan into account then the Federation made a surplus of £333.85. If you include the SADY loan, a deficit of £4400, it created an overall loss of £4,066.15. James corrected himself he meant Brean not SADY. The loan was to set up a new Plus Spring Holiday Bank account.

Voting Strength – 27 Delegates.

Katie commented that next year on the Agenda make more clearly what we are voting for i.e. James’s Accounts or Katie’s Account, if going to do both, know what we are voting for.

## **10. Election of National Chairman and Officers to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

Mike and Erica put to the floor if any objections for doing the motions. Erica commented that there will be amendment to the Agenda, going to discuss the Motions before the elections so people know what they are actually discussing

## **12. Motions for Debate**

### **12.1 Joint membership**

**John Smith Leeds Delegate** Our motion is to allow a “couples” membership that is 1.5 times the current full membership. The reason behind the motion is this, I know of a couple in Plus where 1 member of the couple is a member and the other isn’t because they have family commitments at home so that they have

decided one will stay at home and the other will go off gallivanting. Reduced membership will encourage both partners to be members. Please vote for this motion.

Steve Rolfe South Buck Delegate – Formally second the motion, I am friends with lots who have family commitments. As an area we hold family friendly events like our beach BBQ to encourage more members to come back and existing members as well.

Ian Crawshaw – Chiswick Delegate – I think it's too small an amount of money to worry about, this devalues the Federation.

Corrinna Teale – Sutton Delegate – I agree that the membership fee is too cheap however this is about perception, may couple look at it and say we can't afford £200 but we may be afford to afford £150. If someone can't attend 100% of the events reduced membership may be a good incentive to encourage them to join.

Erik Bean – Stevenage Delegate – Administrative chaos and loss of money, Stevenage group are a large group of couples mostly without children.

Adam Redshaw – Coventry Delegate – Most organisations have some sort of joint membership, targeted marketing may be successful. Vote for this motion, vote for change.

Richard Thomas – HLM The world cohabiting scares me, I think this needs to be clarified and life membership fee needs to be clarified.

John Smith – Leeds Delegate summed up.

21 Needed for Motion to pass.

For 11

Against 15

Abstentions 1

**Motion Lost.**

## **12.2 National Lite Motion**

Proposed Didcot and Seconded by Stevenage

Adrian Barnard Proposed the motion, I attend a lot of the NEC meetings not as many as usual last year, one of the major issue is the costs that National cause the organisation, I use an old engineering term that you know you've actually got somewhere when you can't take any parts away rather what more parts can you add to make something function. National Lite is there for practicality on cost grounds; the amount of effort that people need to put in, its complexity and the change observed by the membership.

I'll start from the building block downwards, groups don't see any change, and the average member does not see any difference. The area chair gets to see 3 less meetings a year and there is still an AGM there to pick your 2 people. They make sure the insurance is paid centrally, as an area you would still have to pay £600. Centralised membership cards, centrally paid out paid for websites, a central contact point, they are there to ensure the annual meeting is run. A couple of people in charge of £20000, wow, that money apart from the first years operating costs will be split evenly between the areas in order to support their groups to get more members in.

The instruction is there for the national body to restructure the organisation; to have a figurehead and deputy whose duties are to ensure the insurance is paid, issue membership card and to send out a National Directory. Audited accounts will be presented at the annual meeting this will be funded as justified by the annual meeting.

Areas are relieved of quarterly meetings.

Erik Bean in seconding the motion said that the National representative does not have to do all the tasks themselves, just make sure that they get done.

There are concerns that if areas can't raise a committee now, will they be able to if they actually have to do the work, they should be able to as being on the area committee will be less onerous as you won't have to attend the 4 meetings and particularly for Midland Area there will be more potential candidates as National won't be there to take potential area committee members. We need to live within our means, please vote for this motion.

Ian Crawshaw Chiswick Delegate - Just clarification really, now have a number of motions on the table that seem to want different things, we also have a number of motions from Hillingdon at the last minute that may be discussed, we need to know if the conference is happy that the Hillingdon Motions are discussed and also what order we are going to do things. The last thing I would like to see is for some good motions down the line to fail as people have voted on earlier items and not really known what they are doing as they are not aware of the options.

Gerry Edwards we want to discuss every option, we've had the first motion discussed we would now like the next motion explained so that the merits can be discussed and anything else can be taken from the floor should enable us to come up with items you want to pursue. We need to put in maximum effort so somethings aren't side lined.

We will have 2 sequential votes after each other; we'll debate and then take the votes one by one.

Adam Redshaw Coventry Delegate - I have an idea we need to debate and I'm also concerned that to move forward, we would need a 75% majority. I would like to scrap all the motions on the table have a really good debate and come up with a motion everyone likes, using the existing motions as a framework, at the risk of sounding like Francis, we use a flip chart to word one motion from the pros and cons of the other motions and that will get the 75% majority as we have all discussed it and created it together.

Gerry Edwards VP, That is really what we would like to do but we have to discuss the motions that have been presented unless the motions are withdrawn.

### **12.3 Reform Motion**

Presented by Matt Dickinson. (As this is an NEC motion it does not require a second)

This motion was drawn up based on the Midland area motion from last year and the outcomes of the POW WOW and tries to represent the original Midland motion for a National based rather than an area based Federation. There are 3 components

50% of the membership fee stays with the groups

50% would go to National Membership officer

The second component would be groups are able to federate directly to the national tier.

Next Component is that the AGM will elect probably 4 members to run the National tier.

I imagine that any area chairs that remained would stand for those posts but that wouldn't necessarily follow.

Areas can be directly affiliated to the National tier but don't have to.

Sue Glover – Andover Delegate Can I just clarify that the NEC are allowed to propose motions

Gerry Edwards VP the NEC can propose motions this is based on an instruction from Midland area motion from last year's AGM, followed by POW WOW in November. All the NEC has done is draw up these strands as instructed. It can be amended if necessary at this conference.

Kath Good – Abingdon delegate – I am for the National Lite motion, I've been to NEC meeting and although good discussions are had I don't think anything actually comes from them. In my opinion, we can't afford National, this meeting is where things change and we are still going to hold on to this meeting. I feel people in group already feel distanced from National; if areas are dissolved will other areas still meet up?

Paul Catterwell Kings Lynn Delegate I would like to raise a few concerns with the National Lite motion, we in Kings Lynn have very little to do with the area due to geographical reasons. For us areas don't work as there are very few area events. It says that any events will be funded by the areas in equal measures and any monies held at NEC will be given equally to the four areas. It seems a little unfair, if it's done on a per capita basis then that's fair enough, Why should smaller areas have to fund a quarter of the National event also why should smaller areas get a quarter of the wealth.

People on Area committee tend to do it because they want to, some area committee post holders are not up to the job. At NEC level you have a certain level of competence. I would vote for the reform motion. Most groups are disenfranchised with the area as well as the NEC. Get rid of areas and bring in a National Communications officer to cascade information from the NEC meetings back down to the groups as a point of contact.

Corinna Teale Sutton Coldfield Observer – What the reform motion does is seek to address a lot of problems Plus has, where one body says how things should be run and that doesn't particularly work for another body. EG When the Age range was increased from 30-35, there was one group of 30 members who deliberately closed themselves as they didn't want to be part of that organisation (Bristol group) That is an example of how motions do not suit everybody, the reform motion gives us the possibly to entwine both motions together.

Erik Bean Stevenage Delegate Talking about the reform motion I would like to propose an **amendment**, the amendment would be that each area by the 1<sup>st</sup> May decided to opt in to the new arrangement or to stay as a membership collecting levy paying area.

Francis Wallington – Lichfield Observer Can I remind people why we are discussing this, the organisation is shrinking, the manpower available to run the organisation is getting fewer and fewer. We need to do something, having this many levels of management is unrealistic from a commercial point of view. We need to face reality. I would ask in the National Lite motion where the sharing of learning and expertise exists this organisation is about the exercise and learning of democracy and realisation of potential in people. It is about learning and doing. Most organisations would copy us by having one chairman, one administrator and one treasurer. I urge you to look seriously at the reform motion.

Adrian Barnard – Dicot Delegate we have an amendment on the table, we need a seconder.

Jeff Rea The amendment is one of the motions we submitted if you want to include it later. At some point we need to have a vote whether or not to include those motions so that people know what is on the table as this may alter the way they vote on the 2 other motions we are considering.

Adrian Barnard I second Erik's amendment to the motion.

Christine Ticehurst Kings Lynn Delegate, I have a question for Erik on this amended motion, you are saying the areas should decide whether they want to be part of this, should it be down to the groups to decide?

Erik Bean – Stevenage – I think areas would make the decision as areas and if groups want to change from that as a later date the guidelines are in place.

Jeff Rea In my version, it's the groups that make the decision.

Paul Catterwell - Kings Lynn, on the assumption that areas vote one way or another, if an individual group don't agree and want to affiliate direct to National, they leave the area and also quite a lot of money in that area accounts, would any of the money come back to the group. If a group left an area as they have no confidence in the area would they get any money from the area?

Vote for the Amendment

Areas to decide to opt in or out of the new arrangement by the 1st May, 50% required.

Ian Crawshaw – Chiswick Delegate If areas opt out of the arrangement does it mean they are effectively defederating?

Erik Bean – Stevenage Delegate, No believe it will remain as it is now. If a group decides to leave an area which has decided move away from the area decision they are effectively walking away from the money, I wouldn't have thought this would happen much. Please vote for the amendment.

Corinna Teale – Sutton Coldfield Delegate The decision to opt in or opt out will happen at an area conference therefore the groups will be aware and have a vote. The only difference is if you go with Erik's amendment the decision is delayed until May but if you vote against the amendment then the decision can be made today.

Erik Bean – Stevenage Delegate if we accept the amendment groups that decide to continue under existing structure get to continue to set a budget, collect memberships and pay levies and as such strong groups can support weaker groups instead of the money going into a big pot. I know NTAC does this now and other areas don't but it works really well for us.

Corinna Teale – Sutton Delegate Wasn't your amendment just to delay the decision until May.

Erik Bean Stevenage No, it was to decide whether to adopt the new structure or stay as you are being a membership gathering, levy paying area. That is fundamental to this.

To confirm the amendment:

About the reform motion I would like to propose an amendment, the amendment would be that each area by the 1<sup>st</sup> May decided to opt in to the new arrangement or to stay as a membership collecting levy paying area. If the reform motion goes through 50% of the Areas membership money goes to National, in the current system in NTAC all surplus money is distributed to the groups with in the area, if the money went

to National, many groups within area are likely to fail as this money will no longer be available to them, therefore I would like to give the area/areas the option to opt out.

For 13

Against 14

### **Amendment Lost**

Adrian Barnard – Didcot Delegate summing up the motion Areas look out for groups, if the area makes a surplus, then this is spread evenly between the groups to help support the smaller groups. If something isn't working, you have to go out and do something yourself, stand on your area. 95% of decisions are made at an AGM with mostly discussions only at NEC meetings.

Richard Thomas – HLM and Observer – Looking at the reform motion, on such a small NEC why doesn't the chairman get a vote, only a casting vote? With such small number surely he/she should get a vote.

Richard also questioned the National Lite motion, to an outsider the "Figure head" doesn't do anything, so to speak of a national figure head and deputy is only 1 active person.

Adrian Barnard replied they are required to sort out cheques.

Voting on the National Lite and Reform Motion

National Lite 75% Required

For 14

Against 11

Abstentions 1

Reform Motion

For 10

Against 16

Abstentions 1

### **Both Motions Lost**

Any motions from the floor?

Jeff Rea – Hillingdon Delegate – I've put some urgent motions together, my understanding is we need to vote whether to accept the motions.

Adrian Barnard – Didcot Delegate – These should have been submitted on time but I'll second the vote.

### **For 27 – Hillingdon's four motions added to Order of Business**

Adam Redshaw – Coventry Delegate Votes for Project Officers They should be entitled to have a vote at NEC meetings

Proposed Coventry

Seconded Hillingdon

### **For 25 – motion added to Order of Business**

Adam Redshaw Coventry Delegate - I would like to propose that we suspend the constitution. We have had 2 motions fail today because they haven't met the 75% vote to go through.

I would like to propose a motion that we suspend the standing orders to change the 75% majority required to pass the vote needed for constitutional amendments to go through for this conference only to 66%.

Proposed Coventry

Seconded Richard Teale - Formal Second

### **Motion Carried**

18 votes is now required for 66% constitutional changes.

### **12.4 Motion H1**

Groups keep up to 50% of the membership fee to enable groups access to money for marketing, development and events. It's the groups that are getting people in. I feel they should be able to access some of the membership money. This motion is driven by Hillingdon being quite a strong group but we are in quite a difficult financial position as we spend the money on developing in group, that's why we have 25 members.

50% membership to the area is a minimum; the group can take a vote if they want to give more to the area.

The constitution as it is currently written says groups shall submit "an" annual membership fee to the area, it doesn't specify how much.

Each group shall submit at least 50% for a member's annual membership fee to the area. Groups may elect to submit more. The remainder shall be retained by the group.

Provided my interpretation of the constitution is accepted, that isn't an amendment to the constitution it is just a standing order so would need a 50% majority. This is assuming that the "a n" annual membership means the annual membership.

Proposed Hillingdon

Seconded Chiswick

It is the consensus of the NEC that "an" annual membership fee would be a bit of an extreme way to take the constitution so we feel that this motion would class as a constitutional amendment so would require 66%.

Erik Bean - Stevenage Delegate. Speaking against the motion Plus is a product and as such has a value. A successful group should find a way of charging for that product. In order to make some money., Therefore you wouldn't need the membership fee to go to the group as you would have a healthy income as we do at Stevenage group, just £2 a week and that covers more than the rent on the room so we have money in the bank.

As a group of 30 members if we kept half of the membership fee that would be a nice little earner for us. As the money goes to the area and at the end of the year any surplus is split between the other groups in the area so Stevenage is subsidising other smaller groups in the area. I urge you not to vote for this motion on the grounds that it will be bad for the wider organisation and it should be up to the groups to raise their own money from the wonderful product you are obviously producing and selling to have increased your membership recently.

Adrian Barnard - Didcot Delegate

If the group kept 50% of the membership, Didcot would be £240 better off. Didcot is exactly the same size as Hillingdon group, 18 members. With 6 memberships given to Katie today.

There was a bit of a ruckus previously with one group charging £10 for membership, that's fine but you still have to find the £20 for area, that group was Hillingdon, you have to be competent with your money, and you can't expect to help somebody out. I would vote against this motion.

Corinna Teale - Sutton Observer, I quite like this motion as when you walk through the door of the group, you see the group and the people in that room. We have had previous discussions that members do not know where the money given to National goes, but I would say the same about area. Membership pay their money to their group as this is what brings them to join the Federation. I feel that it is only right that the membership money goes towards the group that you have joined.

Kath Good Abingdon Delegate - As Southern Area we are already struggling to pay our Area levy and I think this would really sink us. When I was a member of Southampton, we charged the member £30 when the membership fee was £25 and the group kept the extra £5. It is up to the other members in the group to sell National and Area to the new member.

Corinna Teale - You are right Kath, you should tell new members what area/national are all about but when you're in a situation like Kings Lynn or Lincs Quest and are over 100 miles away from the nearest group it is difficult to justify paying money to an area that can't see any benefit.

Katie Hawkins NTAC Treasurer - As an area we wouldn't be able to exist if we only got half the area membership money. We have to stop subsidising group delegates to come to the AGM and would not have been able to subsidise members to come to POW-WOW. Our PR scheme whereby groups can have up to £100 a year to go towards membership. At Barnet we actually charge £25 as we weren't quite making enough money to pay for the room. Groups can charge a bit extra.

Christine Ticehurst - Kings Lynn

If the area subsidise the National meetings if the money is going to the group, can the group not subsidise people to come to the meeting?

Our group subsidise us because our group has an interest in what happens here.

My question is though, how does this affect life membership?

Jeff Rea summed up the motion. In regard to life membership, I suggest it would be just like the other members but that's possibly something we need to think about. Separately. Just to sum up more of the issues raised here, it is the groups that recruit the members and therefore feel the group should have more control of the group.

In fact I think the money that Hillingdon would get would be more than enough to run the group so we could decide to give more to area but at least it would be our decision to make.

For 14

Against 9

Abstentions 4

### **Motion Lost**

Jeff Rea felt the motion should have had a 50% majority but there you go.

### **12.5 Motion H2**

In order to support groups that are not in a supported geographic area or groups that are not in an existing area committee. The NEC may set up a National or Non Geographic area which they may join because we may not have enough people for two committees. The National Chairman will be the Chairman of that area. This achieves some of the things we were aiming for with the reform motion but with a much more limited amendment to the constitutions because it forms a new type of area. It is better if groups join a geographic area but where one doesn't exist, a non-geographic area can be formed, group can transfer to the area if they want like it happens now, it doesn't require an amendment to the constitution.

This isn't sitting back and dealing with the situation we have by giving areas a means to continue, it means that at a National level we can open groups wherever the demand is for those groups have an area to belong to. If we have enough groups in an area that are part of a non-geographic area then they can form their own area to create a new area.

If possible we would have a separate chair of the non-geographic area as all the others have, however I appreciate we may not be able to find one, in which case the constitution is amended in such a way that the National Chair can be a Chairman of the Non Geographic area. As it stands at the minute the National Chairman can't be an area chairman.

Basically it is intended to give the advantages of the motions from earlier without putting ourselves in a situation where we can't move forward and without throwing the baby out with the bathwater by making a huge amount of deletions from the constitution.

Proposed Hillingdon

Seconded South Bucks

Richard Thomas - Observer - Just a question of clarify really, does the proposer envisage that there will only be one non geographic area at any one time or could we be in a position where we would have one in Scotland and one in West Kent.

Jeff Rea - Hillingdon I was envisaging that there would only be one. If we had the situation you describe I think it would be the situation whereby we would have a geographic area just a very big one. E.g. Scotland.

Adrian Barnard Didcot Delegate - At the for microphone on this occasion, let's say we have an area that doesn't want to exist anymore, lets join the non-geographic area, the monies that the area currently have as most areas have a substantial sum of money, does that go to National?

Jeff Rea - No, the NGA is an area is exactly the same as any other area, the funds would go to the non-geographic area separately from the National funds, if the area was split up to become 2 areas, the money would be split between these areas.

Corrinna Teale - Sutton Observer Surely it would be down to the dissolving areas how to dissect the money before the NGA was created that would be my thinking, In Midland area we have already decided what to do with the money if/when the time came.

Jeff Rea - My view is while the area still exists it can do what it likes with its funds, if Midland etc. carry on for a while and Adam Redshaw Coventry Delegate - I would like to propose an amendment to the motion. As previously stated, The National Chairman could be the Chairman of the Non Geographic area. My suggestion is there is a National Development Officer; the person in this role should be the Chairman of the NGA. We should be using project officers a lot more; groups are starting to get a lot more fragmented. By default they are going to have a vote.

Jeff Rea - I don't think this would need an amendment so there is nothing written in to say who is going to hold the post.

In the constitution the only person who can't hold post is the National chairman, if anyone else wanted to stand no amendment would be needed.

John Smith - Leeds Delegate I urge you to vote for this motion, my group is a member of an area which is considering winding up and I don't want to be left high and dry. I'm quite happy for Leeds Plus to be a member of this system as I feel it would be of value.

Adrian Barnard - Didcot Delegate - I'm actually for this motion I just wish you would have got it out in time. I think it's a fantastic safety net we require.

Leo Glover - Andover Delegate What about Levies, if there is only one group in this area, how are they going to find £600?

Geoff Buller - Lincs Quest, we have nearly 80 members and we could afford to pay our levy if we had to.

Jeff Rea - Just to answer Leo's point, there is a motion on the levy coming up, if the motion were to fail, I would have to rely on the NEC not to charge a levy to an area which they couldn't possibly pay.

I would like to reiterate, there is a control in here that stops areas from collapsing without making any effort. Areas must make a reasonable endeavour to elect an area committee and only if they fail to do this then they get to move to the Non Geographic area. I would hope the NEC would challenge then on that and say they haven't tried hard enough, I still believe geographic areas are better, this is just a contingency measure.

Steve Rolfe - South Bucks I want to reiterate the use of common sense when they actually come to doing this.

For 23

Against 2

Abstentions 1

### **Motion Carried**

#### **12.6 Motion H3**

Jeff Rea (Hillingdon Delegate) said: This is directed at reducing costs, looking through the constitution, it is basically a constitution for an organisation for lots of members where now we are a smaller organisation so some parts are not relevant. The constitution calls for a least 4 NEC meetings a year I would like to amend this to a least 1 and any more that are reasonably possible and that an electronic meeting can count as one of these meetings. I completely take into account that electronic meetings aren't as viable as face to face meetings but the fact is we simply can't afford with our current number to have the number of meeting that we are. It removes the requirement that we have to have 4 meetings, if we grow then we could go back to 4 if and when we can afford to do so but in the meantime it stops us running out of money as we

have spent all our money on meetings. I have amended the National Constitution in this meeting and the area constitution but it would be up to the areas how many meetings they have, the main reason that is in there is for the non-geographic area. Probably they would have just 1 meeting. The constitution is written in a way that the national meetings had to be separate from the AGM. I have removed that as if every area is already together it makes sense. If areas have to have 1 area meetings and they just happen to be together at the AGM.

Chiswick formally seconded the motion.

Kath Good Delegate I'm not actually against this motion as I believe the NEC spend too much money already but who gets to decide how many meeting is enough, what if they increase the number of meetings.

Jeff Rea - I feel the answer is common sense if this motion passes we are trying to reduce costs, I think the areas stop more meetings happening. It a matter of looking at the accounts looking at how much income is coming in and deciding how much each meeting costs and working out how many they can afford.

John Smith - Leeds Delegate on the subject of the areas having more meetings, I don't think it would happen, I will give you an example, at the open space meeting in November, did we have it as a separate meeting no, we have the NEC meeting afterwards.

Erik Bean - Stevenage Delegate - I am for this motion, what I am particularly an advocate of is electronic meetings. I worked from home and I only went into the office one and conference calls are effective and a lot cheaper then hauling everyone to the Midlands.

Paul Catterwell Kings Lynn Delegate - Just a small question, it says in article 3.6 meetings as necessary or practical within an available budget, does this mean that each area have to set a budget for the following year to facilitate meetings.

Kath Good - Delegate Setting the budget for next year is not viable as we do not know how many meeting we are going to need.

Matthew Dickinson NTAC - I think Jeff Rea will say this anyway, areas will budget to what they can afford.

Jeff Rea – Areas/National have pretty good idea of what the income is going to be to set a budget and we shouldn't be eating into National reserves, however we have got national reserves and if it was critical to have a meeting and the budget had been used up for this, this is good reason to use national reserves to discuss it.

Steve Rolfe - South Bucks Delegate I would like to propose an **amendment** to article 8.1, that the NEC should hold 2 face to face meetings a year every 6 month. 1 meeting in February and 1 in August and other meetings to be held electronically.

Kath Good Abingdon Delegate - It could work the other way, i.e. we have money in national reserves, let's just have a jolly for the day. Common sense is different for each person.

Proposed South Bucks

Seconded Abingdon

Jeff Rea - We simply have to trust our elected officers. I have written this so we don't go through the agony of amending the constitution, if we want 2 we have 2. I am against the amendment.

Adrian Barnard - The amended places restrictions on a well thought out motion I urge you to vote against this amendment and then vote for the motion.

## **Amendment Lost**

For 24

Against 3

## **Motion H3 Carried**

### **12.7 Motion H4**

The compulsory income for the area levy be set at 25% of the total income per area for the year, paid quarterly. At present we have some areas that are paying the levy who can afford to at the moment but soon will not be able to so they will cease to exist. We need to try and make all areas viable.

This will be set as a minimum, if areas want to pay more then they can. The reason I say this amount is I have based it on what we already have. National has 2 meetings paid for and the insurance and website so the control for the rest of it is put back to the area. If National requires more money, they can still have that but it would need approval from the areas.

I think it is reasonable for any organisation that we don't spend 25% of the money on holding meetings, you have to spend money on marketing and development.

This is not an amendment to the constitution, this is for this year only, and if necessary we can review this next year. It's a mandate to the NEC that they wouldn't exceed that instruction without consulting areas.

Proposed Hillingdon

Seconded Kings Lynn

Katie Hawkins - Barnet - Question for Jeff Rea really, the first paragraph says 25% of the total income from membership but the second says of the membership. They are not necessarily the same thing; we have life memberships who don't form part of the membership income. Would we have to pay 25% for each new member as we charge new members £10 to join, would National still expect 25% of the £20 membership fee?

Jeff Rea - My intention was that it was going to be income, if we are charging members less then the area would pay 25% of that.

Katie Hawkins - Barnet Delegate I would like to amend the motion to insert the word income, the motion should read:

In proportion with membership income.

Adrian Barnard - Didcot Delegate The area run £10 fee to new members is that a National idea or is it the areas problem? I believe National should get 25% of the £20 not the £10 as that is only what our area does.

We have an area according to the stats with 18 people, we also have an area with 117 people, you pay a proportionate amount of what income you get in. If you have 4 areas you get 4 equal votes in the current scheme. If you have an area paying £20 and an area paying £500 the area paying £500 should get 500 votes and the area paying £20 gets 20 votes. The area with 20 votes would probably say what's the point of turning up?

Kath Good Abingdon Delegate As the member of the smallest area, I'm against this in case we are overpowered by the bigger areas that have more money.

Erik Bean - Stevenage Delegate I do agree with the last two speakers, however my concern is a mathematical one we are setting the income as a proportion of a number yet some of the costs are fixed, insurance etc. so we could follow this to the point whereby we don't make a surplus from this. We are fundamentally a business and don't want to make a loss. Please vote against this motion.

Corinna Teale - Sutton Coldfield Observer I find it interesting that its all the NTAC members who are speaking against this motion, as they said earlier the area give back the money proportionally to the groups at the end of the year.. At your area you don't give smaller groups back smaller amounts, the money is split evenly, why would you think National would not split the money evenly

Jeff Rea - I still think that the right system would be that areas should be equally represented because at the moment we may have a situation whereby some are smaller than others but the whole idea of this is that we don't get smaller areas collapsing because they haven't got any money, the smaller area get to increase their money to be able to get an equally justified place on the NEC

This is not an amendment to the constitution; all areas still get equal votes, What if the 25% is not enough? This is only for this coming year. At the next AGM we could vote on it again.

Katie Hawkins - Barnet Delegate - Just to answer Corinna's question, if the motion went through, we would end up paying £535 levy if it didn't we would pay £600 so NTAC members speaking against the motion are making it more expensive for the area.

Steve Rolfe - If Southern area shut down tomorrow, if you mean another £200 each area would be paying the NEC, we have to look at the way we fund this whole organisation, fairly so we don't have groups like Hillingdon and Southern area going bankrupt and closing by not having the right funding throughout the organisation.

Jeff Rea summarised the area levy is £25% of the membership income, we ask the NEC if they want to spend more than that they should come back to the areas and say they would like to do this and why and this is not a constitutional change, this is for the current year only.

50% Required

For 19

Against 7

Abstentions 1

**Motion Carried**

Richard Thomas HLM and Observer - I would like to say at this point that I think we should commend Hillingdon for those 4 motions. They were well thought out and well written so we knew exactly what we were voting on and this how it should be done. Well Done.

Erik Bean - Stevenage Can National Run on this amount of money.

James Oliver NFO - I doubt we can work on this amount of money.

Corinna Teale - Sutton Coldfield Observer Do we have a timeframe of when this is going to start? We're in February nearly March do we want to run from January next year so we have a full year? Is it going to be based on last year's figures?

Jeff Rea - I think it should start when the next levy is due? March? In the information here it's on a rolling year. This is probably not something we can debate here as the mechanics of how it's going to work. My intention was that this should run retrospectively based on the previous 12 months.

Corinna Teale Sutton Delegate Areas have already been charged for the year and have paid for 1 quarter, do we want to issue a credit note and start again or start from January 2016.

Jeff Rea - I would like to propose a new motion, groups should keep 25% of the membership fee.

Francis Wallington Vice President - I would advise the meeting not to take this motion as it has already been voted on at 50%.

## **12.8 Project Officers get a vote at NEC Meetings**

Adam Redshaw Coventry Delegate - Earlier on I put forward a motion that we really need to start utilising the National Officers roles, yes we need to save money but we need people who are passionate about these roles be it Activities, Internet etc., the NEC might vote on this they don't necessarily know anything about e.g. Publicity, development or IT skills., Give the Officer a vote, I urge you to vote for this motion.

Seconded by Hillingdon.

Adrian Barnard Didcot Delegate This motion I did not know which way to go earlier, given that the budget is half the size it used to be I think having doubled the number of people at meetings you have to pay for on half the budget, come on guys do the Maths

Gary Schwimmer Hillingdon delegate, I am in favour of this motion, we need to incentivize people to go for these positions and they should have a voice.

Katie Hawkins Barnet Delegate - A problem I see if the national officers are all from 1 area I'm not saying they could be biased by it might be said that you're just agreeing to that because you are from x area. The point was made that we need to use the skills of the national officers however someone stands for the position because they want to do the role not get the vote, when I was plus news editor it wouldn't have made me any keener if I had the vote, I urge you to vote against this motion.

Paul Catterwell - Kings Lynn Delegate I would vote for this motion if people are willing to give up their time, energy and maybe money, they obviously have a vested interest to the best interest of the Federation, I would really like to think that people would vote with their consciences not with their allegiances.

Corinna Teale Sutton Coldfield Biased voting happens anyway unintentionally, areas hold their meetings without wholly understanding the implications whereby decisions impact the Federation or other areas within the Federation and therefore at NEC meeting you don't give the area chairman license to explore other avenues or freedom to vote in the way they feel is best for the Federation. Most area chairmen voted in a way that best serves their area, for me we should be looking at what best serves the Federation as a whole. I think people stand for a National post because they want to further the Federation; someone generally stands as an area chairman because they want to benefit their area.

Please vote for this motion as this is what is best for the Federation and not for a particular area.

Adam Redshaw summed up. Adrian Barnard said the National officers would just cost more money. At no point did I say that the National officers would actually be at the meeting, they can vote online or call the HGS and say this is my vote. Katie mentions she did plus news because she wanted to do it so have I but I was put in a position that the NEC were voting one way and I thought differently but I couldn't influence

the vote, yes I could voice my concerns and they can be minuted and recorded but for me personally I would like a vote..

For 19

Against 7

### **Motion Carried**

#### **12.9 To change the percentage need for constitutional amendments permanently**

Leo Glover Andover Delegate

I would like to propose a motion that we have two thirds for constitutional amendments permanently.

Proposed Andover

Seconded Coventry

50% majority required to open the motion for debate and voting.

For 18

### **Carried – Motion Accepted into Order of Business**

Richard Thomas - HLM and Observer we have 16 groups represented here today of I believe 23 nationally. The point is not everyone is here. Even the Hillingdon motions were available, you're now going to push through a constitutional motion that at least a third of the groups in the Federation do not know about, and I think you are on very dangerous ground. You had good reasons why you needed to make the decisions today but you are now trying to make these changes permanently, I think you are setting an extremely dangerous precedent, I think you need to think very carefully about what you are doing.

Francis Wallington Vice President I would not accept this motion, I agree entirely with what Richard has just said. We should stop and apply the brakes now.

Erik Bean - Stevenage Delegate - I am also against this motion as we are already in choppy waters and this might just run us up against the rocks. Please vote against this motion for the good of the Federation.

Kath Good Abingdon Delegate - We have changed this for today; I don't believe any of the motions today would have gone through without this. All groups were given the option to attend the meeting all we are doing is tying our hands behind our backs if we keep going to the 75% motion. We've proved today that 66% works.

Adrian Barnard Didcot Delegate - I am against this motion, mainly because we have a large voting strength within the NEC meetings they hold. I think we would be a lot safer with 75% so that things aren't steam rolled through.

Adam summed up, there are a couple of things going on here, yes we have facilitated change here today and this is what is needed, if you are voting against this motion because it has only come up today or because the % needed is so low. If it's because it has only been brought up today then we will bring it back next year so everyone has chance to think about it. Let's make some change today. If it's because of the percentage it wasn't an issue earlier because it would have been changed then. Please vote for this motion.

75% Needed

For 14

Against 11

Abstentions 2

### **Motion Lost**

## **10. Election of National Chairman to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

2 Candidates

Erica Knight HGS and Sutton Coldfield Group

Steve Rolfe South Bucks Group

Steve was proposed by Abingdon and seconded by Andover.

Steve Rolfe Proposal Speech

Good Afternoon everybody I'm Steve Rolfe from South Bucks Plus group. When I heard that Mike had decided to step down as National Chair only a few days ago I was genuinely shocked. I thought it was time I stepped up to the position. I have been a member for over 30 years which I hope has demonstrated my commitment to Plus, Old school I may be but I do see the challenges that Plus faces. We have the opportunity to grow in numbers but the whole organisation does have this opportunity to take it with both hands and I think we've done this today. I joined the organisation when in my mind, Plus was in its heyday. I have enjoy the benefits Plus has offered. As the world around us has changed out of all recognition I fear that sometimes Plus hasn't. Please keep this in mind. I keep in contact with lots of former members of Plus and they always are keen to know how we are doing. People hate change and so do I, if change is made for the sake of change. One key point if elected today would be to listen to the feedback that has come from the POW-WOWs to formulate a plan where we can succeed and is achievable. I do not expect this to be an overnight success but as a plan for 2-3 years for the organisation as a whole. It is down to you the members to help the NEC and support us in the way the organisation is going to go. How can I make a difference? Two things I believe in is that we don't do enough advertising, the right method of advertising social media, twitter, Facebook is fine but we do need to go back to some of the old methods of advertising the organisation.

Another thing is a point that Erik Bean made, that Plus is a product, I'm a member of another organisation and this is what I get for my £20 a year, I get magazines, booklets, membership card and so on.

Finally, I do believe the NEC need to be more accountable to the membership on how we spend the money and in conclusion, my aim for the next year is to try and steer the organisation forward with some of the decisions you have made today. Thank you.

Erica Knight – Sutton Coldfield Group

Proposed by Coventry and Seconded by Kings Lynn.

I can't say I have got any quick fixes of how it is going to be done but going forward I think I will be able to push the Federation forward based on the decisions made today. Throughout my time in 18 Plus/Plus I have been group treasurer, group admin, group chair, area admin, area chair and HGS, I believe these roles have given me enough knowledge of the Federation to stand as National Chairman.

What can I bring to the role: In my opinion, the Area Lead structure has not brought about the changes which we thought that would ensue? It could be that society has changed and Plus needs to respond to these changes.

Plus is struggling, we need to do something to save the Federation – hopefully the motions debated at this conference will take the Federation in the right direction and I will take the ideas of the conference and try to facilitate the changes needed.

I am known by many members and hope I am seen as approachable and a good listener.

Thank You, Erica Knight

Both candidates took questions from the floor.

## **11. Election of National Officers to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

### **11.1 Honorary General Secretary**

Joan Clifford – HGS

I haven't done anything like this before but I'm willing to give it a go. Ian Crawshaw has already said he would help me out.

Proposed by Chiswick. Seconded by Didcot.

### **11.2 National Finance Officer**

James Oliver – NFO

Proposed by Didcot. Seconded by Solihull.

### **11.3 National Training Officer**

Nobody stood; position vacant.

### **11.4 National Activities Co-ordinator**

Adrian Barnard – Activities Officer

I do the National activities, not all of them, there are plenty of other people who do them but since I turn up to the meetings, I do National Activities; I'm reasonably experienced at it. I feel that if the post is there why not actually fill it.

Proposed by Barnet, seconded by Stevenage

### **11.5 National Public Relations Officer**

Nobody stood; position vacant.

### **11.6 National Internet Co-ordinator**

National Internet Coordinator – Steve Rolfe

Me and Erica had a little chat outside while we were waiting for the vote; we said what would we do if we didn't get the role. So here I am taking the role on happy to work with Erica and the rest of the team. So vote for me.

Proposed by Abingdon, seconded by Andover.

### **11.7 National Publications Officer/Plus News Editor**

Adam Redshaw – Coventry

Proposed Lichfield, Seconded Leeds

### **11.8 NEC Administrator**

Ian Crawshaw – Chiswick

The only problem for me is travel and possibly getting divorced, if I'm able to do the NEC meetings remotely, I'm happy to minute then and help Joan in any way possible.

Proposed by Coventry, Seconded by (inaudible)

## **13. Facility for National Debate**

Owing to extreme over-run this item was omitted.

## **14. Announcement of Election Results of National Chairman to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

**Erica Knight was elected to serve as National Chairman**

## **15. Announcement of Results of Election Results of the National Officers to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

Joan was elected to serve as HGS

James was elected to serve as NFO for his 3<sup>rd</sup> and final consecutive term.

Adrian was elected to serve as National Activities Co-ordinator.

Steve was elected to serve as National Internet Co-ordinator.

Adam was elected to serve as National Publications Officer / Plus News Editor.

Ian was elected to serve as NEC Administrator.

## **16 National Chairman's Address**

Mike congratulated everyone who has just been elected and said the new Committee will all support each other. We have an exciting 12 months ahead and it will be interesting to see what goes on, and it is also good to see so many different areas represented on the NEC. Thanks all of you for coming today and enjoy the remainder of the evening. Looking forward to seeing people on the dance floor later on. Enjoy the rest of your weekend!

## **17 Election of Honorary Officials**

### **17.1 Independent Examiner of the 2014 Accounts**

Acceptance of Katie Hawkins as Auditor - Appointed

### **17.2 Vice Presidents**

Gerry Edwards and Francis Wallington

Richard Thomas - HLM and Observer spoke about the role of Vice Presidents, their only official job is for one of them to attend the AGM in a presiding capacity, and this should be the only costs relating to the Vice Presidents. Vice Presidents should be in an advisory capacity and be available over the phone.

Both Elected

Francis Wallington said Thank you and I'm sure Gerry will thank you too, we will do our best to serve you and the Federation. Thank you.

## **18. Any Other Urgent Business (Not Promotion of Events)**

Katie Hawkins said the National Directory is looking very thin so send all your details in.

John Smith advertised the Plus POW-WOW on the Sunday, it's an open meeting you decide the agenda; the theme is where do we go from here. What changes do you want for next year's AGM? Now is the time to start debating. In here tomorrow at 10am.

## **19. Announcement of the Date of the Annual General Meeting 2015**

Next AGM is February 2016

## **20. Presidential Closing Address by Vice President – Gerry Edwards**

Gerry Edwards said Thank you for electing us again, just a short Vice presidents address as we are running out of time. I'll do my best for anything you want at any time. I'll make sure Ian goes to meetings as well as long as he doesn't fart in the car he is welcome. He was nearly banned yesterday.

I think there are lots of challenges emanating from the decisions made today least of all financial ones which may challenge you very hard but at you have made the decisions, it has made us think about things. I think there has been a very high standard of debate, one thing I notice about this year is that there was no bickering or nastiness and that just shows how much we are all developing.

I always like to pick out statements that people say and today there is only one statement that sticks out today and that's the one Joanie says about mixing business with pleasure. Nicky looked horrified when Joanie said about mixing business with pleasure with Steve.

If I could give someone a trophy today, it couldn't be Gary because he's not well and not firing on all cylinders, it would be Joanie. I will go back to what I said at the beginning, Corinna has done a good job at finding this venue, it's not too hot or cold and there is enough space. A good venue always makes for a good conference.

Trophy's will be given out later, next year I would like us to be about to give out the best new group trophy, it hasn't been given out for the last 12 years I believe... Other opportunities are available Best New Area maybe. Thanks for making this a proper AGM, you've done the business and addressed major issues and change.

Thank you all for coming and see you all later.

## **21 Closure of the meeting by the National Chairman**

Mike closed the meeting at 5.43pm.