

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Friday, 9 February 2007.

Present:

WH Brown, G Dalton, OJ Kendall, KJ Lancaster, SR Macaré, Mrs S Marshall and JJ Pearlman, Dr KM Petyt, S Shaw-Wright and Ms N Stedman.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

1/07 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

KJ Lancaster, S Shaw-Wright and SR Macaré were all nominated for the position of Chairman. S Shaw-Wright withdrew from the contest. Neither of the remaining members took the opportunity to address the meeting.

A paper ballot was taken and the Chief Executive announced the result of the vote as follows:

| | | |
|--------------|---|---------|
| KJ Lancaster | - | 4 votes |
| SR Macaré | - | 5 votes |

RESOLVED -

That SR Macaré be elected Chairman of the Committee to hold office until the first meeting of the Committee following the annual meeting of the Authority in 2007.

SR MACARÉ IN THE CHAIR

2/07 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Having been nominated unopposed, it was –

RESOLVED –

That KJ Lancaster be elected Deputy Chairman of the Committee, to hold office until the first meeting of the Committee following the annual meeting of the Authority in 2007.

3/07 MINUTES**RESOLVED -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2006, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4/07 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No notifications of public questions or of the intention to make a statement had been received.

5/07 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED -

That pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Item No 13 on the agenda (Lessons learnt from the Northern Office Project) on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

6/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs Heather and Kirkbride.

7/07 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

8/07 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

No declarations of lobbying were made at the meeting.

9/07 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

CONSIDERED – the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer.

In response to questions raised by members, the Chief Executive stated that:

- the job descriptions of all officers, including the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer, were available to members;
- the draft new National Park circular, to replace the present circular 12/96 had been to all National Park Officers and was now awaited for formal consultation. He advised members that a copy of the draft document would be circulated to them as soon as possible;
- when the 'Consultation Strategy' was formally brought to members, he hoped that they would be pragmatic and critical in their consideration. He acknowledged a member's comment that the general public was often only aware off and interested in issues that affected them personally or were the subject of local campaigns; and
- with regard to 'publicising' the Questionnaires that were circulated to members of the public at Planning Committee meetings, the Chairman of the Committee would be asked to encourage their completion.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to comments being taken into account, the report be noted, and

- (a) the Authority be recommended to adopt the Corporate Governance Policy attached as Appendix 3 to the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer; and
- (b) the proposals set out in the report as to how governance matters should be managed, monitored and reported in the future be approved.

**10/07 BEST VALUE ACTION PLAN 2006/07
PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AT THE END OF QUARTER 3**

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

In response to a number of issues raised by members, they were advised that:

- arrangements would be made for an ‘events/publications’ timetable to be included in the Members’ Information Bulletin to inform members of future planned events and publications
- there was little chance of the publication of the Local Plan being brought forward, although the Head of Planning would pursue the matter if at all possible
- a report would be brought to the March meeting of the Authority on an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Authority’s partnership arrangements in Sedbergh.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to member and officer comments being taken into account, the progress made towards achieving the actions set out in the Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07 be noted.

11/07 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Finance and Resources.

In considering the report, members raised a number of issues, including:

- questioning whether the Authority should have a timetable for the review of its policies;
- commenting on some of the terminology used, particularly in Appendix 1a, such as ‘Contact with the public’ and ‘Poor Committee decisions’.

The Head of Finance and Resources stated that the Authority did not have a published policy review timetable. Some policies would be reviewed when required by changing legislation and others as and when necessary. He suggested that the reference to ‘Contact with the public’ might be better worded as ‘Inappropriate contact with the public’.

RESOLVED –

That subject to further consideration by officers of the need for a policy review timetable and the possible revision of some of the wording used, in particular in Appendix 1a, it be agreed that:

- the Strategic Risk Register contains all identifiable higher level risks which the Audit and Review Committee require to be monitored; and
- the revised Risk Management Policy as presented be adopted.

12/07 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL 2006/07

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Finance Officer.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the Statement of Internal Control appended to the report of the Senior Finance Officer be approved for inclusion within the 2006/07 Statement of Final Accounts;
- (b) the Audit Commission recommendation that the Chairman of the Authority signs the Statement of Internal Control prior to incorporation into the 2006/07 Statement of Final Accounts be noted.

13/07 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Chief Executive.

A member commented that many members had heavy training programmes with different bodies. Whilst one member suggested that the Local Government IDeA Member Development Scheme, in particular its Leadership Programme, would be beneficial, another member commented that he had found the course to be basic.

A member expressed considerable disappointment that an issue that had arisen at the Standards Committee meeting in November did not appear in the draft programme. She referred to Racial and Disability Awareness Training which had been identified by the Standards Committee as an area of member development that should be pursued and which she believed should be added to the list. In response to a comment from another member that North Yorkshire County Council had recently provided some training on this subject which had taken about an hour, she believed that that would not be sufficient time in which to address the subject adequately.

It was suggested that, unless members saw training as being essential or it was made mandatory, there was every possibility that training events would be poorly attended. In order to gauge the likely take up training and thereby reduce the chances of events folding through lack of support, it was suggested that members should be asked to indicate if they would support such events. There was of course always the possibility with some topics of being able to join with other organisations to ensure their viability.

As regards the other issues raised in the report, members accepted that

- ‘passports’ should be discontinued;
- mentoring was worth further investigation, and
- the current member induction process should be reviewed in line with the proposals set out in paragraph 12 of the Chief Executive’s report.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the draft Training Programme for 2007/08, attached as Appendix 2 to the Chief Executive's report, be approved;
- (c) Member Training Passports be discontinued;
- (d) officers pursue the list of 'Other' items set out at the end of Appendix 2;
- (e) the principle of a member mentoring scheme be endorsed and further work carried out on how such a scheme would operate;
- (f) members be surveyed to gauge their likely support for training events on racial and disability awareness and on the Council for National Parks' report on Prosperity & Protection;
- (g) a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee to clarify the issues raised by the Standards Committee on its support for Racial and Disability Awareness Training and on members' response to the survey referred to in (f) above.

The remainder of business was considered in private

PUBLIC SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

14/07 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE NORTHERN OFFICE PROJECT

Members considered a report from the Head of Finance and Resources that summarised the outcome of a review undertaken by two members of the Audit and Review Committee. The review provided an assessment of the Northern Office project and identified lessons learnt from it, which should be taken into account in the development of future projects.

The conclusions of the review were that:

“The project has achieved its original objective, of providing a modern, fit-for-purpose office to replace a number of deteriorating facilities in use in the north of the Park. It has led to a real change in the way that officers work together, has provided the Authority with additional facilities, and has introduced some very new concepts in terms of sustainability. However, no-one reading the Annex would come away with the view that any of the major elements had been achieved particularly easily.”

Members approved the 'Lessons learnt' paper for the Northern Office project and, subject to the inclusion of an additional recommendation to emphasise the need for clear lines of communication, particularly in respect of the authorisation of contract variations, endorsed the recommendations for future projects.