

Minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Tuesday, 5 February 2008.

**Present:**

R Alderson, TRN Harrison-Topham, A Hassan, Ms N Stedman and Ms Y Rose (in the Chair).

***COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK***

**1/08 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2007, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**2/08 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

**3/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from J Blackie and Mrs V Reed.

**4/08 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING**

None.

**5/08 CONSULTATION PAPER ON DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS**

CONSIDERED – the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer, who added that he was to attend a meeting with the Department of Communities and Local Government in London on 6 February representing the English National Park Authorities Association.

In considering each of the 16 Questions featured in the consultation paper, members raised a number of issues, including:

- publicity for the new arrangements should include use of the Authority's website;
- expressing concern at possible delays in complaints being dealt with which could be prejudicial not just to the member(s) concerned, but also to the complainant(s). Whilst guidance rather than a statutory time limit was favoured, it was suggested that there should

be a two stage process with an expectation for complainants that there should be an initial report within say 20 days, followed by further period (possibly 12 months) within which the complaint should be dealt with. In the event of those targets not being met the Standards Board should be notified, with an explanation for the delay; and

- the Regulations should provide that a Standards Committee may refer a matter back to the adjudication panel after a full hearing in respect of the sanction to be imposed only;

#### **RESOLVED –**

That:

(a) the report be noted; and

(b) subject to the further comments raised at the meeting being taken into account, a response, based on the content of the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer, be submitted to the Government consultation paper “Orders and Regulations Relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England”.

#### **6/08 PREPARATIONS FOR HANDLING OF LOCAL COMPLAINTS**

CONSIDERED – the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That:

(a) the report be noted; and

(b) a report be brought back to the June 2008 meeting of the Committee for consideration of the procedures which will need to be developed under the Regulations due to be prepared by Government.

#### **7/08 GUIDANCE ON GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

CONSIDERED – the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer.

In endorsing the draft guidance, it was suggested that it should be amended to include advice in respect of the declaration of the receipt of ‘repeat gifts’ which whilst individually were under the £25 limit, when totalled together would be over that limit.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That subject to the inclusion of guidance in respect of the declaration of the receipt of ‘repeat gifts’, the Authority be recommended to adopt the document attached as Appendix B to the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer in place of the existing guidance for members on Gifts and Hospitality.

#### **8/08 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The dates of future meetings of the Committee were noted as being Tuesday 17 June and Thursday 13 November 2008.