

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Tuesday, 19 June 2007.

Present:

J Blackie, TRN Harrison-Topham, M Lawton, Mrs Y Peacock, Ms Y Rose (in the Chair) and Ms N Stedman.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

1/07 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED – the report of the Secretariat Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

2/07 MINUTES**RESOLVED -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2006, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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Some discussion took place on the need for racial and disability awareness training - the point highlighted at the end of the minutes of the last meeting. Members were advised that a report on member training had been submitted to the last meeting of the Audit and Review Committee, but had failed to be considered by members as the meeting had been inquorate. The report would now be considered by that Committee at its next meeting in August 2007.

The Secretariat Officer reported that following the raising of the issue by members, enquiries had been made of other local authorities on the training provided to their members. Officers at North Yorkshire County Council had referred to the existence of an organisation called the North Yorkshire Improvement Partnership that provides a range of training events for members of local authorities in North Yorkshire. He had attended a recent meeting of the Partnership and hoped that the Authority would be able to 'piggy-back' onto training events arranged through the partnership.

Members, whilst welcoming that development, were concerned that the training that they believed was vital, would not necessarily be attended by those members most in need. It was hoped that the Committee could receive some feedback after the meeting of the Audit and Review Committee and that the Authority's Solicitor/Monitoring Officer could reinforce the need for the training at the Code of Conduct training event for members on 19 July.

3/07 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

4/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from C Hammond.

5/07 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

None.

6/07 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

None.

7/07 ADOPTION OF A NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer.

Members considered the report in some detail. They endorsed the general principles and supported the deletion of a number of non-mandatory provisions contained in the model code. They did, however, support the inclusion of paragraph 12(2) that would allow a member who had a prejudicial interest to attend a meeting whilst that subject was being considered, but only to make representations, answer questions or give evidence in the same way that a member of the public could attend a meeting for those purposes.

The Committee believed that it would be helpful to list the equality enactments, as defined in Section 33 of the Equality Act 2006, as an annex to the adopted code, rather than have members refer to an Act to which they may not have ready access.

Members also supported the extension of the requirement to declare interests beyond meetings of the Authority, Committees and Sub-Committees, to cover site visits, in view of the importance of the principles of probity and openness being seen to apply on those occasions.

The procedure whereby declarations of lobbying and declarations of interest were made at meetings was considered. Members believed that it would be preferable if declarations of interest were made on an item by item basis, rather than, as at present, before the substantive business on an agenda. It was believed that this change would provide greater clarity, particularly for the public who would know precisely which members had interests in the item being considered and would also be easier in terms of administration.

The Monitoring Officer circulated a flow chart that guided members through the process of declarations of interest. Members found the chart very helpful and asked that it be included in the member training event.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the Authority be recommended to adopt the model code of conduct issued by the Secretary of State subject to
 - (i) the 'general principles of conduct' being included as a preamble to the code;
 - (ii) the deletion of the following provisions:
 - Para 1(4)(b) which refers to local authority executives
 - The references in para 1(4)(c) to executives and area committees
 - Paras 9(6) and (7) which relate to "executive decisions"
 - Paras 10(2)(c)(i) and (ii) which relate to authorities with housing / education functions
 - Para 11 which relates to local authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees
 - Para 12(1)(b) which relates to "executive functions";
 - (iii) the inclusion of para 12(2) which provides that a member with a prejudicial interest in a subject may attend a meeting whilst that subject is being considered, but only to make representations, answer questions or give evidence in the same way that a member of the public can attend a meeting for those purposes;
 - (iv) the inclusion as an annex to the code of the equality enactments as defined in Section 33 of the Equality Act 2006;
 - (v) the provision that requires declarations of interest to be made by members to be extended specifically to cover site visits;
 - (vi) the retention of the Authority's existing statement on bullying and harassment; and
- (c) the Authority being recommended to change its current procedure that requires declarations of personal interest to be made prior to the substantive business on the agenda for a meeting, to require declarations to be made on an item by item basis.

8/07 MATTERS FOR MEMBERS' INFORMATION

CONSIDERED – the report of Secretariat Officer that included

- (a) feedback following a member's attendance at a recent Standards Committee Independent Member Regional Forum; and
- (b) a letter from the Standards Board for England relating to the new Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.