

North York Moors National Park Authority Special Authority Meeting

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on Monday 28 July 2014.

Present:

Malcolm Bowes, David Chance, Alison Fisher, Janet Frank, David Hugill, David Jeffels, Christopher Massey, Jane Mitchell, Sarah Oswald, Caroline Patmore, Ted Sanderson, Andrew Scott, Hawson Simpson, Bill Suthers, Helen Swiers, Richard Thompson, Herbert Tindall, Jeremy Walker.

Apologies:

Jim Bailey, Bryn Griffiths

Officers in attendance: Andy Wilson (Chief Executive), Richard Gunton (Director of Park Services), Irene Brannon (Director of Corporate Services), David Renwick (Director of Conservation), Chris France (Director of Planning), Sarah Housden (Policy Officer), Peter Jones (Northern Planning Team Leader), Rachel Smith (Conservation Administrator), Vanessa Burgess (Committees & Customer Services Officer)

Copies of All Documents Considered Are In The Minute Book

In the absence of the Chair Jim Bailey, Malcolm Bowes as Deputy, chaired the meeting

01/14 **Public Question Time**

There were no questions from Members of the public.

02/14 **Members Interests**

Members were reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interests relating to any agenda item prior to its consideration.

03/14 **Implementation of the Changes to Staffing and Other Budgets agreed by Members on 23 June 2014**

Considered:

The report of the Senior Management Team

Before starting the presentation, the Chief Executive advised Members that the meeting could be taken as a private session if Members felt the need to discuss posts or salaries on an individual basis and that the report had been based on decisions taken at June NPA.

The Chief Executive read out a note to Members from UNISON stating that the Union acknowledged the scale/severity of the financial difficulties and it has been in regular discussions with employers over how the proposed cuts will be implemented. Focus to remain on ensuring that the cuts/changes are done fairly whilst safeguarding terms and conditions for remaining staff. Some issues were still under discussion, still of concern,

in particular cuts to the Ranger Service and office closing at 5pm rather than 4.30pm on Fridays. UNISON will provide a response to the consultation at September NPA.

The Chief Executive informed the meeting that the Authority was engaging properly with Staff and UNISON and subject to any major issues the Chief Executive sought delegation from Members to further develop voluntary redundancies.

Senior Officers then provided a joint presentation to Members looking at NYMNPA Staffing, past, present and proposed future, for each Authority Department.

Malcolm Bowes asked Members for comments having acknowledged the detail and seriousness of the report and presentation.

Members commented on the following points:

- Difficult times for the Authority, saddened to receive such a report
- Members generally supportive of Officers and the report
- Loss of Park Services Staff leading to low morale amongst field staff and the possibility of loss of volunteers due to lack of paid staff to support
- Exact number of jobs being lost across Park Services Department and whether or not the post of Head of Recreation and Park Management was really needed
- Health and Safety plus training issues for those volunteering
- Difference between Voluntary Rangers and Countryside Volunteers
- Increase volunteers, volunteering opportunities
- Does the Authority receive payment for work it does on behalf of partners
- Authority to look to improve on advertising of the NP, greater use of social media and Members to help promote the NP via Facebook twitter etc.
- Some positive opportunities, income generation is key to the Authority's future
- Measures should be seen as short term dip, not long term decline
- Report seems to be a balanced approach to cope with difficult circumstances
- The Authority has a catalyst role, to ensure the National Park continues to thrive
- Cost of providing lunch for Members after meetings, Members requested that the Authority bring a proposal to the next meeting
- Reduction in vehicle costs
- Funding from other sources such as Clinical Commission Groups (CCG's)
- Seek more involvement from Parish Councils/Parish Forums
- Use Joint Forum to run workshop, to explore how better to utilise parish forum Meetings
- Any changes to the Education department
- Revised Parish Forum spatial approach, clearer geographically
- Whether there is the need to refresh the Local Plan
- Can the Authority confirm that no member of staff has been given notice of redundancy yet.

Officers gave the following responses:

The Director of Planning advised Members that the Authority did need to refresh the Local Plan, as a number of changes in planning had taken place since the last plan was produced. Detailed policies needed to be addressed and the new plan would be better aligned to the Management Plan.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the proposed cuts were the absolute minimum in order to enable the Authority to weather the budget cuts. The Authority had no option. With regard to cuts in Field Staff, the new structure gives more staff on the

ground than in 2000, both in Conservation and Park Services dept. The Director of Park Services confirmed to Members that under the new staffing structure there would be more staff working directly and regularly with volunteers. It would be a new way of working, but was in part based on experience of the Community Access Project and Cleveland Way models which had already worked well.

The Director of Park Services assured Members that staff were fully aware of the proposed cuts, but confirmed that at this stage, no staff had been given their notice. He also informed Members that volunteers had been made aware of the situation. On the subject of vehicle costs, the Director of Park Services assured Members that there would be savings and that these had already been built in.

Explaining the difference between Voluntary Rangers and Countryside Volunteers, the Director of Park Services informed Members that Volunteer Rangers had a certain set number of duties, and their work was more structured along the lines of a traditional rangers role including patrolling and information provision, while Countryside Volunteers tended to do more maintenance and practical conservation related work such as repairing walls, fences etc. and habitat management.

The Chief Executive stressed that the health and safety of volunteers was very important to the Authority and that there was a proposal in the paper for an increase in funding allocated to the volunteer service which would enable continued proper management. The Director of Park Services assured Members that the Authority already operated a tight, well developed health and safety process for both staff and volunteers and that this would continue. On the subject of charging partners for work the Authority undertook on their behalf, the Chief Executive informed Members that the Authority was doing this more often.

The Director of Park Services informed Members that, under the proposed restructuring a total of 6 jobs would be lost from the Rangers and Field Services teams and that, yes the post of Head of Recreation and Park Management was very much needed as it would lead an area of work where there are currently two team leaders, within a Department that until recently had two rather than the current one Director., it is a large, complex area of work involving many staff and hundreds of volunteers on the ground, that requires expert management . On the subject of the Education Team, the Director informed Members that Education had already gone through a period of rigorous restructuring very recently and as such the department was now operating at a basic minimum staffing level so could withstand no further losses.

Members were asked to agree to an additional recommendation at 13.2 as follows:

Members instruct the Chief Executive to proceed with voluntary redundancies as far as is reasonably possible prior to the September meeting

Resolved:

Members approved the detailed proposals of the report and agreed to the additional recommendation, 13.2.

04/14 Implementation of Changes to Staffing Levels

Considered:

The report of the Assistant Director of Corporate Services

Resolved:

Members noted and confirmed the report

Before the close of the meeting Members asked for action on two points:

That a proposal re: Member's lunches be brought to the next meeting in September

Action: Authority to bring proposal re: Members' lunches to September meeting

That NPA offer advice to Parishes re: all common land.

Action: David Renwick, Director of Conservation to send a note on this to all parishes.