Member Support and Development Committee

2 February 2022

Present: Mrs J James (Chair)
Councillor D Clements, Councillor K Doolin, Mrs S Hoss, Councillor M James, Councillor P Kidney, Dr R Plummer, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor M Williams.

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 11.40am)

1. Apologies
There were no apologies for absence.

2. Disclosures
There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was requested that the final paragraph of Minute 4 be amended to provide the proportion of Members having completed their Personal Support Plans ie 10 of the 18 Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021 be confirmed and authenticated subject to the above amendment.

4. General Update on Member Support and Development

a) Advanced Charter
The Chair congratulated the Authority on having achieved the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development and expressed her pride in the achievement. She thanked both officers and Members of the Authority who had been interviewed by the Panel and noted that the Authority was one of only four Authorities in Wales who held the award, and the only National Park.

The Administration and Democratic Services Manager wished to add her thanks to everyone who had taken part in the Panel review and thanked the Democratic Services Assistant for her help in gathering the evidence for submission. She went on to draw Members' attention to the award letter and certificate which were appended to the report and noted that the letter contained some suggestions for improving the Member Development process further. Members' views on these were sought.

The first item related to the review of the Members' Handbook in advance of the forthcoming Local Authority elections. The officer advised that it was hoped the information would be included on the Members' Hub to be created as part of the transition to Microsoft 365, rather than via the CDs previously circulated to new Members, this being easier to update and access. A list of documents which were currently contained in the handbook was appended to the report. Members' suggestions for additional documents to be added included details of the Personal Development Review (PDR) process, buddying scheme and the digital and remote meeting protocol; it was suggested that the information could be displayed in a more logical manner rather than alphabetically. The Chief Executive suggested that an outline of the place of the Authority in its UK and Welsh contexts would also be useful for new Members and he would provide this.

The Panel had also suggested that the Authority might find it useful to provide customised, individual descriptions for all Members, which included all their roles and responsibilities. Most Members were supportive of the idea, but were concerned that this might be an onerous task for officers. The officer reassured them that providing individual Members with those descriptions that were relevant to them would not be difficult. However the importance of ensuring all Members had access to all the role descriptions was highlighted by the Chief Executive as he felt this could be important for their personal development.

Finally the Panel had noted the Authority's intention to review its Buddying Scheme. The pilot had involved Welsh Government Members only, however the Administration and Democratic Services Manager explained that it was intended that the scheme would be offered to all Members, and that feedback from those involved in the pilot had suggested that Councillors and Welsh Government Members would benefit from being buddied with one another to gain an alternative perspective. However much would depend on the degree of change in Membership experienced following the Local Government elections. It was, however, agreed by Members that the scheme should be voluntary. There was some discussion regarding the timing of its introduction and the consensus was that new Members should first be given some time to gain an understanding of the work of the Authority.

The development of a mentoring scheme for prospective Members was also felt to be valuable. Officers replied that such a scheme had been run previously, and also a document had been produced for all newly elected councillors outlining the work of the National Park Authority and this would be revised before the forthcoming elections. In addition it

was noted that discussions had taken place recently between the National Park Authorities, Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association resulting in agreement of a Protocol for Selection of County Councillors to National Park Authorities; as part of this, the three Welsh NPAs were currently producing a video which would provide an overview of their work.

b) Personal Development Reviews
Members' views were sought on the timing of this year's Personal Development Review (PDR) process, given the anticipated change in Membership in May/June due to the Local Government elections, and also how a greater expectation for participation could be developed at the beginning of a Members' term. The officer suggested that PDRs be delayed until later in the year to allow new Members to have the opportunity to understand their role in the Authority. Members felt that it was important not to lose the momentum, however the pressure on elected Members during April and May was acknowledged, and it was suggested that the 2022 round could be delayed by a couple of months.

Some Members felt that it should be mandatory to complete a PDR, but this was not universally agreed. However it was suggested that the process could be explained as part of the induction – or even set out in the information for prospective candidates - and new Members should be strongly encouraged to participate, with the benefits of undertaking a PDR outlined. It was also suggested that the form be reviewed to provide more examples of what should be included under each section, and the officer agreed to provide a report on this to a future meeting of the Committee.

c) Member Induction
Members' views were sought on how the current induction process could be improved. A number of suggestions were made, including incorporation of sessions on virtual meeting etiquette/protocols and IT. It was suggested that the importance of an induction process, as distinct from a single session, should be emphasised with visits to the Authority's sites, and to different areas of the National Park with other Members and/or officers arranged over a period of some months. The value of the National Parks UK induction course was also highlighted.

It was also acknowledged that a valuable aspect of the induction process was to provide new Members with the opportunity to speak informally to existing Members. That would be difficult if meetings were still being held remotely, however it was suggested that short one-to-one sessions between Members could be held via video conference to allow them to introduce themselves to one another.

d) Remote Meetings
As the Authority began the process of introducing Microsoft 365, with MS Teams as its meeting platform, comments were sought from Members on the lessons to be learned from the experience of remote meetings. A range of views was expressed, with some Members having found them helpful, particularly in terms of the Authority's response to the nature and climate change emergencies, while others felt that technical difficulties had, on occasion, compromised their ability to participate in the democratic process. However as the Authority had to offer Members the ability to attend meetings remotely, the importance of support and training to reinforce meeting etiquette, was highlighted.

e) Member attendance
It was reported that Member attendance in the year to date at meetings was 87% (target 75%), while attendance at training events was 62.5% (target 65%).

Noted.

The Minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the meeting of the Member Support and Development Committee held on 11 May 2022 without amendment