

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
(Extraordinary Meeting)**

3 March 2021

Present: Councillor M James (Chair)
Councillor Mrs D Clements, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs J James, Mr
GA Jones, Councillor P Kidney (non-voting), Councillor PJ Morgan,
Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor S Yelland.

(Virtual meeting: 2.00p.m. – 3.00p.m.)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor ML Evans.

2. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Proposed Listening Service

Members were reminded that the National Park Authority meeting on 2 December 2020 had considered a notice of motion by Councillor P Kidney that the Authority consider a mentor service for staff of the Authority, to discuss any problems or anxieties, in light of extra pressure being put on them due to the current pandemic. This had been referred to the Personnel Committee and considered at an Extraordinary meeting of the Committee on 13 January 2021. Agreement was reached at that meeting for a sub-group to develop the principles for a trial 'Listening Service', which would provide employees with a direct link to Committee Members.

The sub-group had met, however they had been unable to agree the Terms of Reference produced by the HR Manager as such a mechanism was considered too formal. Councillor Kidney had met with the Authority's Staff Representatives Group and his ideas had been met positively.

In order to progress the listening service, a poster had been produced for communicating a less formal approach and a 'signposting' document drawn up which might help enable staff to draw a distinction between all the support mechanisms available to them. This document had been drafted following a suggestion by the Staff Representatives Chair.

Councillor Kidney thanked the HR Manager for his work in progressing the Listening Service proposal and his willingness to embrace the



initiative, but stressed that it needed to be implemented in the next few weeks, rather than months, in order to provide the support needed.

The Chief Executive added that his concern remained that staff would use the system when they did not feel they were making progress via the more formal systems which the Authority had in place, and did not believe that staff would consider the proposed service to be independent as Members constituted the Authority and were its ultimate decision makers. However he agreed that a trial of the service should be put in place in line with the wishes of the Committee.

Although some continued to have reservations over the provision of a listening service due to the potential for conflicts of interest and for overlapping with processes already in place, Members generally remained supportive of offering an informal service. Some detailed comments were offered in respect of the wording on the poster, particularly with regard to widening the scope of the service to include both work and non-work related issues, as well as use of the word 'advice' which it was thought was not appropriate as Members were not trained or qualified to offer this. It was also suggested that, rather than the Terms of Reference, there was a need for a checklist for those Members providing the service to ensure that staff were encouraged in the first instance to seek the support of their line manager, clarify the position regarding confidentiality and the process for onward referral to the Chief Executive/HR Manager for action in those cases where it was deemed appropriate.

A question was raised regarding how those providing the service would be identified, and it was suggested that an email be sent to all Members asking for volunteers, and if more than three expressed an interest officers would contact the Committee to agree a way forward. It was hoped that a gender balance could be achieved. It was further suggested that it may be possible for a single telephone number/email address to be provided which diverted automatically to the appropriate Member(s) and officers would explore this possibility.

With regard to a date for the launch of the service, Members hoped that this could take place on 1st April, however officers suggested that there could be more effective communication if its introduction was aligned to publication of the Authority's staff newsletter, expected to be during the first week of April.

It was **RESOLVED** that delegated authority be given to officers to amend the poster in line with the Committee's comments, draw up a short checklist/protocol document and contact all Members of the Authority to



seek volunteers with the aim of providing an informal listening service on a 6 month trial basis. The service to be launched as soon as was practical.

