

**REPORT OF ADMINISTRATION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER AND
DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS 5.1 AND 5.4:
APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR**

Purpose of Report

To agree an amendment to the procedure for the election of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority and/or its Committees to accommodate a situation in future where some or all Members may be attending a meeting remotely.

Introduction

Members will recall that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic last year, Welsh Ministers introduced the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations, which provided a framework for local authorities to convene virtual meetings of the Authority and its Committees using video and/or telephone conferencing software.

As a result, the Authority's Standing Order 5 relating to the appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority and its Committees was temporarily amended to reflect the fact that it would not be possible to undertake a secret ballot for such appointments.

Since then, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has taken effect which, amongst other things, extends the requirements of the Regulations and now allows meetings to be held where some, or all, of the participants can be in different places at the same time, provided that – for National Park Authorities at least – all participants can be heard, but not necessarily seen by everyone concerned.

Moving forward, therefore, it is necessary to amend Standing Order 5 to enable the appointment process of Chairs and Deputy Chairs to take place irrespective of where Members are when they attend such meetings.

Procedure prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

Standing Order 5.1(c) stated that, "...if more than one nomination is received the election of the Chair shall proceed by secret ballot by removing the nominee with the lowest number of votes until one of the nominees has received an absolute majority of the votes cast." This is also the procedure for the election of Deputy Chair. Under 'normal' conditions, when all Members would have been present in the same room, ballot papers would be distributed, collected and counted. However, if not all Members are present in the same room in future, this procedure will not be possible.

Proposed amendments

It is, therefore, recommended that a Standing Order 5.1(d) be added to the effect that:

“(d) To accommodate remote attendance at meetings pursuant to The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, a secret ballot will be carried out as follows:

- (i) Members will be invited to vote for one candidate only. Candidates shall be entitled to vote for themselves.
- (ii) The meeting shall be adjourned for a period of time to allow each Member attending by remote access to email, telephone or text his/her vote to the Administration & Democratic Services Manager or an alternate named officer at his/her National Park Authority email address and/or telephone number. Should a Member/Members be attending the meeting at the Authority’s offices, and the officer is also present, they shall be afforded the additional option of voting by ballot paper.
- (iii) The officer shall count the votes received and follow the usual voting procedure, i.e. removing the candidate with the lowest number of votes and continuing – if necessary – with subsequent ballots carried out under the procedure set out in (ii) above until one of the candidates has received an absolute majority of the votes cast.”

If Members agree to this amendment going forward, it will also be necessary to amend Standing Order 5.4 to reflect this change:

“The Chair and Deputy Chair of a Committee shall be appointed at the first meeting of that Committee following the Annual Meeting of the Authority. The process for nominations to the office of Chair and Deputy Chair of a Committee shall be:

- (a) Nominations should be submitted in writing to the Democratic Services Manager or his/her team no later than 10 working days before the date of the meeting of the Committee.
- (b) If no nominations are received prior to the deadline of 10 working days, nominations will be invited on the day of the meeting.
- (c) If all Members are present in the same room on the day, the elections will be conducted in the same manner as referred to in Standing Order 5.1(c) above.
- (d) If some or all Members are attending the meeting remotely, the elections will be conducted in the same manner as referred to in Standing Order 5.1(d) above.”

RECOMMENDATION:

That Standing Orders 5.1 and 5.4 in relation to the procedure for the election of Chairs and Deputy Chairs to the National Park Authority and its Committees be amended as set out in this report.

Background Documents

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
The Authority’s Standing Orders

(For further information, please contact Janet Evans, Administration & Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

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