

# EMPLOYEE FORUM

27 July 2022

Present: Mr M George (Chair)

Member representatives:

Dr M Havard, Mrs S Hoss, Councillor R Owens, Councillor V Thomas, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor C Williams.

Staff representatives:

Mrs S Hirst, Mr R James, Mr Tegryn Jones, Mr K Dickens and Ms E Rooney (Unison Rep).

Union representatives:

Ms Carmen Bezzina (Unison).

[Mr J Lewis (Unison) joined the meeting prior to consideration of the item on Organisational Restructure (Minute 7 refers)]

(Virtual Meeting: 2.00pm – 3.30pm)

## 1. Election of Chair

It was noted that it was the Authority's custom for Chair's to be elected from Member and staff representatives alternately. As the previous Chair had been a staff representative, nominations were sought from Members of the Authority.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor R Owens be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

[Councillor Owens then took the Chair]

## 2. Election of Deputy Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Mr R James be elected Deputy Chair for the ensuing year.

## 3. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Tomos Jones and Dr RM Plummer, however Ms S Hirst and Dr M Havard, respectively, had substituted for them.

## 4. Introductions

All those present introduced themselves.



## 5. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

## 6. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10 March 2021 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 10 March 2021 be confirmed and authenticated.

## 7. Organisational Restructure

Staff had asked Authority Members for their views regarding the recent Organisational Restructure.

The Chief Executive began by outlining the restructure process that had taken place to date, the result of which was that a revised structure had been agreed by the Human Resources (HR) Committee on 25 May 2022. Three areas were outstanding: People and Governance, Health and Wellbeing and Administration, however an Extraordinary HR Committee had that morning agreed a way forward for two of these, leaving only the review of Administration to be concluded. The process of filling new posts had commenced, and it was hoped to implement the new structure later in the year. A pay and grading review would take place at an appropriate point, once the structure was in place, and a staff survey, which would seek staff views regarding the restructuring process, would also take place in due course. The HR Manager added that the recent staff newsletter had provided answers to the questions asked during the consultation process and set out the next steps.

While one Member noted that engagement and communication with staff appeared to have been undertaken correctly, Reps believed that there should have been greater engagement with staff from the outset so that they could have expressed an opinion on the sort of structure that was needed to deliver the purposes of the Authority. The Chief Executive replied that those messages had been taken on board, however most counter proposals put forward had been accepted, demonstrating that it had been a genuine consultation exercise.

The forthcoming pay and grading review was of greater concern to Forum Members. The HR Manager advised that he had discussed this with Staff Reps and would engage with staff to help them understand the process. The next step was to discuss and agree the project plan, and particularly the composition of the Review Panel, with the Leadership Team.

Both the Staff Reps and Union requested adequate staff representation and involvement during the job evaluation process. The HR Manager



confirmed that the project plan to be discussed with the Leadership Team, set out the need for external and internal evaluation; which included full involvement from a cross section of staff and Unions.

Several Members commented that the Union needed to be involved early on in the process, while another Member asked that staff who were involved were allowed sufficient time to participate fully, as her experience had been that it was a very demanding process, both emotionally and in the time taken. Reps asked that external Panel members were made aware that the National Park Authority was a small authority, not like a County Council, and that staff roles were unique. The HR Manager reassured staff that ensuring job descriptions were accurate, up to date and agreed by individuals was the first stage of the process. Training would be provided to staff and managers regarding the information that was needed to ensure a robust evaluation process.

A representative from Unison noted that the key point was to ensure that pay assimilation was correct – how the Authority’s pay scales connected to the national pay spine. The Chief Executive replied that the Authority had created an earmarked reserve to deal with this issue, which meant that the assimilation could genuinely be to where the Authority felt it should be.

**Noted.**

## **8. Any Other Items of Business**

### a) Living Wage

Unison noted that the Authority was not currently a Real Living Wage Accredited employer, but paid an uplift of equivalent value. He asked that consideration be given to accreditation going forward. The Chief Executive replied that this matter had recently been discussed with the HR Committee, which had agreed the point in principle, however they were nervous about the impact of the forthcoming pay and grading review and asked that the matter be reconsidered by the Authority once that had taken place. Other considerations were the Authority’s projected flat line budget settlement and likelihood of a significant national pay increase.

It was acknowledged that the impact of the living wage on the pay scale was challenging employers at a national level due to questions of affordability, even though it had been done for the right reason.

**Noted.**

