

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

19th November 2014

Present: Mr R Barrett-Evans (Chair)
Councillor B Kilmister, Mrs J Wainwright

(Oriell y Parc, St Davids 10.40am – 12.05pm)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Evans and Councillor R Owens. The Monitoring Officer explained that the Standards Committee Regulations 2000, reg 24 prevented there being more National Park Authority representatives than independent members present at a meeting of the Standards Committee and therefore as Mr Evans could not be present, it was not possible for Mrs G Hayward to attend the meeting. Members agreed that consideration be given to increasing the size of the Committee in order to avoid this situation occurring again.

2. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Judith Wainwright to her first meeting of the Committee.

3. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st August 2013 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held 21st August 2013 be confirmed and signed.

5. Matters Arising

Social Media (Minute 10)

There was a wide ranging discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of both the use of Twitter within meetings and their broadcast through webcasting, taking into consideration the experience of the Pembrokeshire County Council and Brecon Beacons NPA who currently used the latter. The Chief Executive noted that it was intended to report on webcasting to a future meeting of the Authority and given the issues raised, this would be extended to include the use of social media.

NOTED.



6. Training Day

The Monitoring Officer reported that in accordance with his usual practice, he would provide Members of the Authority/Standards Committee with training on the latest Code of Conduct issues that had emerged. This would be arranged in due course. He therefore asked members of the Committee if there were any particular issues which they wished him to cover. The issue of social media was raised, however Members felt that a general update would be helpful as Councillors in particular received a good level of training from their Local Authority.

NOTED.

7. Ombudsman's Annual Report 2013/14

The Monitoring Officer was pleased to report that the Authority did not feature in the Ombudsman's latest Annual Report and there was therefore little more he wished to add. There had been a new Ombudsman Mr Nick Bennett, and this might lead to a change of approach in future. He noted that overall the number of maladministration complaints had increased, however this was due to the increased scope of the Ombudsman's work to include health and housing. There had been a 22% decrease in Code of Conduct complaints, and this was due, at least in part, to the introduction of local resolution procedures to deal with low level member vs member complaints.

NOTED.

8. Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer

Members were reminded that it was the Monitoring Officer custom to report the nature and background of the reports he had published over the previous year. He explained that he had neither made any reports under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, nor any appeals against decisions made by the Authority's Sustainable Development Fund Committee. There had been no referrals from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales regarding Code of Conduct issues in relation to any Members.

Under the Authority's complaints procedure, where a complainant was unhappy with the response of officers, a complaint could be made to the Monitoring Officer, and it was reported that three such investigations had taken place. One investigation was still ongoing, and a second had recently been completed, and the Monitoring Officer circulated copies of his report into this. The report on the third matter had been completed earlier in the year.

NOTED.



9. Standards Conference 2015

The Monitoring Officer agreed to circulate further details of this when they became available. The Chief Executive added that the Authority would provide whatever support and training was necessary for Members of the Committee to undertake their functions and new Members of the Committee could attend the Conference if they wished. Those Members who had attended the Conference in the past, felt that it was of limited use, and a practical training session on how to conduct a hearing would be more useful. The Monitoring Officer agreed to arrange such training, possibly in conjunction with Brecon and/or Snowdonia NPAs.

NOTED.

10. Member Dispensations

The Monitoring Officer reported that all Members of the Authority who were Members of Pembrokeshire County Council had received a dispensation to allow them to speak and vote on matters relating to Pembrokeshire County Council provided they had no other reason to declare any personal or prejudicial interest. No new applications for dispensations had been received.

NOTED.

11. Date and Venue of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in twelve months' time unless it was necessary to call one sooner. All those present agreed that Oriel y Parc was a convenient place for the meeting to be held.

NOTED.

