

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd August 2012

Present: Mr A Archer; Councillors JA Brinsden, P Harries, Mrs L Jenkins, Mrs A Lee, DW Rees; Mr EA Sangster and Mrs M Thomas.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 12 noon – 1.05pm)

1. Election of Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Mr EA Sangster be elected Chairman for the forthcoming year.

2. Election of Deputy Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Mr A Archer be elected Deputy Chair for the forthcoming year.

3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Morgan.

4. Scrutiny Toolkit

The Chairman introduced Members to the Scrutiny Toolkit, explaining, for the benefit of the new Members of the Authority, that it had been drawn up as part of the Joint Scrutiny Exercise with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority which had been carried out over the previous twelve months. The Democratic and Executive Services Manager went on to explain that it was anticipated that the toolkit would be revised and refined over the coming months to tailor it more closely to this Authority's way of carrying out Scrutiny.

She then drew Members attention to the Scoping Proforma for Scrutiny Review, found in Appendix 17.6 which outlined some of the questions Members needed to consider in undertaking the current Scrutiny Review on Affordable Housing, as agreed by the National Park Authority at its meeting in August. It was important that the review was focused to ensure it achieved what it set out to do. One Member then sought clarification regarding the resources available in terms of the support Members would receive and the impact on the work of the Authority. The Democratic and Administrative Services Manager replied that it was anticipated the review would take 6 months and staff would give Scrutiny as much attention as they could – information would be provided by the Head of Park Direction, with administrative support from the Democratic Services Team. However she thought it likely that each review would be different and there would need to be a review in 12 – 18 months time to see whether resources had been adequate.



5. **Scrutiny Review into Affordable Housing**

The Director of Park Direction and Planning began by asking Members whether they felt they had a full understanding of affordable housing and the Authority's role in providing it, or whether they felt it would be helpful to first receive background information before going on to consider the topic. Members agreed that background information on the definition of affordable housing and the policy framework within which it had to be considered should be provided, possibly by e-mail, and the next meeting of the Committee should take the form of a workshop to try to ensure that all Members had a common understanding of the subject.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee needed to gain an understanding of the current policy, how it arose, what alternatives were tested, what it was seeking to achieve, how well known and understood it was and the effect of implementation compared to expectations. It could also consider the effect of the policy on the whole of Pembrokeshire by inviting views from Pembrokeshire County Council and others. The review could then seek to form a view as to the policy's effectiveness and may be able to recommend how it could be improved or changed. Other Members agreed, but asked that consideration be also given to looking at the issues of housing need, viability assessments, the operation of Section 106 Agreements, monitoring of affordable housing units granted permission, the affordable housing contribution as well as the situation in other authorities and National Parks in England and Wales.

Another Member proposed that as the Affordable Housing Policy had only recently been approved, the Committee should review the effectiveness of the delivery arrangements, rather than the policy itself. The Head of Park Direction agreed, stating that in his report, the Inspector at the recent Examination into the Local Development Plan had recommended that the Policy should run until the first review which had to be carried out by the end of the financial year 2014/15.

The Chairman then clarified the anticipated scope of the review as to consider the effectiveness of the delivery of the Authority's policy on affordable housing against the original objectives and targets defined for that policy. Having gained a better understanding of the subject, the next meeting could then consider how to obtain the views of other stakeholders, such as the Rural Housing Enabler, Housing Authorities, mortgage lenders, Community Councils, developers and, planning applicants. It was suggested that Sue Essex could also be invited to a future meeting to give a broader perspective. One Member asked whether it was envisaged that the Committee would look at the impact of second homes in pricing people out of the market, but officers replied that this was a huge subject over which the Authority had no control, and it would be better to focus on delivery of the policy that existed.



It was **AGREED** that the scope of the review be summarised as to consider the effectiveness of the delivery of the Authority's policy on affordable housing against the original objectives and targets defined for that policy.

