

JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17th September 2014

Present:

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority representatives:

Members: Mrs G Hayward (Chair), Councillor DGM James, Councillor RM Lewis and Mr AE Sangster

Officers: Mr T Jones, Chief Executive

Snowdonia National Park Authority representatives:

Members: Councillor A Gruffydd, Councillor S W Jones, Councillor J MacLennan and Councillor C Roberts.

Officers: Mr E Williams, Chief Executive, Mr J Cawley, Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage and Mr G I Jones, Director of Corporate and Legal Services.

(Meeting by Video Conference 2.00pm – 3.00pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Kilmister (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority), and Councillor E Edwards and Dr I ap Gwynn, (Snowdonia National Park Authority).

2. Disclosures of interest

No disclosures of interest were received.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21st February 2014 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 21st February 2014 be confirmed and signed.

4. Confirm the Scope of the Review

The Chairman reminded the Committee that at the previous meeting, it had been agreed “that a review be undertaken to establish how successful National Park Authority policies and work were in supporting job creation in micro businesses”. Since the meeting a number of Members had reflected upon this and had expressed the view to her that this was too limited in scope; she therefore sought the views of the Committee as to whether the scope of the review should be widened.

Initially some Members were concerned that widening the project would make it too big to implement, especially given that slippage had already occurred, and that the brief should remain as agreed previously. They

were keen to stress the importance of small businesses to the National Park and that the Authority's welcomed their expansion into bigger businesses. However other Members were of the opinion that a concentration on microbusinesses could give a distorted view, although agreeing that they were an important element within the National Park, medium sized businesses could have a bigger economic impact. A better sample would therefore be obtained if a wider range of businesses were considered.

It was suggested that it might be helpful to define what was meant by small, medium and large in terms of numbers of employees and this was agreed as small (micro) being under 10, while a SME (Small and Medium sized Enterprise) was up to 250. It was noted that there were few businesses of over 250 employees within the National Park, however there were quite a number with more than 10, particularly those which employed part-time staff.

It was **AGREED** that the scope of the scrutiny review be broadened to include all small and medium sized enterprises.

The Chairman then pointed out that at the previous meeting a title for the Committee had not been agreed. "The National Parks Joint Scrutiny Group on the Economy" was suggested and it was **AGREED** that the Chief Executives of both Authorities finalise a mutually acceptable title.

5. Possible Interview Framework

The Chairman suggested that the Interview Framework circulated with the agenda be used as a basis for each Member to interview 3 businesses, and that the data collected be used a basis of evidence for the scrutiny review.

One Member questioned whether this would provide sufficient data, however it was pointed out that as this was qualitative data, rather than hard statistics, information from 30 businesses would be reasonable. It was hoped that a wide variety of business sectors would be covered, as well as those established 10 years or more ago as well as more recently, and it was **AGREED** the Members provide their lists of proposed interviewees to their respective Chief Executives so that this could be ensured.

It was also **AGREED** that some changes be made to the list of questions, with the inclusion of an additional question regarding the effects of businesses on the Welsh language, with this being formulated by the Chief Executives in consultation; also the first question be amended to establish whether the businesses had received any assistance, and from what sources and to ask about their access to broadband.

6. Evidence Providers

The Chairman asked whether the Committee was happy with the list of evidence providers discussed at the last meeting and set out in the minutes. It was agreed that all remained relevant however it was proposed that Councillors who had Wards in the National Park could be included and that in order to further explore the issues surrounding broadband provision, information could be sought from BT or Welsh Government Officers. It was also suggested that it might be interesting to meet with the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport. Other Members felt that it was not appropriate to invite the Minister to what was a Scrutiny Committee, and it was **AGREED** that County Councillors, BT and Welsh Government Officers be included in the list, but that a presentation to the Minister would be considered once the scrutiny report had been completed.

The Chairman then sought Members views as to which organisations would be invited to give evidence to the Committee and from which written evidence would be sought. It was **AGREED** that Members first undertake their interviews with local businesses, and that this take place before the end of October, before the Committee then met again in Aberystwyth to go through the evidence collected and to decide on a way forward.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was **AGREED** that officers would agree a date for the next meeting hopefully in November, once all the outstanding issues had been resolved and Members had carried out their evidence gathering interviews.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting.