

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Friday, 16th June 2006.

**Present:**

J Blackie, WH Brown, SHK Butcher, KJ Lancaster, SR Macaré, Mrs Y Peacock (in the Chair), JJ Pearlman, Dr KM Petyt and Ms N Stedman.

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**COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK**

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**13/06 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2006, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**14/06 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No notifications of public questions or of the intention to make a statement had been received.

**15/06 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED –**

That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Item No 12 on the agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

**16/06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs Dalton, Kirkbride and Mrs S Marshall.

**17/06 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

None.

**18/06 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING**

None.

**19/06 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2006/07**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Finance and Resources.

Members were advised that the ‘review of Material Systems’, that now formed a significant part of the Plan, related to a review of those systems that were considered by the Auditors to be ‘material’ in terms of their significance and which had a financial cut-off of £130,000 (approximately 2% of turnover).

**RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted and the Internal Audit Plan for 2006/07 be approved.

**20/06 AUDIT COMMISSION: AUDIT PLAN 2006/07**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Finance and Resources.

The Audit Manager updated some of the information in the Annex to the report. He stated that the audit fee for the Authority should read £20,300 (instead of £21,800) because the extra audit costs for the “whole of Government Accounts” for 2006 would now be borne by the Audit Commission and that the ‘Audit Fees as % of grant’ for the Authority and for Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia could be calculated as 0.4%, 0.65%, 0.6% and 0.74% respectively.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that he had attended a meeting, at the former office of the Deputy Prime Minister, at which there had been an indication of the Government’s intention to review the Best Value (BV) regime for National Park Authorities (NPAs), to bring in a less onerous and more ‘user friendly’ alternative. He asked the Audit Manager if he had any information on that proposal and if the Audit Commission might monitor its application across English National Parks to ensure greater consistency in the way in which statistical evidence was gathered by authorities. He explained that currently there were a number of performance

indicators that had been set collectively by NPAs. There was, however, considerable potential for variation in the way in which those indicators were measured, which devalued their use for comparison purposes.

The Audit Manager responded that he had no more information on the proposed BV changes and suggested that the uniformity of measurement was probably an issue for NPAs to pursue collectively.

There was some concern amongst members at the potential inconsistency of Authorities in the way in which they addressed post-Performance Assessment improvement plans. The Chief Executive stated that an 'Improvement Group' had been set up by the English NPA's to share 'best practice', although it was accepted that any improvements that were achieved were likely to be as a result of the work of individual authorities.

The Audit Manager, in pointing out the reduction in audit fee, confirmed that 'any work required in relation to the Whole of Government Accounts' referred to in paragraph 27 of his report would not incur any additional cost to the Authority.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That, subject to the comments of members, officers and the Audit Manager being noted, the draft Audit Commission's audit plan for 2006/07 be adopted.

### **21/06 REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE IN 2005/06**

#### **CONSIDERED –**

The report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

In considering the report, members raised a number of issues, to which officers responded as follows:

- an explanation was given of what the designation of the Authority as a Standards Authority meant. The Chief Executive stated that whilst the status had no funding implications, it did impact on officers in so much as they were having to commit significant time and effort to try to turn the situation around. As the Authority had to show improvement for six consecutive quarters, the status would remain at least until June 2007. Members expressed concern that officers, in particular in the Planning department, should ensure that the public was dealt with as quickly as possible;
- a report would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee with a draft programme of project reviews for members to consider. These would include the 'Public Spaces, Private Places' project, 'Out of Oblivion' and the Northern Office project;
- consideration would also be given on whether the following areas of work should be the subject of review by the Committee: the review and updating of the Definitive Map; the Authority's performance in respect of statutory and non-

statutory nature conservation consultations; and the delay in the completion of the Pennine Bridleway;

- a final meeting of Planning Performance Working Group would be held, possibly in September 2006, to review its work and to report either to the Planning Committee or to the Authority.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That subject to member and officer comments being taken into account:

- (a) the report be noted, and
- (b) a report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee setting out, in the light of performance in 2005/06, those areas of work identified that might form a programme of future reviews.

### **22/06 REVIEW OF MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN PARTNERSHIPS**

#### **CONSIDERED –**

The report of the Chief Executive.

Members noted the criteria that had been developed and generally endorsed the proposals contained in the report. They did, however, consider that the Chief Executive should continue to represent the Authority on the Richmondshire and Craven Local Strategic Partnerships.

It was pointed out that in respect of the Yorkshire Dales Tourism Partnership, there was also an officer group in operation.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That subject to member and officer comments being taken into account:

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the Authority be recommended to approve the proposed representation, as set out in Appendix B of the report of the Chief Executive, subject to the Chief Executive remaining as the Authority's representative on the Richmondshire and Craven Local Strategic Partnerships.

### **23/06 REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP**

#### **CONSIDERED –**

The report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Working Group held on 15th May 2006.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Working Group held on 15th May 2006 be noted.

**24/06 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS – HALF YEARLY RETURNS**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Secretariat Administrator.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

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**The remainder of business was considered in private.**

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**25/06 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS**

CONSIDERED –

The private report of the Secretariat Administrator that identified individual members of staff.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.