

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

Friday 6 November 2015

Present: K Ball, P Harper, P W Hitchins (Chairman), P Sanders, D Webber

Officers: C Walledge (Monitoring Officer)

In attendance: T Stapleton (Independent Person)

154 Welcome and Apologies

It was noted that all Members of the sub-committee were present.

155 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2015 were signed as a correct record.

156 Declarations of Interest

None.

157 Public Participation

None.

158 Monitoring Officer's Update

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that no formal complaints under the Code of Conduct have been received to date in 2015. There have been a couple of minor issues around Member behaviour in meetings, but these have been addressed informally.

The Monitoring Officer stated that it is good to be able to report that the government have not seen the need to review or revise the current legal framework for Standards since 2013. This is allowing the new approach to settle down and become better understood.

The advertisement for new Independent Persons in May 2015 generated seven enquiries, but unfortunately only one application was submitted. It is excellent to welcome Mr Tim Stapleton to his first meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee as an Independent Person, following his formal appointment by the Authority on 4 September 2015.

The question of a second Independent Person is on the agenda for discussion.

159 Arrangements for Appointment of second Independent Person

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members of the recruitment process earlier this year:

- (i) Western Morning News advertisement (current vacancies) cost £1,000 and website;
- (ii) DNPA website – Situations Vacant;
- (iii) Detailed application pack for anyone expressing an interest;
- (iv) Streamlined application process, including structured face to face meeting with Monitoring Officer.

Members were invited to offer advice on where to target recruitment activities.

- It was agreed that the pre-Christmas period should be avoided.
- It was suggested that press coverage about the new Independent Person could be an effective advertisement/recruitment tool.
- It was suggested that contact made with the Boards of local Higher Education providers eg. Exeter College, South Devon College and other public bodies.
- The Monitoring Officer was asked to check whether either of the two recently “retired” Independent Persons would consider serving a further term of office, after a suitable break.

Mr Stapleton undertook to provide some text for use on a press release.

The Monitoring Officer advised that he hoped to advertise in January/February with a view to recruiting and appointing well before the Annual Meeting in 2016.

160 Observation Reports

Report forms completed by Independent Persons since May 2015 were circulated. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that in his view there were no significant concerns and no patterns/trends warranting action. Members agreed that the observations were very positive and expressed their gratitude to the Independent Persons for the time taken to observe meetings.

161 Recent Decision Notices

Members discussed three recent decisions publicised by Cornwall Council which raised issues of interest, including:

- (a) Conduct at meetings;
- (b) Content of emails – the line between “robust” debate and a direct personal attack;
- (c) Declaration of interests – spouse member of local campaign group;

(d) Interests – employment by estate agent which sold site for development;

It was agreed that it is helpful to be aware of the types of issue which form the basis for investigations, and the basis for decisions whether the Code of Conduct is engaged.

162 Meeting Dates

Members were advised that the Calendar of Meetings for 2016, adopted by the Authority at the Annual Meeting in July 2015, sets the dates for the meetings of the Standards Sub-Committee as:

6 May 2016, and
4 November 2016

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