

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

Friday 16 May 2014

Present: P Harper, J Nutley, P Sanders, P Vogel, J McInnes, J Shears

Officers: C Walledge (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

In Attendance: R Blackshaw, R Woodall (Independent Persons)

132 Welcome and Apologies

Mr Nutley, Chairman, welcomed those present.

133 Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 16 August 2013

The Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 16 August 2013 were signed as a correct record.

134 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

135 Public Participation

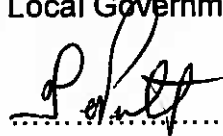
None

136 Standards Sub-Committee Annual Report

The Chairman thanked the Head of Legal and Democratic Services for his guidance and drafting of the Annual Report.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that the purpose of the Annual Report was to record a summary of the activities of the Standards Sub-Committee over the preceding twelve months; it also contained an indication of areas of work for the forthcoming year. Following presentation to the Authority at the Annual meeting on 4 July 2014, it would be uploaded onto the Authority's website for public viewing.

The past year has been relatively quiet. Neither the Terms of Reference or Membership have changed. The role of the Monitoring Officer has remained the same but the actual Monitoring Officer has changed, following the retirement of the Director of Communications and Business Support. The Monitoring Officer role is now being undertaken by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, supported by a Service Level Agreement with Devon County Council. In addition, the Authority's complaints procedure would now be the responsibility of Neil White, Head of Human Resources, who would also be the link officer with the Local Government Ombudsman.

Signed 

Date 21-11-2014

With regard to the use of cameras, mobile phones, filming and tweeting in meetings, recent guidance to local authorities had been issued by Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP stating that this should not be prevented. The current guidance regarding acceptable use of mobile phones at meetings of the Authority, agreed by Members in January 2011, would be re-visited by Standards Sub-committee during the next 12 months. A discussion followed, the salient points were as follows:

- If a Member does not give an agenda item his/her full attention then he/she would not be able to make an informed decision;
- A Member should not vote if he/she were to miss the start of the Officer's presentation;
- Training to be provided for Members - to include a refresher regarding current guidance on the use of mobile phones;
- Members should not make any form of statement on social media that they would not be prepared to make in a meeting;

It was agreed that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services would draft some guidance notes for Members, to include the use of social media and Member behaviour during a meeting that is webcast.

With regard to the late of arrivals at a meeting, it was noted that Members now remained at the back of the meeting room and waited for a natural break in proceedings before taking their seat.

Mr Shears arrived at the meeting.

137 Observation Reports


The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported that one of the long-standing issues raised by the Independent Persons was the microphone system which, due to its age, had become unreliable. He advised that an alternative system was being sought as a matter of urgency. With this in mind, a different system would be in place for the Authority meetings on 6 June 2014 for Members to trial. It was hoped that a new system would be sourced over the summer.

Other issues raised in the observations reports included punctuality, language used and behaviour. Positives noted included the Chairman of Development Management Committee ensuring that speakers did not go over their allotted three minutes and that Members who arrived late to a meeting were not using their vote in the matter/application being discussed.

Mr Woodall and Mr Blackshaw both stated that the standard of probity at meetings had improved considerably over the years.

The Chairman thanked Mr Woodall and Mr Blackshaw for their efforts.

The next meeting of the Sub-Committee will be on 21 November 2014.

Signed 

Date 21-11-2014...