

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

Friday 3 November 2017

Present: K Ball, A Cooper (Chairman), P Sanders, D Webber, P Woods

Officers: C Walledge (Monitoring Officer)

In attendance: T Stapleton (Independent Person)

179 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies had been received from Mike Galt, Independent Person.
All members of the sub-committee were present.

180 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2016

The Monitoring Officer reminded members that the meeting due to be held in May 2017 had not taken place. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2016 were still to be agreed and signed as a correct record of that meeting.

RESOLVED:

Members formally approved the minutes of the meeting on 4 November 2016.

181 Declarations of Interest

None.

182 Public Participation

None.

183 Monitoring Officer's Update

The Monitoring Officer informed members that no formal complaints under the code of conduct have been received since the last meeting of the sub-committee in November 2016. This is very welcome indeed. Although the Monitoring Officer was absent through illness for a while at the beginning of the year, no standards issues appeared to have arisen during that time.

The Monitoring Officer advised members that he continues to give informal advice on standards issues and probity from time to time as appropriate, in particular regarding behaviour in meetings.

Signed  Date 25/5/18

Some time ago, the Independent Persons identified that the programme of observations does not include Development Management site inspections. The Monitoring Officer had undertaken to look into this, but the matter had not yet been addressed. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would be working with Mr Stapleton and Mr Galt to facilitate their attendance at site inspections in the near future.

Finally, the current legal framework for standards has been in place since 2013 and given the demands of the current legislative programme it seems unlikely to be reviewed or revised in the near future.

184 Observation Reports

The Monitoring Officer informed members that report forms completed by Independent Persons in 2017 were available for inspection, if required. On this occasion it had been decided not to copy them for distribution to all members of the sub-committee as it is considered that there are no concerns or patterns/trends warranting discussion or action.

There was positive comment on the improved use of microphones at meetings by members, while mobile phones still have potential to be an unwanted intrusion or distraction – noted by an Independent Person on 3 separate occasions in 2017.

Members agreed that the protocol for observation by the Independent Persons is used in a positive and helpful spirit and members expressed their thanks to the Independent Persons for the time they devote to attending and observing meetings of the Authority, Development Management committee and Audit & Governance committee.

185 Recent Decision Notices

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

- (a) Failure to declare a relevant interest, where the interest arose from the employment carried out by the member's wife (which was also not registered in the register of interests as required)
- (b) "off duty" – a county council member who attended a meeting of a town council and failed to treat others at that meeting with respect was NOT in breach of the code of conduct because he had made it clear that he was attending solely in his private capacity.
- (c) An email exchange which descended into a personal rant with insulting language crossed the line into unacceptable behaviour. The fact that the member of the public used similar language was no excuse – as a member of the council you should rise above this.

It was agreed that it continues to be helpful to receive brief reports of relevant complaints, investigations and findings.

Signed Date

186 Meeting Dates

Members were advised that the calendar of meetings for 2017, adopted by the Authority at the annual meeting in July 2017, sets the dates for the meetings of the standards sub-committee in 2018 as 4 May and 2 November.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm

Signed Date