

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday 16 November 2004 at 2.30 pm in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

Mr M A Collins (Chairman)
Mr R Morrison-Smith (Vice-Chairman)

Mr W J Dyke	Miss E I Stacey
Mr J C Edwards	Mr M E Taylor
Mrs A M Foxhuntley	Dr J F Travis
Mr M H Knight	Mr R J Webber
Mr M J Pile	

Also present: - Mrs A Amory (Deputy Chairman of the Authority) – for part of the meeting, and Mr B O Windsor.

15. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were declared at this point in the meeting, but see the declaration from Dr Travis at Minute 19 below.

16. **MINUTES**

(1) **Confirmation**

The Minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 20 July 2004 were signed as correct.

(2) There were no matters arising.

17. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

18. **REPORTS OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR**

The Committee considered reports from the External Auditor covering the External Audit 2003/04 – Annual Audit Letter and the Audit of Accounts 2003/04 – Matters Arising, together with the covering report of the Chief Finance Officer. Mr J Roberts and Miss S Waller from RSM Robson Rhodes were present to outline the content of the report and to respond to comments.

Members were appreciative of the work of the Chief Finance Officer and his Finance Team in securing reassuring reports from the External Auditor.

RESOLVED: (1) to receive the reports from the External Auditor and agree the Chief Finance Officer's responses to the recommendations made; and

(2) to re-adopt the Statement of Accounts for 2003/04 in the light of comment from the External Auditor.

19. **REVISED BUDGET FOR 2004/05**

The Chief Finance Officer's report explained the budgetary review that had been carried out and the Committee was asked to agree the financial strategy to be adopted for the remainder of the financial year.

The report included references to the Lynmouth Pavilion Project and Dr Travis declared a personal interest as a Councillor for both North Devon District Council, which owned the building, and Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council, which operated the building under an agency agreement. He remained in the meeting.

In response to members' comments, the Chief Finance Officer explained:-

- That the activity on which a VAT Assessment had been levied on the Pinkery Outdoor Education Centre (paragraph 2.6 of the report) concerned improvements to the Centre roof and the Wind Turbine and covered several years. Some members expressed concern that the Wind Turbine inverter had lasted only a couple of years (Appendix 1, Original and Revised Budgets 2004/05).
- Concerning staff costs, that there was a system in place for staff replacements, whereby, when a vacancy occurred, the Section Head had to justify the filling of the post and it would be taken to the Management Team for consideration. The recent period of reduced manpower in the Field Services Team had meant some work being put on hold.
- That it would be possible to include the previous year's outturn figures in future Revised Budgets to enable a comparison between financial years.

In response to comment concerning there having been no financial commitment for works at Driver Farm (Statement on Reserves, Appendix 2), the National Park Officer said that there would be a full progress report on activity to the next meeting of the Food, Farming and Land Management Panel.

In response to comment about the future of Planning Delivery Grant, the officers explained that it was received on a year to year basis, with no guarantees on whether it would continue or on future levels of payment. It was noted that this had consequences for the staffing situation as receipt of the grant had enabled various initiatives to be undertaken to meet planning targets. The Committee recognised the contribution of staff in the Planning and Community Section in achieving targets.

- RESOLVED:** (1) to approve the revised budget for 2004/05 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (2) to approve the allocation of £5,000 to complete the Public Safety Plan inspection and documentation;
- (3) to approve the transfer to the General Reserve of the balance of the projected underspending (£37,551) together with any further underspendings that arise during the second half of 2004/05;
- (4) to approve the funding from 2004/05 Contingency Fund of the General Reserve of any amount in excess of £10,000 that arises from the VAT Assessment for the Pinkery Outdoor Education Centre;
- (5) to approve the funding for the Lynmouth Pavilion Project being transferred to and held in reserve until the future of the project is determined and that the funding for the Pinkery Showers etc project be carried forward to 2005/06;

(6) to note the position regarding the Sustainable Development Fund, Implementing Electronic Government Allocation and the Planning Delivery Grant; and

(7) to authorise the National Park Officer and the Chief Finance Officer to make such adjustments as are necessary to keep within the Budget and with the objective of marshalling resources to transfer to the General Reserve and to increase the Project Fund Reserve.

20. **FINANCING OF VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT PURCHASES**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer on the most beneficial method of financing the purchase of Authority vehicles and equipment.

RESOLVED: to approve the approach of internal lending from reserves to a Vehicle and Equipment Asset Account and to charge budget headings at the rate repayment charges would have occurred through using the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB).

21. **OUTCOME OF TENDER FOR BANKING SERVICES**

The Chief Finance Officer's report informed members of a tendering exercise for banking services.

RESOLVED: to note the outcome of the joint tendering process that has been carried out for banking services.

22. **RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The report of the Head of Business Management sought agreement for the Authority's approach to dealing with the management of risk across all of its activities.

In response to members' comments, the officers indicated that there would be appropriate training and educational input for staff to enable the strategy to be implemented.

RESOLVED: to adopt the Risk Management Strategy as proposed in the report and to note the roles and responsibilities set out together with the implementation framework.

23. **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS**

The Committee considered the joint report of the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer and the Head of Business Management on suggested responses to the Government's draft Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees and the Review of the Regulatory Framework Governing the Political Activities of Employees.

RESOLVED: to endorse the comments set out in the report for responses to both documents, subject to the response to Question 6 of the Draft Model Code being expanded to tie in with the political restrictions on employees.

24. **PERSONNEL UPDATE**

The Head of Business Management's report updated members on personnel matters.

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An amendment was made to paragraph 1.2 to make it clear that the post of Planning Officer (Policy and Community) was being readvertised.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the changes to personnel and the management of the Field Services Team that have occurred;

(2) to approve the Managing Pressure and Stress at Work Policy and Guidelines attached to the report; and

(3) to note the changes in the Local Government Pensions Scheme from April 2005 and keep a watching brief on the Consultation Paper issued in October 2004 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

(The meeting closed at 4.14 pm)

Chairman

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