

ITEM 6

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday 1 March 2011 at 2.00pm in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

Mr M A Collins (Chairman)	
Mr W J Dyke	Mr R Milton
Mr N Holliday	Mr I Rigby
Mrs F Nicholson	Mr R J Webber

Apologies for absence were received from Miss A V Davis, Mr R C Edgell, Mr S J Pugsley and Dr J Wibberley

44. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mr I Rigby declared having been lobbied in relation to Item 10 - Upgrade of Toilet Facilities at County Gate.

45. **MINUTES**

- (1) **Confirmation:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 November 2010 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
- (2) **Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.

46. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

See Minute 48: Budget 2011/12; Minute 51: Annual Governance Review; Minute 52: Upgrade of Toilet Facilities at County Gate and Minute 53: Personnel Update for public questions from Mrs M Groves, Exmoor Uprising.

47. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2011/12 TO 2014/15**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer.

The Committee's Consideration

The Medium Term Financial Plan provided an overview of the future financial position of the Authority and outlined the financial strategy for the period of the public spending review. The National Park Grant settlement for 2011/12 was confirmed and the notified grant figures for the three years 2012/13 to 2014/15 were indicative at this stage. After allowing for the effects of inflation, the outcome of the government's public spending review was a real terms reduction in National Park Grant of 33.5% over the period to 2014/15.

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In previous years, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had provided £200,000 for a Sustainable Development Fund which was ring-fenced; however, from 2011/12 onwards this would be incorporated into the National Park Grant, although each National Park Authority was expected to continue to run a similar sort of scheme.

The Committee noted the Authority's response to the reduction in National Park Grant through:

- Initial changes in management and organisational structure to refocus the organisation to key communities.
- Completion of a review of the National Park Management Plan.
- Exploration of options for other ways of achieving Authority objectives and priorities including through delegation, partnership working, joint delivery, shared services and closer working with businesses, voluntary and community organisations.
- Revised organisational structure to be adopted by July 2012 based on new service priorities and in line with the revised National Park Management Plan and the new financial environment.

Members agreed it was prudent to retain the general reserve at a level of £300,000, although in future years and in the context of an overall reduction in income, it may become appropriate to consider reducing this level.

- RESOLVED:** (1) To adopt the Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15.
- (2) To agree the Financial Strategy that underpins the Medium Term Financial Plan as set out at paragraph 4.2 of the Plan.

48. **BUDGET 2011/12**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer.

Public Question Time

Mrs Groves, Exmoor Uprising, questioned the level of use of the Pinkery Outdoor Education Centre, which she considered did not represent good value for money and should be closed.

The Committee's Consideration

The meeting was advised that compared with the original notification for 2010/11, the Authority faced a reduction in National Park Grant for 2011/12 of £412,738 and the previously ring-fenced Sustainable Development Fund element of £200,000 was now incorporated into the National Park Grant settlement.

Core Budget

The Core Budget had been rolled over at 2010/11 outturn pay/price levels and the following assumptions had been made:

- There would be no cost of living pay award for staff from 1 April 2011.
- An inflation allowance of 2% for the costs of goods and services.

Adjustments to the Core Budget reflected savings achieved through efficiency measures, the Green Travel Plan and a reduction in Members' allowances.

Discretionary Budget

As resolved at the Authority's meeting on 15 February 2011, after allowing for priority elements, the Discretionary Budget would be available as a 'single pot' open to a wide range of bids in a similar way to the current Sustainable Development Fund, and communities and external groups would be able to apply for funding alongside bids to support Authority projects. Funding awards would focus on the achievement of National Park purposes and the objectives of the National Park Management Plan, with a weighting given to projects that would also provide community and economic benefit.

The Committee welcomed the introduction of the 'single pot' fund as an intrinsic element of the Authority's future service delivery and agreed that the mechanism established to consider bids should be responsive, with decision-making ability. It was considered that the creation of a Discretionary Budget Sub Committee of the Resources and Performance Committee would provide an efficient, easily understood, open process that would clarify access to funding, and it was hoped that communities would come forward with applications.

Reserves

Actions taken following a detailed review of reserves included increasing the Legal Support Reserve to £100k in recognition that at a time of financial constraint legal support would be more difficult to fund, and increasing the Lynmouth Pavilion Project Reserve to £500k to enable this priority project to progress as soon as practicable.

Financial Standing

The Medium Term Financial Plan continued the effective stewardship of the Authority's resources and was underpinned by the following financial strategy:

- Leadership Team would continue to review critically all staff vacancies that arise with a presumption towards not filling vacancies and exploring possible alternative methods of service delivery;

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- Requests for additional spending would be resisted unless they could be covered by genuine savings;
- The financial impact of the organisational review would be evaluated and implementation monitored to ensure future spending was within the financial projections of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Any underspendings that arise during 2011/12 would be transferred to reserves to aid the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Pinkery Outdoor Education Centre

Members agreed that the Pinkery Outdoor Education Centre was an important resource in furtherance of the Authority's statutory purpose to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of Exmoor's special qualities. The Chief Executive advised that the principal use of the Centre was by school groups during academic terms and while there was reduced demand during the winter months, the Centre was used to capacity during the majority of the year. In recognition of the changed financial environment, the Authority was currently reviewing the Centre's operations to inform future management options.

RESOLVED: (1) To request the Authority

- To approve the Core and Discretionary Project budgets for 2011/12 as summarised in the Appendices.
- To include in the Scheme of Delegation to the Committee the proposal for the creation of a Discretionary Budget Sub-Committee.

(2) To approve the financial strategy for 2011/12 as outlined in paragraph 5.1; and to note the position on reserves as detailed in Appendix 5.

49. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer.

RESOLVED: (1) To note the Treasury Management Outturn for the first six months of the 2010-11 financial year.

50. **BUSINESS PLAN PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2010/11**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Corporate Services.

The Committee's Consideration

The Work Programme was an integral part of the Business Plan, reflecting the targets in the National Park Management Plan. The Committee noted that 88% of Work Programme targets for 2010/11 were either completed or on schedule for completion by 31 March 2011.

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Members were pleased to see that the Development Management service continued to improve and noted that 93% of public rights of way in the National Park met the criteria required by the 'easy to use' national standard Best Value Performance Indicator.

RESOLVED: To note the progress in delivery of the Business Plan 2010/11 at the end of the third quarter of the year.

51. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

The Committee received the joint report of the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

Public Question Time

Mrs Molly Groves, Exmoor Uprising, referred to Defra's recent consultation on the review of governance arrangements for National Park Authorities. She expressed concern that while the consultation had invited comments on whether the selection process for all categories of members of National Park Authorities could be improved; the issue of direct elections had previously been considered by Defra and was understood not to have formed part of the review.

The Committee's Consideration

It was confirmed that the report related to the annual review of the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance adopted in 2009 and based on the framework produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accounting and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers. The outcome of the review was a draft Annual Governance Statement that Members were recommended to approve for inclusion with the Annual Accounts for 2010/11. As part of its governance and internal control systems for 2011/12, the Authority would be taking into account any requirements of forthcoming localism legislation as applicable to National Park Authorities.

RESOLVED: (1) To adopt the Annual Governance Review.
(2) To approve the Annual Governance Statement for inclusion with the Annual Accounts for 2010/11.

52. **UPGRADE OF TOILET FACILITIES AT COUNTY GATE**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Corporate Services.

Public Question Time

Mrs Molly Groves, Exmoor Uprising, considered quotations for the refurbishment of the existing toilets to be excessive. She questioned whether demolition of the toilet block would improve the landscape setting and requested details of the cost of drainage and landscaping works anticipated by the scheme to convert the walkers' shelter. Mrs Groves

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asked that all accounts relating to the upgrade of toilet facilities at County Gate be itemised.

The Committee's Consideration

The results of a comparative tender exercise to evaluate the approximate cost of refurbishment of the toilets at County Gate against demolition of the existing toilet block and conversion of the walkers' shelter to three cubicle units had been reported to Members. The Committee was advised that conversion of the walkers' shelter would require land drainage and landscaping works, which in view of the sensitivity of the site would be carried out by the Authority's Field Services Team and involve a materials cost of approximately £12,000.

Members acknowledged the Authority's obligation to ensure that its public toilet facilities complied with the Disability Discrimination Act, and noted that while the existing sewage treatment arrangements could be used, it was likely that the septic tank would require replacement in the medium term.

Although mindful of the expenditure required, there was support from some Members for refurbishment of the existing toilets, which as the lower cost option would achieve Disability Discrimination Act compliance and improve the visual aspect of the building. They were unconvinced of the landscape gain to be achieved by demolition of the toilet block and one Member questioned whether the reduced number of cubicle units envisaged by conversion of the walkers' shelter would be adequate to support the number of visitors to the site.

While agreeing it was difficult to consider capital expenditure at a time of financial constraint, other Members noted that reserves had previously been set aside for implementation of the Authority's Toilet Upgrade Programme, which included improvement of the facilities at County Gate. They believed conversion of the walkers' shelter and renewal of the septic tank to be an opportunity to provide a high standard facility for years to come, and that installation of a modern facility and reduced maintenance costs of the site could achieve longer-term cost savings. It was also their view that demolition of the existing toilet block would improve the landscape setting of an important visitor destination. The majority of Members having supported a proposal to implement a scheme to demolish the existing toilet block and convert the walkers' shelter, it was agreed that the cost of the works, including provision of a new water supply, should be contained within the remaining £86,000 balance on the Toilet Upgrade Programme.

RESOLVED: To approve provision of a new water supply; demolition of the existing toilet block and conversion of the walkers' shelter and renewal of the septic tank as the toilet upgrade scheme to be carried out at County Gate within the £86,000 balance of the Toilet Upgrade Programme.

53. **PERSONNEL UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Corporate Services.

Public Question Time

Mrs Molly Groves, Exmoor Uprising, agreed that the National Park Authority was a major employer but expressed disappointment that a greater number of its employees did not originate from Exmoor. She also considered that moorland enhancement projects to be implemented by the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership Scheme did not represent good use by the Heritage Lottery Fund of its grant funding.

The Committee's Consideration

Staff Changes: The staff changes were noted and it was reported that five requests for voluntary redundancy had been accepted.

Employer Contributions to the Somerset County Council Pension Fund:

The pension fund was revalued every 3 years and at 31 March 2010, the Authority's employer contribution rates had been set for the three years 2011/12 to 2013/14. The actuary had produced contribution rates in two parts, a percentage to cover future service costs and an annual sum for past service deficit recovery; and this approach would have the effect of reducing the overall pension fund deficit.

It was noted that the independent Public Service Pensions Commission's review of public service pension provision chaired by Lord Hutton was likely to recommend proposals to increase public sector employees' pension contributions and to change public sector pensions from a final-salary basis to a pension based on average pay over a career. If adopted, it was anticipated that these recommendations would be implemented from a future prescriptive date.

Staff Cost of Living Pay Award 2011/12: The Local Government Employers had advised there would be no cost of living pay award for 2011/12, believing the protection of services and mitigation of job losses and redundancies should take priority over any increase in pay.

RESOLVED: To note the personnel change that have occurred since April 2010, the changes to the Authority's pension contribution rates from 2011/12 and the position regarding the 2011 staff cost of living pay award.

54. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY**

There was none.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm

(Chairman)

Original Budget 2011/12

Budget Heading	2010/11	2011/12			Variance
	Revised Budget	Expenditure	Income	Net	
	£	£	£	£	
Woodland Management & Support	50,400	66,700	16,500	50,200	(200)
Landscape Advice & Support	81,560	81,400		81,400	(160)
ENPA Estate	(11,000)	69,500	102,100	(32,600)	(21,600)
CareMore for Exmoor		5,000	5,000		
Engagement with Farmers	26,500	33,200	4,900	28,300	1,800
Wildlife Advice & Support	14,000	27,900		27,900	13,900
Conservation Management	80,700	81,000		81,000	300
Archaeology	97,500	102,000	4,000	98,000	500
Historic Buildings & Settlements	29,600	14,100		14,100	(15,500)
Access & Recreation	57,800	83,300	27,000	56,300	(1,500)
South West Coast Path		15,000	15,000		
Visitor Facilities & Car Parks	92,200	122,200	40,500	81,700	(10,500)
National Park & Information Centres	130,000	210,200	80,100	130,100	100
Pinkery Outdoor Activity Centre	35,000	122,900	87,000	35,900	900
Information & Access Management	117,000	116,900		116,900	(100)
Interpretation Management	67,000	67,300		67,300	300
Education Services	71,500	51,300	300	51,000	(20,500)
Sustainability & Economy	74,600	72,600		72,600	(2,000)
Rangers	143,500	142,600	6,100	136,500	(7,000)
Field Services	338,600	341,600	75,300	266,300	(72,300)
Volunteers & Outreach	25,500	25,600		25,600	100
Development Management	150,600	214,100	67,000	147,100	(3,500)
Planning & Community Management	113,700	99,100	3,000	96,100	(17,600)
Policy & Community	103,100	110,600		110,600	7,500
Support to the Community	5,000	5,000		5,000	
Corporate Support	240,400	236,700		236,700	(3,700)
Corporate Management	120,700	120,900		120,900	200
Finance	105,600	140,200	30,000	110,200	4,600
Personnel & Admin Support	162,700	149,600		149,600	(13,100)
ICT Services	250,100	251,600		251,600	1,500
Legal Services	71,150	70,000		70,000	(1,150)
Member Services	158,200	135,300		135,300	(22,900)
Premises Management	130,700	155,900	15,200	140,700	10,000
Training - Members	9,000	9,000		9,000	
- Staff	25,000	25,000		25,000	
Savings to be found		(75,000)		(75,000)	(75,000)
Sub-Total	3,167,910	3,500,300	579,000	2,921,300	(246,610)
Contingencies	48,643				(48,643)
Total Core Budget	3,216,553	3,500,300	579,000	2,921,300	(295,253)
Transitional Funding		252,000		252,000	
Total Budget	3,216,553	3,752,300	579,000	3,173,300	



DISCRETIONARY BUDGET 2011/12

	£
1 Priority elements - top sliced	
Support for upland farmers - SW Uplands Federation etc	5,000
Mosaic commitment - outreach programme run by Campaign of National Parks	5,000
Volunteering opportunities - to support volunteering partnership	4,200
Active recreation - to continue work of Active Exmoor	5,000
Visitor satisfaction survey	2,000
Rural Housing Project	1,000
Farm Management payments	18,000
Exmoor Ponies	2,000
Research & Data gathering	7,000
Monument Management Scheme	4,000
Total	<u>53,200</u>
2 Fund for other calls for discretionary funding including Sustainable Development Fund and other grants (indicative allowances below)	
a) Landscape, land management, access, biodiversity, cultural heritage, conservation areas etc	248,800
b) SDF, community and economy including tourism business support.	180,000
c) Information, enhancing visitor experience, education and outreach.	110,000
Total	<u>538,800</u>
Total Discretionary Budget	<u><u>592,000</u></u>

Appendix B

Discretionary Budget Sub Committee

The Sub-Committee shall comprise 5 Members of the Resources and Performance Committee, of whom at least one shall be a local authority Member and at least one shall be a Member appointed by the Secretary of State. The Members shall be the Chairman (who will preside at meetings) and Deputy Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee and three Members chosen by the Committee. At least three Members of the Sub-Committee must be present in order to provide a quorum.

The Sub Committee shall:

- Be allocated by the Resources and Performance Committee a budget for each financial year which must not be exceeded.
- Consider bids for Authority projects alongside proposals from communities, external groups, businesses or individuals taking account of the indicative areas approved each year by the Resources and Performance Committee.
- Approve funding for projects the focus of which to be the achievement of National Park purposes with a weighting to projects that also provide community and economic benefits.
- Submit the minutes of meetings containing details of approvals to the next meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee.