

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Standards Committee**

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **INAUGURAL MEETING OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2010**

Held at Capron House, Midhurst at 1.30pm

Present:

Nick Bennett  
Jim Funnell  
Tom Tupper

David Burden  
Dame Denise Holt #(Chair)

Anne Dickens #  
Andrew Shaxson

# Independent member

Officers: Kevin Gardner (Interim Monitoring Officer), Fiona MacLeod (Interim Member Services Officer)

#### **WELCOME**

1. The Interim Monitoring Officer welcomed members to the first meeting of the Committee and introduced the newly appointed independent members Dame Denise Holt (Chair) and Anne Dickens (Deputy Chair).

#### **APOLOGIES**

2. There were no apologies.

#### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3. There were no declarations of interest.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

4. No questions were raised.

#### **THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

5. Report SC01/10 explaining the statutory role and functions of the Committee was introduced by the Interim Monitoring Officer, who made reference to the training session held for members prior to the meeting.
6. Members gave thought to how the Committee could develop its role in promoting high standards of conduct within the Authority. It was felt that the promotion of high ethical standards could contribute to establishing and maintaining stakeholder confidence in the developing National Park Management Plan. Members therefore saw a role for high ethical standards in supporting the core business of the Authority, and felt that this applied regardless of likely future changes in the law regarding the local government standards regime. It was felt that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee should meet the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority to discuss the development of the Committee's role and its contribution to the work of the Authority.

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7. The Interim Monitoring Officer reported that all Authority members would continue to receive training and guidance on the Code of Conduct adopted by the Authority in April 2010 together with a future presentation on the role of the Standards Committee.
8. The Interim Monitoring Officer clarified that the Authority's complaints process was under development and would be reported to the Standards Committee in February.
9. **Resolved:** that the Committee
  - 1 notes the statutory role and functions of a standards committee
  - 2 aims to develop its role in promoting high standards of conduct as part of the core business of the South Downs National Park Authority

**PROCEDURES FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND DETERMINATION OF COMPLAINTS UNDER THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT**

10. Report SC 02/10 explaining the statutory requirements relating to the receipt, assessment, investigation and determination of allegations of failure to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct and the procedures to ensure compliance was introduced by the Interim Monitoring Officer.
11. In response to a question regarding member refusal to comply with Code of Conduct sanctions against them, the Interim Monitoring Officer clarified that, should a member refuse to co-operate with a sanction, then the matter could become a fresh and more serious breach of the Code for further consideration. Refusal to comply could also result in referral of the matter to the Standards Board.
12. It was agreed that the address for submission of a complaint, in the complaints form, should be amended to be the same as that in para. 2.1 of the procedures. With regard to para 10.1, videoconferencing would be considered for assessment and review meetings.
13. Authority members would be updated at the Authority meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> November of the adoption of the procedures, which would subsequently be published on the Authority's web site [www.southdowns.gov.uk](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk)
14. **Resolved:** that the Committee
  - 1 approves the procedures appended to the report
  - 2 agrees that these procedures should be published on the Authority's website
  3. agrees that all Members of the Authority should be advised that these procedures had been approved and would be available on the Authority's website for information.

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**STANDARDS COMMITTEE OUTLINE WORKPLAN AND TRAINING NEEDS**

15. The Committee considered Report SC 03/10 which was introduced by the Interim Monitoring Officer. Members were updated that, as announced by Government on 14 November 2010, the law of predetermination would be reviewed and was expected to allow members to express views more freely. Legislation was expected to be published in the near future.
16. During discussion, it was agreed that the following would be incorporated into the Committee's workplan
  - training for the Committee Chair and Deputy Chair on the South Downs Management Plan
  - discussion on the relationship between the Standards and Audit Committees
  - benchmarking for monitoring Standards e.g. annual report on attendance, member interests, complaints raised
  - highlighting the positive role of the Committee in championing standards within the Authority
  - dates for three scheduled meetings of the Committee in 2011 -12 to be reported to the February 2011 meeting
17. **Resolved:** that the Committee
  - 1 subject to the comments raised, agrees the work plan for the Committee appended to the report
  - 2 keeps under review Members' training needs arising so that the Committee can implement its agreed work plan

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm