

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

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY Agenda Item 4

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2011

Held at Capron House, Midhurst at 10.30am

Present:

Nick Bennett	David Burden	Anne Dickens #
Jim Funnell	Dame Denise Holt #(Chair)	Andrew Shaxson
Tom Tupper	Charles Peck (ex-officio)	

Independent member of the Committee

SDNPA Officers: Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), John Beckerleg (Director of Corporate Services), Fiona MacLeod (Member Services Manager)

APOLOGIES

18. Apologies were received from Margaret Paren (ex-officio member).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

19. There were no declarations of interest, however Andrew Shaxson drew members' attention to the fact that he was Chair of the Chichester District Council Planning Committee regarding the Agenda item on Local Protocol for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters.

MINUTES

20. The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on the 15 November 2010 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

URGENT MATTERS

21. There were no urgent matters raised.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

22. There were no members of the public present.

LOCAL PROTOCOL FOR MEMBERS AND OFFICERS DEALING WITH PLANNING MATTERS

23. Report SC 01/11 inviting comments from the Committee on the draft protocol was introduced by the Monitoring Officer, who highlighted that this was the first of a suite of governance documents for discussion at the meeting.

Nick Bennett joined the meeting at 10.40am

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24. The Committee was reminded that, subject to comments, the draft Protocol would be considered by the Planning Committee on 14 February 2011 and taken to the full Authority meeting on 29 March 2011 for approval.
25. During discussion, officers clarified the following in response to Members' questions:
- An Executive Summary of the key points would be added for ease of reference
 - It was understood that, as part of the Section 101 Agreement, the relevant local authorities would be required to undertake the appropriate level of training on planning matters affecting the National Park
 - If a Planning Committee Member was representing local views at a Planning Committee meeting, it would be considered that the Member would have a 'closed mind' regarding the application and must take no further part in the meeting for that item. If, however, the Member merely reported local issues for information purposes only, then they would normally be able to remain in the meeting
 - The Protocol for site visits would be strengthened to reflect the requirement that there must be no formal or informal discussion between Members and/or officers, or with applicants/objectors should they be present at the time
 - The senior officer present would direct the site visit in conjunction with the Chair of the Planning Committee
26. **Resolved:** that, subject to amendments agreed by the Standards and Planning Committees, the draft Protocol be recommended for approval by the Authority

LOCAL PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS

27. Report SC 02/11 inviting comments from the Committee on the draft Protocol was introduced by the Monitoring Officer.
28. During discussion, the following observations were made
- A culture of support between Members and officers should be encouraged
 - Links to reference documents, etc should be added
 - In the interest of transparency, the Monitoring Officer would be made aware of and record any hospitality provided to Members following a presentation or talk at an event
29. **Resolved:** that, subject to amendments agreed by the Standards Committee, the draft Protocol be recommended for approval by the Authority

OFFICER CODE OF CONDUCT

30. Report SC 03/11 inviting comments from the Committee on the draft protocol was introduced by the Monitoring Officer, who drew Members' attention to the seven key principles in the protocol. The protocol would be subject to review and consultation over a 12 month period.
31. Following discussion, it was agreed to delete section 8.2 of the protocol (Personal Interests) as it was felt to be unnecessary.

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32. **Resolved:** that, subject to amendments agreed by the Standards Committee, the draft Protocol be recommended for approval by the Authority

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY

33. Report SC 04/11 inviting comments from the Committee on the draft Policy setting out how people can offer feedback or complain about the services of the South Downs National Park Authority was introduced by the Director of Corporate Services. The Committee was reminded of the separate provision for handling complaints against Members of the Authority.
34. Following discussion, the following amendments were proposed:
- Feedback Form to be renamed 'Compliments, Comments and Complaints'
 - Ensure 'staff tips' removed from public document and web site publication
 - Change the email address for complaining about a Member's conduct to that of the Monitoring Officer
 - Delete the word 'to' from the sentence in the second box on page 3 of the current Customer Feedback Form
35. The Monitoring Officer explained that the Standards Committee Terms of Reference included the monitoring of the overall effectiveness of the complaints process and outcomes.
36. **Resolved:** that, subject to amendments proposed, the Standards Committee recommends the draft Policy be recommended for approval by the Authority

LOCALISM BILL – CHANGES TO STANDARDS REGIME

37. Report SC 05/11 updating the Committee on the proposed changes to the standards regime was introduced by the Monitoring Officer.
38. Members asked that this topic be discussed further at a future Committee meeting.
39. **Resolved:** that the Committee notes the proposed changes to the standards regime

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm