

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
AUTHORITY MEETING: 28 March 2007**

**MONITORING MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE**

**Report by:** Member Services

**Summary:** The Authority adopted a revised scheme of allowances at its meeting on 18 January 2007, in line with recommendations made by an independent remuneration panel. As part of its recommendations the independent panel suggested that the Authority adopt a "light touch" system to monitor members' attendance at meetings and workshops of the Authority and its committees.

The Standards Committee has now reviewed a set of draft tables to enable Member Services to record the attendance of members at Authority meetings and events, and recommends their systematic use from 1 April 2007 as the "light touch" system for monitoring members' attendance.

The draft tables are attached as **Annex 1** to the report.

**Recommendation:**

**That the Authority considers the draft monitoring tables and, subject to any comments, approves their use from 1 April 2007, noting that the information will be reported annually to the Standards Committee.**

**Corporate Plan:** Objective A1 – Build the new Authority

**Resources:**

None.

**Papers:**

NFNPA 171/07 Cover paper

NFNPA 171/07: Annex 1 – Attendance sheets

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**1 Introduction**

1.1 The Authority adopted a revised scheme of allowances at its meeting on 18 January 2007, in line with recommendations made to the Authority by an independent remuneration panel. The revised scheme featured increases to the basic allowance paid by the Authority to its members.

1.2 As part of its recommendations the independent panel suggested that the Authority adopt a "light touch" system to monitor members' attendance at meetings and workshops of the Authority and its committees. Paragraph 5.2 of the independent panel's report stated that:

*"The Panel felt that there should be some form of accountability of members' activity. A number of those interviewed agreed with this, although not all. An electronic system, allied with mileage claims, could be helpful in this. The Panel is not suggesting a detailed method, rather a simple note of what has been achieved, meetings attended, etc."*

1.3 The above recommendation was supported by the Standards Committee on 27 November 2006.

**2 Monitoring members' attendance**

2.1 The Standards Committee has subsequently reviewed spreadsheet tables drawn up by Member Services which record members' attendance since April 2006 at Authority meetings and at each of the Committees, namely the Planning Development Control Committee, the Resources and Performance Committee and the Standards Committee. A further table has also been produced which details members' attendance at non-committee events such as workshops, members briefings and training sessions. These tables are attached as **Annex 1**. The tables have been prepared, **for illustrative purposes only**, from data currently held by Member Services. The data may not be completely accurately and, thus far, members have not been asked to provide information on their reasons for not attending meetings.

- 2.2 At the Authority meeting on 18 January 2007, it was pointed out that officers should bear in mind the fact that most members had responsibilities outside the Authority, and whilst this brought greater expertise to Authority meetings there would be times when members were unavoidably committed elsewhere. The circumstances surrounding absences for these reasons should therefore be considered when recording attendance of members at meetings.
- 2.3 The draft tables are intended simply to record attendance at meetings and workshops as an indicator of members' time commitment to Authority business. However, in line with the points made by members at the January Authority meeting, the tables will also record when members' absences are a result of either other National Park Authority business or other business, including public sector business, where this information is known. From April 2007 members will be asked to notify Member Services of the reasons for their absence from meetings where these absences are caused by other business conducted on behalf of the Authority or in the pursuit of other work or public sector business. Other reasons for absence, such as illness, can also be recorded.
- 2.4 It is intended that where dates of meetings or workshops are changed, or particular meetings do not fall on the normal day of the week, the tables will take account of this. Appropriate shading would also be used to illustrate those events which are not relevant to all members.
- 2.5 As the information in the tables is set out in a spreadsheet format, it will be possible to extract statistical information and produce this as required for consideration by the Standards Committee. This could illustrate, for example, data on categories of attendance per member, categories of attendance per meeting or categorised annual attendance figures per member or meeting.
- 2.6 Following the meeting of the Standards Committee a further suggestion was made that a table be created to log members' attendance at external meetings as representatives of the Authority. This would help to demonstrate that many members are putting in time and effort in ways that are not fully obvious from the other forms. Members of the Standards Committee have supported this approach, and subject to approval by the Authority the Member Services section will add this to the schedules.
- 2.7 Information and statistics taken from the completed tables will be used in annual reports to the Standards Committee, and will thus be publicly available.

### **3 Recommendation**

**That the Authority considers the draft monitoring tables and, subject to any comments, approves their use from 1 April 2007, noting that the information will be reported annually to the Standards Committee.**