

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
MINUTES OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 31 JANUARY 2022 AT 2:00 PM  
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON**

**Attending:**

Committee: George Bisson (Chairman)  
Zoe Clewer

Officers: Rosalind Alderman                      Solicitor and Monitoring Officer  
Vicki Gibbon                                      Member Services Administrator

**1            Apologies for Absence**

1.1           Apologies for absence were received from Victoria Mander and Ann Sevier.

**2            Declarations of Interest**

2.1           Rosalind Alderman told members that a dispensation had been issued under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to allow the Committee to discuss members' allowances. The members present also had a personal interest in that agenda item.

**3            Minutes**

3.1           The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

**4            Public Question Time**

4.1           There were no public questions on this occasion.

**5            Review of Members Scheme of Allowances (SC 52/22)**

5.1           Rosalind Alderman advised members that the NPA must adopt a new Scheme of Members' Allowances to run from 1 April 2022 for a period of up to four years. The last scheme was adopted on 1 April 2018 and would expire on 31 March 2022. Ms Alderman reminded members that the law required members to have regard to the findings of any IRP convened by local authorities that appoint members to the Authority. The paper also set out the basic allowance amounts paid by other National Park Authorities for members' consideration. Ms Alderman noted that the basic allowance since 2018 had increased in line with periodic staff cost of living awards, and the officer recommendation in the paper was to continue on this basis. However, this year it appeared likely that there would be two levels of awards granted, with a lower award to those officers on band 9 and a slightly larger percentage being awarded to those below that band, although the final figures were not yet known. Members were asked to determine which award should be offered, if they wished to continue index linking the basic allowance in this way for successive years. It was also suggested that the Scheme of Allowances be amended to provide a dependent carer allowance (DCA), and members considered what figure this should be, with reference to the DCAs paid by two other National Park Authorities, Test Valley and New Forest District Council.

5.2           Following a full and detailed discussion in which members considered the recommendations of the IRPS of appointing bodies and also noted that the current allowance was comparatively low when considered against the allowances paid by other National Park Authorities, it was proposed that the basic allowances should increase to £2500 for four years, as index linked to the staff pay award for senior staff, with a dependent carers allowance of £10.50 being claimable where necessary

as a result of attendance at meetings of the Authority and its Committees by members with dependants. Members also agreed including a co-optees' allowance as per the paper. Officers would raise the question of available resources with the Chief Finance Officer and if necessary this could be discussed by the Resources Audit and Performance Committee to consider whether resources were available for the proposed increase.

- 5.3 Members agreed that the proposed Scheme would be reported to the full Authority meeting in March for final decision.

**Resolved, that**

The Standards Committee recommend to the full Authority meeting in March 2022 that the draft Scheme of Allowances annexed to the report should be adopted for a further years with the basic allowance to be increased to £2500 per annum, index linked to any staff pay awards for senior staff for four years with effect from 1 April 2022, and that a Dependent Carers Allowance of £10.50 be added to the Scheme of Members Allowances together with a co-optees' allowance as per the report.

*Voting: Unanimous*

**6. Any other items which the Chair decides are urgent**

- 6.1 With the Chair's permission, Ms Alderman advised that prior to the Localism Act 2011 an exemption from the rules on pecuniary interests (the equivalent of what would now be Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, or DPIs) had existed to allow members to discuss matters relating to allowances, and after that Act was passed a number of local authorities, including the Authority, had taken the view that because allowances could be considered as compensatory in nature rather than being carried on 'for profit or gain' they were not caught by the rules on DPIs. However, the current legal advice was that the rules should be interpreted to the effect that members' allowances would be caught by these rules, and therefore in order to be able to discuss them members were required to ask for a dispensation pursuant to the provisions of the Localism Act. Ms Alderman proposed that she would write to all members to ask them to request dispensations in respect of allowances (and also other items that would affect all or a substantial number of members, such as decisions relating to the Local Plan or matters that related to appointing authorities), in order to put together a group dispensation in relation to these matters. The members present supported this approach, although a formal vote was not necessary, with the Chair suggesting that it would be helpful if the form contain guidance as to which members needed to request which dispensations (because the local authority appointment issue would not apply to all members).

**7 Date of next meeting**

- 7.1 TBC.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm.

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Chairman

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Date