

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2025 AT 2:00 PM
IN THE ANDERWOOD ROOM, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL OFFICES, AVENUE ROAD,
LYMINGTON**

Attending:

Committee: Barry Dunning
Mel Kendal (Deputy Chair)
Victoria Mander
Ann Sevier (Chair)
Derrick Tipp

Officers:	Rosalind Alderman	Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
	Nigel Stone	Head of Resources (CFO)
	David Stone	Corporate Services Manager

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Brice Stratford and Zoe Clewer.

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1 No declarations of interest were made on this occasion.

3 Minutes

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

4 Public Question Time

4.1 There were no public questions on this occasion.

5 Standards Consultation (SC 56/25)

5.1 Rosalind Alderman advised that the Government had announced that it would be consulting on changes to the standards regime. On 18 December 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government issued a consultation entitled 'Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England'. She said that the consultation would run for ten weeks from its publication date and drew members' attention to a link which could be used to access the consultation document.

5.2 She said that the consultation sought views on proposed reforms to the current standards and conduct regime for local authority members, which was established by the Localism Act 2011, including reintroducing powers of suspension and widening the circumstances in which members would be disqualified. As part of its plans for greater local devolution, the Government felt that people should expect to be able to trust local authority members to uphold high ethical standards and act in the best interests of the communities they serve.

5.3 She drew attention to paragraph 2.2 of the report which set out the measures on which public views were requested. David Stone suggested that the Member Services team write to members seeking their views on the measures set out in paragraph 2.2 and then consolidate these views for a response to the Government prior to the deadline of 26 February 2025.

5.4 This approach was supported by members who thereafter noted the report.

Resolved, that

1. the Members' Services Team write to members of the Standards Committee seeking their views on the measures set out in paragraph 2.2 of the submitted report in connection with the Government's Consultation document 'Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England' and then consolidate these views into a response to the Government prior to the deadline of 26 February 2025.

Voting: Unanimous

6. Update to Indemnification of members and officers

- 6.1 Rosalind Alderman presented the report and advised that in 2006 the Authority resolved to indemnify its members and officers, and authorised the Chief Executive to maintain adequate insurance in that regard, in respect of potential liability for acts or omissions of members or officers.
- 6.2 She said that given the passage of time it was now appropriate for, the existing Indemnity which was attached as Annex 2 to her report to be reviewed and updated and, in particular, to extend it to cover the Independent Persons appointed by the Authority and any co-opted members who may be appointed to one of the Authority's Committees in the future. A number of other amendments were also suggested, as summarised in her report.
- 6.3 She requested that the Standards Committee to consider the draft amended Indemnity attached as Annex 1, and, if considered appropriate, to recommend to the full Authority that it grant the revised Indemnity at its meeting on 23 January 2025 and authorise the Chief Executive to ensure the Authority's insurance covers the amended Indemnity.
- 6.4 Following discussion, members supported the amended indemnity for onward recommendation to the Authority meeting on 23 January 2025.

Resolved, that it be recommended to the Authority meeting on 23 January 2025 that the Authority

- (i) grants an indemnity to members and employees of the Authority, and Independent Persons appointed by it pursuant to the Localism Act 2011, on the terms set out in Annex 1 to the submitted report; and
- (ii) authorises the Chief Executive to ensure that the Authority's insurance arrangements make adequate provision to cover the Authority's liability under the Indemnity.

Voting: Unanimous

7. Minor amendments to Authority documents

- 7.1 Rosalind Alderman advised that the Authority's Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegations, and other key governing documents fall due for review in 2025. Among other changes that could potentially be made at this time, officers and members have been discussing whether the remit of the Standards Committee should be broadened, and whether the frequency of Planning Committee meetings should be adjusted, as well as whether the delegations in respect of planning matters should be simplified.
- 7.2 However, in view of the recent national consultation on the holding of remote / hybrid meetings and proxy voting, the outcome of which is awaited and which will need to be reflected in the Standing Orders, the invitation to give views on a suggested national scheme of delegation in respect of planning decisions, which is likely to result in a significant amendment to the Planning Committee's remit, and the standards consultation that is the subject of another report to the meeting, it was considered that it would be premature to make substantial amendments to the Authority's governing documents at this time.
- 7.3 Members and officers were also considering whether it would be appropriate to co-opt members onto one of the Authority's Committees, and if following further discussion and consideration this course of action is considered practicable and desirable, it would necessitate a review of the Authority's constitutional documents and its Committee structure to allow this change. It might accordingly be sensible to await the outcome of national changes before pursuing this course of action.
- 7.4 Members considered the above points and also the further issues outlined in the submitted report where it was also considered sensible to await the outcome of national changes before making changes to the constitutional documents in respect of these issues.
- 7.5 In the meantime, Rosalind Alderman advised that there were a number of minor amendments that could usefully be made to ensure the Authority's documents remain fit for purpose, pending any national changes to be made, if any. Accordingly, the Committee was asked to consider the draft Standing Orders and Member Complaints Process, attached as Annexes 1 and 2 respectively to the submitted report and if thought appropriate recommend these to the full Authority for approval at its meeting on 23 January 2025
- 7.6 Members briefly debated the situation with regard to the timing of amendments to the constitutional documents both in the interim and when further changes might occur due to the national consultations which were taking place and agreed to recommend the draft updated Standing Orders and Member Complaints Process to the Authority meeting on 23 January for approval.

Resolved, that:

1. the submitted report and the future need to revise the Authority's governing documents in view of national changes be noted; and
2. it be recommend to the Authority meeting on 23 January 2025 that it adopt the revised Standing Orders and Member Complaints Process (Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations) attached to this report as Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

Voting: Unanimous

8 Date of next meeting

8.1 To be advised.

The meeting ended at 3.02 pm.

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Chairman

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Date