

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Staff Consultative Forum

**held at Board Room, Grantown
on Wednesday 21 February 2007 at 11.00am**

Present

David Cameron (Chair)
Eric Baird
Sara Krawczynska
Quentin McLaren
Anne MacLean
Gavin Miles
Fran Scott

In Attendance

Alan Denney (Prospect)

Apologies

Fiona Munro

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies as above.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

2. Minutes of the previous two meetings were agreed (i.e. 6 November and 20 December 2006).

Matters arising not covered on Agenda

Minutes of 6 November 2006 – actions not completed

3. *Monitoring mechanism for cleaners in place (para 26 14.08.06)*
Ongoing. The contract cleaning company identified can no longer deliver so alternative options are being explored.
4. *Issue guidelines re general housekeeping (para 28 14.08.06)*
The Chair will issue a general guideline to staff once the new arrangements are in place (see above).
5. *Issue update note on Gateway Scheme (para 11)*
The HR Manager has now received information and will issue a note soon.

6. *Piggy back on discounted hotel rates (e.g. SNH) (para 24)*
The Chair still to pursue.
7. *Alert Line Managers to Craigdon quote for boots (para 51)*
Suppliers have not come forward.
8. *Consider article in Housing Magazine on auditing customer care (para 62)*
The Chair and HR Manager still to consider.

Pay Offer 2006/07

9. The Chair said that whilst an update paper had been circulated on the Pay Award, he had in fact heard back from Ministers just before going into this meeting. Our proposed pay remit had been passed by the Remuneration Committee in mid-January. However, the news today is that Scottish Ministers have turned down our pay remit, insisting that the total of the pay awards should not exceed 3.5% in 2006/07 or 2007/08. They do not accept the Authority has significant recruitment or retention issues, and as such do not support our business case for a pay award of between 3.5% and 4.5% which would be in the upper band of their pay guidelines.
10. Our proposed pay remit, which included Performance Related Pay (PRP) and other changes to salary scale, came to around 2.33%. Added to this was a cost of living increase of 2%, making a total of around 4.33% for 2006/07.
11. The Chair stressed he was aware of how disappointing this news was, and of the ongoing frustration and length of time taken. He was also mindful that we are approaching both the Authority's year end and the tax year end, and that there could be tax or Child Tax Credit implications for staff if the pay award is not settled before the end of March.
12. Alan Denney was able to confirm that the CNPA was not alone in being put back, and that no-one in all of the Scottish Executive's (SE) control areas has had a remit above 3.5% approved. He said that an Arbitration Hearing for the Scottish Prison Service had been set up for 14 March 2007, at which Prospect would be trying to move beyond the 2% on offer at present – they were pushing for 5%. A decision will be announced 14 days later. Alan suggested that we put things on hold until this outcome is known, as it may give us ammunition to go back to the SE and deal.
13. The Chair stressed the need for staff input on how to take this matter forward. He was aware that if negotiations are postponed too long, parliament closed for business on 4 April 2007 in the run up to Elections and a decision could be delayed until summer. It was suggested that the staff representatives take 10 minutes out to discuss. The Chair offered to update staff at the staff meeting on Tuesday (27 February), with agreed support from the staff representatives. The options as he saw them were:
 - (i) Settle for 2 year remit at no more than 3.5% for each year.
 - (ii) Adapt settlement for one year only, re-starting negotiations for 2007/08.
 - (iii) Seek further renegotiation with Scottish Executive to push case for settlement within higher (3.5% to 4.5%) band.

14. The HR Manager said that earlier in the negotiations with the SE, the CNPA had asked if it could award the PRP only whilst the negotiations on the cost of living increase were in progress, to be told that this could not be done independently. However, given the amount of time that had elapsed since that request, employer representatives were considering whether or not this would be possible now.
15. The HR Manager was not comfortable with how the CNPA would stand if a claim was made against it for withholding PRP, as it was part of contractual agreements. Alan Denney confirmed that a claim might be made for unlawful deductions of wages in this case. He stated that whilst Prospect may recommend their members to accept the SE limit of 3.5% for 2006/07, it couldn't do so for 2007/08 due to the prevailing cost of living costs.
16. The Chair said that they had started negotiations with the SE in April 2006 and it had taken until now (10 months) to be knocked back. If the decision was to look at one year only, starting over again for 2007/08 onwards, he felt it would prove very difficult to get a sensible agreement with the SE.
17. The employee representatives left the room at 11.45am to discuss how best to take the pay award forward.
18. The meeting resumed at 12.00 noon, when the employee representatives returned. They all agreed that they were not in a position to make a decision on behalf of staff, and asked that employer representatives e-mail staff with an explanatory note of how things stood now with our proposed pay remit. **It was agreed that the Chair would do this as soon as possible, which would give staff a chance to respond to staff representatives / think of questions before the staff meeting on Tuesday.**
19. Alan Denney cautioned against including detailed options to staff at this stage, until clearance has been received to make an offer. The HR Manager said this would involve re-submitting a remit that's acceptable to staff. It was agreed that the Chair's note to staff would inform them of the situation at present.
20. Members discussed further just paying PRP to staff whilst negotiations were ongoing (see para 14). The Chair was concerned that if this was done without clearance from the SE, we may contravene legislation. Anne MacLean said that it was the Board's responsibility to protect the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Services. Therefore, the Board would have to approve authorisation of PRP. **It was agreed that a proposal would have to be put to the Staffing & Recruitment Committee, before any decision was made.**
21. Alan Denney said that whilst the Authority might be able to justify paying PRP as the pay award delays were seriously affecting staff, it may result in ongoing implications – e.g. mean an overspend, and make negotiations with the SE harder for future years.
22. **The Chair rounded off by saying that after the staff meeting on Tuesday, a final follow-up note would be issued to staff, with a response date of 9 March 2007.** Members agreed to meet again on Friday 16 March 2007. Alan Denney said he would be able to give an informal report then of the 14 March Arbitration (para 12).

Childcare Vouchers & Cycle Scheme

23. The HR Manager introduced this information paper, which was to update staff on the Childcare Vouchers and Cycle Purchase Salary Sacrifice Schemes. **The CNPA were now in a position to progress with these schemes, and proposed to implement them early in the 2007/08 financial year.**
24. To summarise, Salary Sacrifice is where an employee sacrifices a proportion of their salary for a specific benefit – in this case either Childcare Vouchers or access to the Cycle Scheme. Staff would gain tax/NI relief when paying for approved childcare, and in gaining access to a bicycle for work and personal use.
25. With regards to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme, your final salary benefits are not affected as pension contributions are calculated on your pre-sacrifice salary. Your maternity pay would also remain unaffected as long as you qualify for CNPA maternity benefits.
26. Alan Denney was concerned that staff be aware of when they would have to opt out of the Salary Sacrifice Scheme, reverting to full salary, so that it would not affect maternity pay. The HR Manager confirmed that full details would be included in guidance notes, which she planned to include in the staff Induction Pack.

Redundancy Policy Paper

27. The HR Manager introduced this paper, explaining that draft Redundancy Policy & Procedures had been developed after being raised as part of discussions last year over restructuring the Management Team (MT). The draft policy sets out steps according to ACAS guidance and legal requirements and once agreed will be added to the Staff Handbook.
28. Alan Denney raised the following points in the “procedures” section:
 - (i) **Planning Stage** - “invitation for volunteers (if appropriate)” – Alan felt that the Authority should always be looking for volunteers as the first step in any potential redundancy situation arising.
 - (ii) **Consultation** - Alan asked if the sentence could be rephrased to make it clear that any consultation should include Prospect (not just say Staff Consultative Forum).
 - (iii) **Appeal Hearing** - Alan asked for “if appropriate” to be clarified to say “if someone appeals”.
29. With regard to the point on volunteers, the HR Manager responded that it would, indeed, be the Authority’s approach to consider the potential for volunteers as the first step in any process. The text “(if appropriate)” had been included in the draft policy to highlight that in some circumstances the cause leading to, or outcomes sought from the redundancy process may not make this element of the process viable. **The HR Manager agreed to consider the wording further prior to finalising the policy.**
30. The Chair also confirmed that the terms of the draft policy would always include Prospect in consultation on any potential redundancy, through its confirmed

representation on the SCF and established partnership agreement. **Again, he agreed that the wording of the draft would be reviewed to make this more explicit.**

31. Alan Denney also raised the terms of redundancy, suggesting that they are negotiated and set down in the Staff Handbook, rather than reaching a settlement at the time of redundancy. The Chair confirmed that the CNPA would use statutory redundancy calculations at present, but **agreed that this point would be discussed at a future meeting on the basis of a detailed paper.**

Support for Higher/Further Education

32. The HR Manager introduced this paper, saying it was prompted by recent comments from some staff and board members, who said it would be fairer if there was a formal system/guidance in place making clear what assistance was available to staff for Higher/Further Education. The paper, which included a draft Application Form, outlined the procedures that staff should follow when seeking support, and the process carried out by the CNPA when assessing any application.
33. Quentin McLaren brought up the “bonding agreement” referred to in the final paragraph of the paper, asking if this was a new thing or if it had been applied in the past. The HR Manager said it was just being proposed now, as any Higher/Further Education course would typically be more expensive and time consuming than a straightforward training course.
34. This led to a lengthy discussion by Members on the feasibility of enforcing a bonding agreement. The Chair acknowledged that it might not be enforceable, but felt it was an important mechanism to highlight the significant investment and support made available by the Authority in these instances. He noted the issues raised, but was going to proceed on the basis that courses “may be subject to a bonding agreement”.
35. Eric Baird raised concerns about the criteria for assessing an application. He questioned whether it would be appropriate use of funds if the “training” was just going to develop an individual and not benefit the organisation.
36. The Chair said that the first step (as laid out in para 1 of The Procedure) for staff was to discuss any plans with their Line Manager, probably at their appraisal, who would help them assess what support may be available. This process would certainly consider both the benefit to the organisation from the training, in addition to the personal benefit to be gained by the individual. The HR Manager felt that as long as the organisation would benefit as a whole, there was no need to be more prescriptive towards an individual.
37. **It was agreed that support for Higher/Further Education would be progressed on the basis of the proposed policy as laid out in the paper circulated.**

Revised Staff Handbook

38. The HR Manager reported that over the last couple of months she had been updating/amending the Staff Handbook, including adding any new policies which had been issued since the handbook was first distributed two years ago. **All Members were**

given a draft copy to read, and they agreed to take any comments with them to the next meeting on 16 March. The HR Manager agreed to send Alan Denney an electronic copy.

39. Anne MacLean reminded the HR Manager that all Board Members should receive a copy of any new or updated policies. **The HR Manager agreed to make sure this was done.**
40. The HR Manager confirmed that the Redundancy Policy would be inserted into the Staff Handbook once it was agreed.

Any Other Business

Membership of the Forum

41. Quentin McLaren asked what the mechanism was to replace Fiona Newcombe on the Forum. The Chair confirmed that he had discussed this with MT and that no members were keen to come on to the group. He asked if Members would like to have a fifth representative from elsewhere, but all agreed that the preference would be to continue with a representative from MT. **The Chair agreed to convey this wish back to the MT**, and would remind them it was just a one year commitment.

Structure Review

42. The Chair said that following on from the request from staff to clarify posts as part of the structure review, the HR Manager had updated the organisation chart, as requested by staff representatives at the previous meeting. This was handed out to Members and the HR Manager explained that she had “taken out” posts that no longer existed, and included notes on secondments and back-filling of posts.
41. **The Chair asked Members to confirm back to the HR Manager** if the chart was detailed enough and met the wishes of staff re clarification of posts.

Date of Next Meeting

42. The next meeting of the Staff Consultative Forum will be held in the Boardroom at 11.00am on Friday 16 March 2007.

Summary of Actions Arising

Ref	Action	Responsible	Due Date
14/08/06	Monitoring mechanism for cleaners in place	DC	Sept 06
14/08/06	Issue guidelines re general housekeeping	DC,FS	Sept 06
06/11/06	Issue update note on Gateway Scheme	FS	
06/11/06	Piggy back on discounted hotel rates (e.g. SNH)	DC	
06/11/06	Alert Line Managers to Craigdon quote for boots	FS	Immediate
06/11/06	Consider article in Housing Magazine on auditing customer care	DC,FS	
18	Issue update note to staff on pay remit	DC	Immediate
20	Submit paper to S&R Committee re PRP element of pay award if it is proposed to go down that route	DC	March 07

**Cairngorms National Park Authority
Staff Consultative Forum
21/02/07 MINUTES**

22	Issue final follow-up note to staff on pay remit	DC	28 Feb
23	Implement Salary Sacrifice Schemes	FS	May 2007
28 (ii)	Rephrase sentence under Consultation	FS	Immediate
28 (iii)	Rephrase sentence under Appeal Hearing	FS	Immediate
29	Include a paper on Terms of Redundancy in future SCF meeting	DC	
35	Progress support for Higher/Further Education	FS	
36	Members to read draft Staff Handbook and bring comments to 16 March meeting	All	16 March
37	Ensure Board Members have new or updated policies	FS	March 07
39	Ask Management Team for someone to join SCF	DC	March 07
41	Confirm to HR Manager if Organisation Chart is detailed enough re clarification of posts	All	