

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Staff Consultative Forum

held at Board Room, Grantown
on Friday 16 March 2007 at 11.00am

Present

David Cameron (Chair)
Sara Krawczynska
Anne MacLean
Fiona Munro

In Attendance

None

Apologies

Eric Baird
Quentin McLaren
Gavin Miles
Fran Scott
Alan Denney (Prospect)

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies as above.
2. Members questioned whether the meeting would be quorate given the number of apologies. The Chair stated that the substantive item of business would be the staff feedback on the pay offer and he would seek confirmation of any decision made from those staff representatives not present in order to ensure this was a consensus view. [Generally, the terms of reference for the Forum are not explicit in terms of the required attendance for a quorum to be established. Rather, the focus was on staff representatives arriving at a consensual view in representing staff views to employer representatives.]
3. Fiona reported that Alan Denney was unlikely to continue to attend the Forum meetings as a matter of course, as a result of the continuing low Prospect membership within the Authority. When not in attendance, he would continue to provide advice on any matters through the Prospect staff representative.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

4. Minutes of the previous meeting of 21 February 2007 were agreed.

Matters arising not covered on Agenda

Minutes of 21 February 2007 – actions arising

5. *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. The Chair stated that other options for buying into existing cleaning supervision contracts in place with other public sector bodies locally had been explored with no result. An advert would be placed in order to seek establishment of a cleaning supervision service.

Staff representatives enquired when the dishwasher was to be repaired, and were informed that a replacement had been ordered and was due to be installed in the near future.
6. *Issue update note on Pay Remit (para 18)*
This had been actioned.
7. *Issue final follow-up note to staff on pay remit (para 22)*
The Chair had actioned this, in the form of the formal pay offer to staff.
8. *Staff Response on Revised Staff Handbook (para 36)*
This item was on the agenda for today's meeting.
9. *Staff Response on Updated Organisation Chart (para 41)*
This item was on the agenda for today's meeting.
10. Other items remained outstanding, given the relatively short amount of time that had elapsed since the meeting on 21 February.

Pay Offer 2006/07

11. The Chair Highlighted that the pay offer circulated to staff represented the best offer which could be made to staff within the explicit requirement now set by Ministers. He and the HR Manager had given absolute priority to reworking the pay remit following the Ministerial rejection of the previous submission reported at the February meeting. We had also been supported by colleagues in the sponsor team, who had helped get the remit looked at as a matter of urgency by the Finance Pay Policy Team.
12. Fiona reported that Alan Denney of Prospect had recommended accepting the two-year offer. He had suggested it was very unlikely that staff would be able to get a higher settlement for 2007/08 given the current direction of public sector pay.
13. Sara reported the outcome of the staff ballot on the pay offer. A total of 67 ballots had been issued to staff, of which 54 votes had been returned: 51 voting to accept the offer made, and 3 votes to reject the two-year offer and seek a single year deal for 2006/07 only.

14. Staff representatives confirmed their acceptance of the pay offer on behalf of staff, on the basis of the results of the ballot. Staff representatives agreed that the Chair should seek confirmation from those staff representatives not present that they were also agreed on accepting the offer, in order to ensure consensus between all representatives.
15. Staff representatives stated a number of staff had specifically asked them to make clear their appreciation of the work that had gone into seeking a pay settlement acceptable to the Scottish Executive by Corporate Services.
16. The Chair thanked the staff representatives for undertaking the ballot, and for their understanding and support during what had been an incredibly long, drawn-out process of negotiation with the Scottish Executive. The Chair also expressed his thanks to all staff for their understanding of the situation. He entirely accepted that the monthly updates of “no progress” on pay at staff meetings had been frustrating and demoralising and thanked staff for the understanding shown that officers were trying to deal with the matter as quickly as the system allowed. The support of staff representatives in this was acknowledged and greatly appreciated.
17. Anne MacLean also wished to note the Board’s awareness and gratitude for the general maturity shown by all staff in dealing with this lengthy delay in the pay award for the year.
18. Staff representatives asked whether it may be possible in the future to take the PRP element of annual salary increases out of the pay remit process.
19. The employer representatives clarified that this was not possible, as salary progression (increments) within salary bands were treated as an integral part of the pay remit costing and evaluation of proposals by the Scottish Executive. The Chair accepted that application of this was not entirely consistent across the NDPB sector: it was known that some NDPBs automatically paid salary increments. This point had been raised with the Scottish Executive and would be pursued further.
20. The Chair also highlighted that the NDPB Chief Executive’s Forum continued to pursue the matter of the pay remit process itself, in order to seek improvements to the time taken to issue guidance; improve the clarity of guidance and transparency of the pay remit process; improved, direct access to Finance Pay Policy Team in conducting pay remit negotiations. Although we would not now be entering into pay negotiations over the course of 2007/08, we will continue to monitor progress in making these changes and report back to the Forum as required.

Staff Handbook: Feedback from Staff Representatives

21. Staff representatives indicated that they had not managed to complete their review of the handbook, and were not aware of any comments to be raised by those representatives who had given apologies for the meeting.
22. The Chair agreed to defer this item. Members agreed that any detailed comments should be passed on to the HR Manager by 31 March. Any substantive issues arising should be highlighted for discussion at the next SCF meeting.

Organisational Structure Chart: Feedback from Staff Representatives

23. Staff representatives agreed that the revised structure chart issued at the previous meeting by the HR Manager was very helpful, and addressed the information requirements raised by staff following the consultation on the organisational structure completed in December.

Draft Homeworking Policy

24. The Chair introduced this paper, indicating that it had been developed to support policy on flexible working, organisational policy on supporting retention and recruitment, and the goal of a professional, respected and motivated staffing complement. The policy also linked in with ongoing work on organisational greening, seeking to impact on carbon emissions as a result of commuting to and from the office.
25. The Chair stated that the draft policy had previously been considered by and received the support of Management Team. The key outcome of the MT discussion had been an agreement to split the policy into two: one dealing with occasional homeworking, in order to clarify the criteria and policy elements appropriate to occasional use only, and a second dealing with the organisation's approach to more regular or permanent homeworking.
26. Anne MacLean wished to ensure that the policy is not used to put people under pressure to work from home while off sick. The Chair and Anne agreed that the Authority's clear policy was that staff should not work while ill.
27. Staff representatives welcomed the policy, indicating they felt that there was currently some inconsistency in the approach to working occasionally from home by different line managers in the organisation. Staff representatives believed that the policy would be very helpful in setting out a standard set of criteria for considering such working arrangements, while accepting that it would by no means always be suitable to seek to arrange to work from home.
28. The Chair highlighted that previous discussions on this potential policy development by the Greening Group had been supportive, while recognising that it may be perceived by staff as divisive as some jobs / roles may lend themselves less to being able to work occasionally from home than others. The Chair sought views on this from staff representatives and enquired whether any comments had been received from staff members. Staff representatives indicated that no comments had been received, and stated they felt the policy should go ahead as it would make a valuable contribution to organisational and greening policy initiatives.
29. Staff representatives asked that arrangements for routing telephone calls to staff while working from home and ensuring that staff remained accessible to colleagues while making use of these arrangements, while keeping personal contact details private, should be given further thought before finalising the policy.

30. **It was agreed that the homeworking policy should be progressed, subject to further consideration of the comments made.**

Health and Safety

31. Staff representatives asked to Chair to investigate the reason for only partial coverage of smoke alarms in the main HQ building.
32. Staff representatives also asked the Chair to follow up the outcome of today's fire evacuation drill in order to determine whether any changes to procedures was required.
33. Anne MacLean raised again the need for a ramp at the fire exit from the Boardroom.
34. **The Chair agreed to follow up these issues.**

Any Other Business

Cleaning and Facilities

35. Staff representatives asked that when the matter of cleaning supervision was actioned, the resultant reinforcement and clarification of cleaning specifications should also be clear on responsibility for laundering dishtowels.
36. The potential to have milk delivered was raised by staff representatives. In discussion, it was agreed that this and the use of a milk cooler had been considered at the Greening Group and both discounted as a result of cost and/or practicality.

Membership of the Forum

37. The Chair expanded on previous discussion on the replacement of the MT staff representative. This had been discussed at MT and MT members felt that there was no need for them to be specifically represented by a representative on the Forum. There were now 2 fewer MT members than when the terms of reference for the Forum had first been drawn up, and with growth elsewhere in the organisation the Heads of Group now formed a smaller proportion of total staff. The Heads of Group also felt adequately represented by the existing arrangements, feeling that they were able to access other staff representatives should they wish anything to be raised on their behalf. The members of MT were clear that it was not the Head of Corporate Services who represented them on the Forum, the role of the Chair being to encourage open discussion and seek to arrive at agreement on actions.
38. Staff representatives expressed their regret that it appeared unlikely that a member of MT would come forward to take up the vacant staff representative position.
39. Members agreed that it was important to seek to fill the vacant staff representative position. There was general agreement that 5 representatives continued to be the right number to undertake this function and ensure sufficient coverage of staff views.

40. Members agreed that the **HR Manager should coordinate a request for another staff representative to come forward**. Members agreed that the Forum's terms of reference should not be amended, and that this vacancy should still be reserved for a Head of Group in the event that one came forward. It remained the staff representatives' strong preference that the fifth staff representatives should be a Head of Group. However, failing this, the position should be allocated to another member of staff for the coming year.

Date of Next Meeting

41. The next meeting of the Staff Consultative Forum will be held in early June, the date to be confirmed.

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	
21/02 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
21/02 23	Implement Salary Sacrifice Schemes	FS	May 2007
21/02 28 (ii)	Rephrase sentence under Consultation	FS	Immediate
21/02 28 (iii)	Rephrase sentence under Appeal Hearing	FS	Immediate
21/02 29	Include a paper on Terms of Redundancy in future SCF meeting	DC	
21/02 35	Progress support for Higher/Further Education	FS	
21/02 37	Ensure Board Members have new or updated policies	FS	March 07
22	Members to read draft Staff Handbook and submit comments to HR Manager by 31 March	All	31 March
30	Make changes to homeworking policy and implement	FS	May 07
34	Report back on Smoke Alarm and Fire Evacuation procedure review	DC	May 07
40	Coordinate appointment of replacement staff representative.	FS	May 07