

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING of
THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**held via Lifesize Video Conferencing
on 29th October, 2021 at 10.30am**

PRESENT

Deirdre Falconer (Chair)

Ian McLaren

Carolyn Caddick (Vice Chair)

Xander McDade (Convenor)

Derek Ross

Geva Blackett

In Attendance:

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, CNPA

Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development, CNPA

Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer, CNPA

Lynn Anderson, Minute Clerk, CNPA

Apologies:

Pippa Hadley

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Declaration of Interests

2. There were no interests declared.

Minutes of last meeting held – for approval

3. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 6th August were agreed with no changes, proposed by Carolyn Caddick, seconded by Deirdre Falconer.

Matters Arising

4. The Chair asked the Director of Corporate Services whether there was still some tweaking to do on the wording for the terms of reference? The Director of Corporate Services confirmed amendments to the terms of reference would be consolidated into a paper for the Board's Governance Committee meeting in December.

5. Board papers to be colour coded in due course, the Convenor asked for it to be noted that they would like a set of grayscale papers rather than anything colour coded.

Identification of items for publication/recording on website

6. The Chair introduced this item for discussion. The Committee were asked to consider what items or papers should be published on the website. The Chair commented that we should be aiming for as much clarity and transparency as possible yet still being mindful of confidentiality.
7. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services gave a brief overview of this item. The Resources Committee had consolidated the 2 committees together of Finance and Delivery and Staffing and Recruitment. Finance and Delivery Committee published and made public as much of their business as possible, however Staffing and Recruitment Committee, given the confidentiality of much of the information in the papers, had not typically been published.
8. 9. The Convenor commented we should be as open as possible and it is important for the public to see how their money is being spent and the ability to scrutinise decisions made. They suggested that there could be an overview paper which could be published with any information deemed to be confidential set out in appendices.
10. A member commented that it was good that we are now reviewing what could be published. Confidential items should stay at the end of the agenda.
11. Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer commented that it makes more sense for this Committee to be recorded rather than live streamed. Committee members agreed that given the nature of the discussions live streaming would not be possible.
12. Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development asked the Chair whether it might be sensible when setting the agenda to decide what papers will be published and what papers will remain confidential and therefore not published. This will be different for each meeting. The Vice Chair and Committee members agreed that this would be a sensible approach.
13. The Head of Organisational Development had not published any of the papers for this meeting on the website but would do so following this meeting.
14. A member suggested that this process should be reviewed at this stage next year.

15. The Director of Corporate Services commented that the recording of these meetings means as much information as possible can be published.
16. The Resources Committee approved the recommendations in the paper with the following actions:
 - i. Meetings should be recorded rather than live streamed
 - ii. Confidential items should be the final items for discussion on the agenda
 - iii. Decision to be made on which papers will be published to be agreed by Chair, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Organisational Development when agenda is set
 - iv. Papers which are deemed to be not confidential from this meeting to be published on website
 - v. Review of process to be undertaken one year from now.

21/22 Budget Monitoring, including Scot Gov in year savings exercise and impacts (Paper 1)

- 17 David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the paper which presents an overview of the Cairngorms NPA budget management position at the half year point of the current 2021/22 financial year. The Director of Corporate Services asked members to note that the figure of £125,000 indicated as the impact for Cairngorms NPA of in year grant in aid reductions applied across the Scottish Government Environment portfolio was more likely to be around £117,000, it has been indicated that there will be no recovery from the Cairngorms Peatland programme.
The Committee are asked to:
 - i. Consider the budget management position for 2021/22
 - ii. Identify any strategic risks or implications posed for the Board's delivery of its strategic objectives which may require additional management action;
 - iii. Note the expected reduction in the Authority's resource grant funding of 2% and that management have plans in place to accommodate this action within a continued break-even financial target.
- 18 The Resources Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
- 19 A member commented that this was a good and healthy set of figures however they expressed concern regarding the staffing underspend and wondered whether this meant things were not being delivered and was delays in recruitment having a knock on effect on our effectiveness?

20. The Director of Corporate Services explained that there did not appear to be any significant impact on delivery, and highlighted Key Performance Indicators are being met as evidenced in latest performance monitoring reports to the full board. The underspend against staff budget was more about assumptions made when the budget for the year was set. The levels of staffing costs being covered from other sources was underestimated and this underspend has been recycled into other investment areas. For example, 100% of LEADER staffing costs have been able to be recovered from external sources as opposed to what was originally thought. So although initial assumptions were a little prudent this has had no impact on delivery.
21. The Chair concluded that: this was a very positive position to be in mid-year and it was good to see such a high recovery from other sources.
22. The Resources Committee approved the recommendations in the paper and indicated they were all happy with the budget management position. They identified no additional strategic risks and noted the expected 2% reduction in the Authority's grant resource funding.

New Normal Programme Strategic Impacts (Paper 2)

23. Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development, introduced this paper which provides an overview on the hybrid working approach and office return. The Committee were asked to:
 - i) Consider the risks, and to advise on any omissions
 - ii) Comment on preventative and remedial actions
24. The Resources Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations.
25. The Convenor asked how staff are feeling in general and commented that this would be useful barometer.
26. The Head of Organisational Development responded that there appeared to be a little bit of online fatigue, staff had had a busy summer and typically at this time of year the HR case load starts to rise and this year is no different. The Best Companies Survey had just been sent to staff: the result of this will be a good indication on how staff are feeling. Initial headline results of this survey will be brought to the Resources Committee meeting in February.
27. It has been a challenge for new members of staff starting in a virtual setting and this has also posed challenges for existing staff.

- 28 It is recognised that there needs to be a balanced approach to this and not everyone will get what they want. Some people are very keen to return to the office and be able to have those face to face meetings, some would prefer a combination of a home and office base and some people really don't want to be in the office.
- 29 The Chief Executive Officer commented that staff just want to see what this hybrid approach actually looks like. It is recognised that this will need to be adjusted as we go along. It has been challenging over the last 18 months. However he feels that staff are still operating as a staff group but people are suffering from VC fatigues and we need to try and find ways to get staff away from screens.
- 30 The Head of Organisational Development explained that gradually staff numbers have increased into the building however numbers are limited by the 1m social distancing rule.
- 31 A member commented that staff and organisational effectiveness is key in all of this and a more flexible way of working which allows those that want to be in the office to be there and those that want a mixture of both can have that. It is good that it is understood that this will evolve as we move forward.
- 32 The Chair agreed organisation effectiveness is key. They noted from the report that the majority of staff wish to be in the office on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and wondered how this would look from a public perception. This might be perceived as staff having long weekends? Should there be some sort of rota system in place to manage numbers.
- 33 The Chair noted that meeting rooms could only be used by one meeting a day and suggested a way of cleaning those in between meetings to enable more use?
- 34 The Director of Corporate Services understood the concern of the Committee around the office being used more Tuesday – Thursday however felt this was in fact very positive. This concentration of staff on those days means full engagement across Teams and as inclusive a staff group as possible. The repurposing of the office supports teams coming together for collaboration on a face to face basis.
- 35 The Director of Corporate Services did recognise there are risks involved with an intense period of change and trying to come out of that after achieving what needs to happen as opposed to going on a step by step basis over a longer period of time, which may seem relentless to staff. There needs to be a balance drawn and timetable that appropriately
- 36 The Convenor asked if staff are able to access the office at weekends?

- 37 The Head of Organisational Development explained that staff are able to work their contracted hours over 7 days. In terms of the office, cleaners do not work weekends and at this moment in time this was not possible. To be able to allow this would need more consideration and planning however staff have not indicated that they would wish to access the office at weekends.
- 38 The Chair asked whether there should be a paper on all the options mentioned in the paper circulated to the Committee?
- 39 The Head of Organisational Development explained that staff have been consulted with extensively and we now have a final position. This final office layout configuration can be circulated to Committee members for information.
- 40 The Director of Corporate Services explained that the idea of the discussion today was to flush out any concerns on the wider risk and approach as set out in the papers. The Director of Corporate Services suggested that they could come back to the Committee in 6 month's time to provide an update on management and facilitation of the new ways of working. This future paper would allow the Committee to taking assurance on how things are going and review how things are going and to be able to input into the wider sense of direction.
41. The Chair concluded that: there are risks to be considered, the offices needs to be open for business 5 days a week and it is about striking that balance and getting it right for staff and the public. At the end of the day it is what is right for the organisation as a whole.
42. The Resources Committee approved the recommendations in the paper *with the following actions:*
- i. Update to Resources Committee to review process and progress at Resources Committee meeting in May 2022

SCF Update (Paper 3)

- 43 Minutes were noted – no further discussions/actions
- 44 The Chair commented this was a very detailed set of minutes and apologised for being unable to attend the meeting.

Health & Safety Update (Paper 4)

- 45 Minutes were noted - no further discussions/actions

Private Finance (Verbal Update)

46. Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer, gave an update to the Committee on Private Finance.
47. The launch of Net Zero Nature Private Finance Facility took place a couple of weeks ago which involves all the National Parks in partnership with Palladium. This is looking at bringing private finance into the Parks. There are a number of projects ongoing through the National Park networks. CNPA taking two bits forward, one through the Heritage Horizon programme and a partnership with Palladium and Santander to restore 200 hectares of peatland. The Chief Executive Officer is in the process of arranging a session with Palladium and the Board on all the work in the immediate future.
48. A member commented that this was really exciting to see this partnership but was worried that this might be seen as us endorsing these private funders to other partners on other projects.
49. The Chief Executive Officer responded that these funders are a partner within National Parks Partnership. They have put a lot of time and effort into this however this is a non-exclusive operation and it is an entirely voluntary agreement. They have been a good partner so far and we are looking to develop the right sort of product which will help National Parks. Key aspects of the CNPA's interests include looking at Community benefit which has not come through private finance previously.
50. The Chair commented that it would be useful to have a presentation for board members.
51. Board members noted the information in the oral update with the following action:
 - i. Presentation session with Palladium highlighting all the work being carried out

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

Staffing Update: Key Statistics

Turnover (Paper 5)

1. The Head of Organisational Development presented this paper which updated the Committee on the staff turnover and recruitment activity for the period November 2020 to September 2021.
2. The Committee noted the contents of the Staff Turnover report and made the following comments:
3. A member was pleased with the report, the statistics were good however asked how many of the internal promotions were due to the management restructure? The member asked whether there had been any training for managers on how to manage staff remotely?
4. The Head of Organisational Development confirmed that 4 posts had been regraded during the management restructure, these regraded roles were not new roles but these roles now had a higher level of responsibility.
5. There had been training for all line managers early on in the pandemic as well as “Managing with Impact” training for new line managers which was delivered in September. Training on hybrid working was due to be delivered for all line managers next year.
6. A member confirmed that they would be happy to see an overview paper published in the public domain and anything confidential remains in the annexes which would not be for publication.
7. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that when a role was upgraded it went through a full job evaluation and an independent decision was made on the content of the new role, irrespective of whoever was currently in the role.
8. A member asked what the ratio was of managers to staff? The Head of Organisational Development to confirm this.
9. A member thought it a very healthy sign that 31 external candidates had been recruited to Cairngorms National Park Authority posts and commented that the Cairngorms National Park as a business is a very attractive business for people to come and work for.
- 10 The Resources Committee noted the contents of the paper with the following action:

- i. Ratio of manager to staff to be circulated to members for information

Absence (Paper 6)

11. The Head of Organisational Development presented this paper which provides statistics on sickness absence amongst staff for the year 2020/21 compared to the previous year.
12. The Head of Organisational Development confirmed that absence had dropped considerably from the previous year and working from home had resulted in reduced levels of absence for a number of reasons.
13. The Committee noted the contents of the paper and made the following comments and observations:
14. A member congratulated the Team on the report. It was clear that managerial training had worked and working from home was positive. This report showed how good the health of the organisation was.

Staff Contracts and Scottish Government Pay Policy Strategy (Paper 7)

15. The Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which asked the Committee to:
 - i. Agree the timetable for the Authority's approach to consideration of a 35 hour working week as set out in this paper
 - ii. Consider the proposed approach to starting the conversation with the staff group on this matter
 - iii. Subject to any agreed adjustments, support management's approach to opening conversation with the staff group
16. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed to the Committee that Management Team have not taken a position on this and had had no discussion on what this might look like. There was a lot of things to think about. A reduction to a 35 hour week equates to 6.53 FTE staff across the organisation which is significant in a small organisation and required careful consideration about what efficiencies would need to be made? Consideration would also need to be given to questions around "What are you not going to do?"; "What are you going to change?" and "How does this reduction fit in terms of pay, terms and conditions of employment and holidays?"
17. The Resources Committee made the following comments and observations

- 18 A member was concerned about loss and capacity, efficiencies would only go so far. They raised concern around the timeframe, and felt it important to stress to staff representatives that this will be a long conversation.
- 19 A member thought it important that the Senior Management Team should prepare a more detailed analysis of the different options and how we might get to that and present this analysis to this Committee so they can comment and agree a negotiating position. Officers present confirmed this would be done in due course.
- 20 A member stressed it was important to settle staff expectations and felt this proposal should be planned over a 3-5 year period. There was more work to be done and they would like to see more details.
- 21 A member asked if any final decision would be for the full board to decide or just this Committee.
- 22 It was confirmed that this Committee would consider the detail arising from management's conversations with staff and unions and make recommendations to the Board for consideration and decision in due course.
- 23 A member pointed out this would be difficult for HR going forward. This was a balancing act and the implications of decision making down the line needed to meet the needs of an organisation. There would also be implications for part time working.
- 24 A member suggested we will get a feel of what staff are thinking when we begin the discussions. In response to a question from the Chair, a member confirmed that they had recently implemented a reduction in employee working hours within their business with currently no impact on productivity. Therefore, while agreeing these matters were significant, it did seem appropriate to follow the processes suggested by management in the paper and in discussion.
- 25 The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that Senior Management were in full agreement on the scale of the issue but needed to be on the front foot and begin these open ended discussions with staff. It was important to identify how staff were feeling, and also to manage staff expectations both on what may be possible and timetables. It was recognised there was a need to harness changes in a manageable fashion.
- 26 The Director of Corporate Services clarified that management propose that the Staff Consultative Meeting on 6th December should be used to start that conversation with staff. It was important that we are seen to begin this process as Prospect will be attending this meeting and will come with their own views and proposals. It must be

made clear to staff, and equally with board members, that we are not looking to enter into any negotiations at this stage and need to be clear around points of discussion we need to get into.

- 27 A member asked what are the answers we need for Prospect?
- 28 The Director of Corporate Services explained that if we open the process and start that conversation then we take ownership locally of the conversation. Thoughts from initial discussions will structure the debate going forward which will keep control of the overall structure of the conversation.
- 29 A member asked whether this Committee should see the proposed questions before the meeting.
- 30 The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the questions were set out in paragraph 16 of the paper.
- 31 A member confirmed they were happier following this discussion however a discussion needs to take place at management team. They were ok with the questions set out in paragraph 16 with some “topping and tailing” around timelines and expectations and it must be stressed that no decisions are being made at the moment.
- 32 The Chief Executive Officer confirmed the intention that questions set out for consideration by Committee today would be put into a context prior to issue and thought the feedback from SCF important in terms whether these are the right questions to be asking before starting any conversation with staff.
- 33 A member asked whether there was any guidance from Scottish Government on this?
- 34 The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that that SG have been made aware across the sector that there is a greater need for clarity on approach and process and guidance is needed.
- 35 The Convener asked whether the options on the table were all operationally possible. It would not be helpful if a proposal was then withdrawn.
- 36 The Director of Corporate Services stated that there were no options currently on the table nor would there be for some time until initial thoughts could be distilled from staff conversations and management consideration taken into account. The Director reiterated that it was important to keep a view on how the conversations move forward, no offers were being made, this was no more than the opening of a conversation.

- 37 The Resources Committee approved the recommendations as set out in the paper. The next SCF meeting is due to take place on 6th December. Both the Resources Committee Chair and Vice-Chair are due to attend.

AOCB

- 38 The Convenor thanked the Chair for their running of the meeting and suggested some thought should be given to managing agendas going forward.

Date of Next Meeting

- 39 The next scheduled Resources Committee meeting will take place on Friday 11th February 2022.
- 40 The meeting finished at 12.45.

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