



Minutes of the Resource Committee Meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority and Virtually

17 May 2024 at 02.30pm

Present

Russell Jones (Chair)	Sandy Bremner (Board Convener)
Dr Fiona McLean (substitute for Dr Hannah Grist)	Lauren McCallum (Deputy Chair)
Xander McDade	Derek Ross

In Attendance

Grant Moir, CEO
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO
Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development
Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations
Karen Johnstone, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Dr Hannah Grist

Minutes from the previous meeting for approval

1. The minutes from the meeting on the 26 January 2024 were approved with no amendments.

Matters arising not covered from previous meeting

2. None

Declarations of interest

3. No declarations of interest were made.



Budget Monitoring

4. Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations, presented the paper which sets out an overview of the Park Authority's budget management position at the end of April - month one of the 2024 / 25 financial year. Louise highlighted at this early stage in the year the position on payroll and staff salaries against budget is a key point of assessment. The month one figures for actual costs are slightly below the phased budget position providing some early confirmation of the accuracy of budget estimates for this significant area of expenditure.
5. The Resources Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments:
 - a) The chair of Resources Committee thanked the Head of Finance and Corporate Operations for her papers.
 - b) David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO updated the Resources Committee that there had just recently been a change in budget for the Community Lead Local Development (CLLD) community development grant. This was for £258,000 inclusive of development and £57,000 of this is for staff costs.
6. The Resources Committee noted the paper.
7. Action point arising: none

Estimated Outturn

8. Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations presented the paper which estimated outturn position for the 2023 / 24 financial year.
9. The Resources Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments:
 - a) Committee members sought clarification about the underspend on the Peatland restoration sites. Grant Moir, the CEO clarified that the final costs of restoring a site depend on the nature of the work required: ditch blocking costs less than the restoration of bare peat and a site may come in less expensive than anticipated depending on the proportion of ditch blocking work involved.
 - b) Head of Finance and Corporate Operations also commented that initial budgets are set based on a grading of complexity. The peatland restoration has come in under budget owing to the projects undertaken being less complex than anticipated.
10. The Resources Committee noted the paper.



11. Action point arising:

- i. Committee would like updates about the peatland restoration grants and more information of the different types of restoration undertaken.

Organisational Development and People Strategy 2024 – 2027

12. Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development presented the paper which sets out an overview of the many changes that have taken place within the organisation since the last Organisational Development Strategy of 2019, and how these changes have informed the emerging Organisational Development and People Strategy (ODPS), which is designed to give our staff the framework and support to be able to deliver our ambitions around nature, people and place

13. The Resources Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments:

- a) Board members approved of adding the word “people” to the title of the strategy as it feels very personable, and people focused. They requested that feedback on the outcomes of the values and culture comes back to the board at an appropriate time.
- b) A board member requested the addition of “external stakeholders” to the wording in the section about the overarching vision of the ODPS. That being “...supports staff to achieve excellence in their work, their behaviour and their relationships with each other and external stakeholders”. This was agreed by officers.

Lauren joined 02.54pm

- c) A board member raised concerns about the value and wording of some of the questions and results in the survey. The Head of Organisational Development replied that they have no capacity to amend or change the questions as this is prescribed by Best Companies who design the Staff Survey. She explained that the survey does also include the opportunity for staff to give open ended responses to several questions e.g. “what is great about the organisation and what would you like to change about the organisation”. These comments will be scrutinised, and a report provided in due course.
- d) A board member noted the results were really positive across the majority of factors, with good results in staff and management relationships. However, they noticed there were some issues with workload and boredom, what about their motivations? Requesting more background on this at another stage.



- e) A board member mentioned the importance of staff living in the park and questioned the difficulties around recruitment and housing in the area. Head of Organisational Development noted the importance of staff living in the National Park communities and explained that our Hybrid Working Policy does not allow for permanent home working contracts, except in the circumstances of short term internship contracts. As such our recruitment continued to have an emphasis on staff living in communities within and around the Park.
- f) Discussions were had around the new 35 hours work week and the effect this is having on staff and their workload and productivity. It was stated that there was a flexible working policy in place to ensure staff are not over working and managers monitor this. In addition, staff have regular Performance Development Conversations with their line managers, and workload should be discussed at these meetings
- g) A board member questioned how individuals are rewarded for going above and beyond to progress in the organisation or personally? Officers stated that we have a good mix of staff with some working above and beyond the expectations of their roles, but also that it was equally acceptable that some staff simply do enough to deliver the requirements of the role. A member commented staff should only be expected to carry out their contracted hours and that should be valued and anything over that is their personal choice as many people may have caring or other commitments meaning they cannot work above and beyond. Officers stated that the organisation maintains a good training budget, encouraging employees to undertake training both on existing skills and to develop new skills to allow them to work towards their future roles, advertising jobs internally first. A Board member suggested that there are positive employment stories, which together with the support for training, and personal development should be shared with the public as a good news story, this to be discussed with Head of Communications and Engagement.
- h) A board member questioned what training staff had for dealing with the public. It was highlighted, there was lots of training opportunities published on Eólas, our intranet, and also that we have an excellent online training portal, ELMS, which covers a large variety of training. Officers reported that we had arranged specific training recently for certain projects, on “dealing with difficult people”, and “safe and sound” training is delivered for rangers to enhance their skills when dealing with the public and knowing when to step back from a situation, among many more.

14. The Resources Committee noted the paper.



15. Action points arising:

- i. An update on the values and cultures work to be brought to a future meeting.
- ii. A change in the wording in the paper to “supports staff to achieve excellence in their work, their behaviour and their relationships with each other and external stakeholders”
- iii. Issues raised on approaches to staff motivation in the context of the survey results, more background on this to come back to the Board.
- iv. Good employment stories, training, and personal development to be shared with the public as a good news story, this to be discussed with Head of Communications and Engagement.

Health and Safety Committee Minutes

16. Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development, introduced this paper and noted that this is a standard item that comes to the Committee to provide oversight of the meeting and of Health and Safety matters generally.

17. The Resources Committee discussed the paper and made the following comment:

- a) A board member raised a question regarding lone working, ensuring all staff know the policy and have the correct equipment. Head of Organisational Development stated that we are in the process of upgrading approach and communications around lone working and aim to deliver workshops for staff on lone working options once the upgrade is completed. Board members requested a follow up ensuring staff were following procedures.

18. The Resources Committee noted the paper.

19. Action point arising:

- i. Follow up on lone working, ensuring staff are following procedures to be brought to a future meeting.

Draft Staff Consultative Forum Minutes

20. Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development, introduced this paper and noted that this is a standard item that comes to the Committee to provide oversight of the meeting and of Staff Consultative Forum matters generally.



21. The Resources Committee discussed the paper and made the following comment:

- a) Lots of positive feedback for the Head of Organisational Development on the progressive policies being put in place such as Pregnancy Loss and Neurodivergence. A board member requested to see all policies available, which the Head of Organisational Development confirmed are all online as we have moved away from having paper copies of the staff handbook. It was highlighted the Head of Organisational Development's policy development has been recognised externally and she has been invited to speak at several national conferences on key policy topics

22. The Resources Committee noted the paper.

23. Action point arising:

- i. Board members would like to see Eólas to read through the policies available or have a handbook available for Board Members to read.

AOCB

24. None.

Date of next meeting: 9 August 2024

Motion for confidential session to be set out will be to protect confidentiality of staff pay and conditions proposals prior to formal negotiations.

Meeting concluded at 15.38