

**MINUTES of MEETING of the
FINANCE COMMITTEE of**

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
held at Kinord Hall, Dinnet
on 21 May 2004**

Present:

Eleanor Mackintosh
Gregor Rimmell
David Selfridge
Joyce Simpson

In Attendance:

Andy Rinning, Head of Corporate Services

Apologies:

Andrew Thin

Minutes of Meeting of 12 March 2004

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment.

Matters Arising

2. In response to a question on the Park Authority's pension scheme, it was confirmed that CNPA had been admitted to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme. Cabinet Office are making arrangements for CNPA's inclusion into Schedule 1 of the Superannuation Act. Staff members have been issued with pension option forms and contributions under the default pensions provision arrangements have been made with effect from 1st April 2004.
3. For the purposes of clarification Eleanor MacKintosh explained that the dates of future meetings of the Finance Committee had been determined to review and consider quarterly updates of spend against a budget. There may be occasions when the Finance Committee needs to meet at other times to consider proposals, submitted by staff, which require approval of the Finance Committee under the delegated financial authority procedures. It was agreed that where such meeting are required they would be convened prior to an appropriate Planning Committee or Board Meeting.

Outturn at 2003/04 and Budget 2004/05 (paper 1)

Outturn 2003/04

4. The Head of Corporate Services introduced this part of the paper which provided the Committee with an overview of the final outturn for the financial year 2003/04. The final outturn of £1.994m represents an underspend of £6K or 0.3% of the £2m total provision allocated to CNPA for the financial year.
 - a) In response to a question about the level of provision for a project spend in the original budget against final outturn, it was explained that a percentage of the budget figure included a sum for committed expenditure inherited from the Cairngorms Partnership. The remainder of the budget reflected aspirations for new programme spend expected to have been set in place during the year. These aspirations had not been realised mainly due to the delay in recruitment of staff to develop proposals throughout the year.
5. The Committee noted the outturn for 2003/04 and complimented staff over its budget management during a difficult first year.

Budget 2004/05

6. The Head of Corporate Services introduced this part of the paper and reminded the Committee that the Corporate Plan proposals included a sum of £3.84m for the financial year 2004/05. The Scottish Executive advised CNPA that its allocation for 2004/05 had been set at £3.55m, a reduction of £300K. As a consequence the budget allocation shown in the Annex had been adjusted to take account of the reduced allocation.
 - a) In response to a question on recruitment and relocation costs, it was explained that provision covered the proposed recruitment of ten new staff over the forthcoming year. Relocation costs were available in cases where CNPA considered these should be offered within the overall package to recruit and retain the highest calibre of employee.
 - b) In response to a question on costs for official vehicles, it was explained that there were three vehicles on lease and the costs in the budget provision related to insurance, lease and running costs. There were no proposals to purchase vehicles.
 - c) In response to a question on professional fees, it was explained that this item covered the reimbursement of fees for professional subscriptions for staff where professional qualifications are a necessary requirement of the job.
 - d) In response to a question on training costs for staff, it was explained that proposals for a staff training and development programme are to be put in place and specific and general training needs will be identified. The budget provision has been set to meet the costs of training needs throughout the year. The Committee requested that a summary of training offered be made available for information together with indicative feedback from staff on training provided.
 - e) In response to a question on the increase in costs for Board meeting costs, it was explained that this reflected the additional costs in relation to planning meeting costs - previous year costs for Planning Committees covered a six month period only from 1st September. The 2004/05 provision reflects a full year for Planning Committee and Board Costs.

- f) In response to a question on refurbishment costs it was explained that the major refurbishment of property at Grantown and Ballater had been completed during 2003/04. A further small amount of refurbishment work to outbuildings at Grantown remains outstanding and budget provision has been made to cover this work.
- g) In response to a question for provision for a Public Relations Advisor, given that CNPA now has a communications function in place, it was explained that provision had been made to allow additional PR to be bought in if required throughout the year.
- h) In response to a question on other professional costs it was explained that this provision covered expenditure on external professional expertise employed on planning, consultancy, accounting and other professional work deemed necessary.
- i) On programme expenditure the committee requested that details of budgets for individual projects be made available at the next Finance Committee meeting.

7. The Committee approved the budget for 2004/05.

Action

- **Head of Corporate Services to provide details of budget allocation to specific projects at the next meeting of the Finance Committee.**
- **Head of Corporate Services to provide the summary of training provided to staff together with indicative feedback from staff on training provided.**

AOCB

8. Eleanor MacKintosh raised the point brought up at the last Board meeting concerning the circulation of Finance Committee papers and minutes to allow the Board an opportunity to comment on or approve matters dealt with by the Finance Committee. To resolve this matter the Finance Committee agreed that the agendas for the Board meetings immediately following Finance Committee meetings should include an item for an oral report from the Finance Committee. This would give Board Members an opportunity to raise any specific issues and to meet Corporate Governance requirements.

Dates of Next Meeting

9. The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on 27th August 2004 at 9am at Nethy Bridge.