

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

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
held at Albert Memorial Hall, Ballater  
on 21 September 2007**

**Present:**

Eleanor Mackintosh  
David Green

Bruce Luffman

**In Attendance:**

David Cameron, Head of Corporate Services  
Denby Pettitt, Finance Manager

**Apologies:**

Jane Hope, Chief Executive

**Welcome**

1. The Chairperson welcomed all present to the meeting and noted apologies as listed above.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting**

2. The minutes of the previous meeting of 10 August 2007 were approved without amendment.

**Matters Arising**

3. There were no matters arising.

**Ratification of Previously Approved Expenditure Proposals (Paper 1)**

4. Members ratified expenditure approved by the Committee since their last meeting on 10 August.

## Development of a Park-wide Trust (Paper 2)

5. David Cameron introduced this paper, which presented an update to the Committee on work to date on the development of a Park-wide Trust, and also sought the Committee's agreement to create the Trust through working with Upper Deeside Access Trust (UDAT) to extend and expand the remit of this existing Trust.
6. Members discussed the need to ensure that the Authority was protected from exposure to liabilities should the Trust fail financially, through establishing an appropriate legal framework and legal relationship between the Trust and the Authority.
7. Members also highlighted the importance of changing the name of the Trust to reflect its new geographic coverage, and the need to pursue the partner funding that will be crucial to delivery of objectives and the financing of the Trust.
8. David Cameron confirmed that he was pursuing the various legal issues in establishing the framework and legal relationships between the Trust and the Authority with the CNPA's solicitors. Officers were also developing the outline business plan along with potential partners, and a partner meeting to discuss the Trust development in more detail would be held in late Autumn.
9. **Members agreed that officers should continue to seek to develop the Trust on the principle of Option 2 set out in the paper: through expansion of UDAT.**

## Outturn for 5 months to August 2007 (Paper 3)

10. Denby Pettitt introduced this paper, highlighting that to the end of August the Authority's expenditure was under budget: £15,000 under budget on core expenditure and £231,000 on Operational Plan expenditure. Denby also highlighted that the second quarter Operational Plan budget review was in progress.
11. In discussion, members noted that the level of underspend was similar, or indeed slightly lower than had been seen at the equivalent stage in previous years. Denby also indicated that the latest information available from the Operational Plan budget review exercise confirmed that planned expenditure would catch up with budget estimates before the year end.
12. Members also noted that the budget review exercise had not been completed as a result of some information not having been supplied to Corporate Services staff. Members asked David Cameron to ensure, through Management Team, that the need for information to be supplied timely to Corporate Services is vital.
13. **Members noted the draft outturn position for the 5 months to end August 2007.**

### Corporate Plan 2008/11: Initial Financial Considerations (Paper 4)

14. David Cameron presented this initial financial forecast for the forthcoming Corporate Plan period, which had been developed to support discussion by the Committee on the Authority's potential budget position over the coming three year period. The paper sought the Committee's views on financial strategy for the period 2008/11.
15. David also highlighted that the paper sought the Committee's agreement to the financial consequences arising from the Staffing and Recruitment Committee's decision on the Authority's pay remit for 2008/09.
16. In discussion, members noted that it was vital for the Authority to remain aware that we are not always the right organisation to deliver activities, and that we should identify and work through others when it is right to do so. Resources simply do not stretch to undertaking all activities that may be identified as desirable. Provision for this approach would be through ensuring sufficient resource remained available within the Operational Plan aspect of the budget to provide for enabling projects to go ahead.
17. The Committee noted pressures on staff numbers, and accepted that there are some circumstances in which staff recruitment represent the correct way forward: one such potential example cited was on Planning Enforcement. However, there has to be a good business case for taking staff on – in this case a rationale may be a lack of available resource within potential partner organisations, and a potential to provide service to those partners through some form of service agreement.
18. It was generally accepted that the income side of the financial model presented was towards the optimistic end of the spectrum, with future grant settlements potentially at or below current year's levels. David did highlight that the assumptions had been based on information gleaned from an NDPB conference speech by John Swinney.
19. On the subject of the pay remit, members noted their concern about the financial implications of the pay award on a budget which was likely to be close to standstill in income terms.
20. **Members agreed the financial consequences of a 3.5% total increase on the budget for 2008/09.**

### AOCB

21. There were no items of Other Business raised.

### Date of Next Meeting

22. The next meeting of the Finance Committee was scheduled to take place at 9am on 30 November 2007, Lonach Hall, Strathdon.