Governance Review Working Group Report

May 2024

Introduction

In 2023 a number of issues were identified as needing consideration by the Governance Review Working Group and meetings were arranged starting in December 2023. The topics currently being considered are:

- Standing Orders
- Role of Members
- Member Champions
- Public Participation
- Audit, Budget and Project Monitoring
- Cycle of Meetings
- Committee Report Template
- Information for Members in Advance of the Annual Meeting
- Member Learning and Development

The recommendations of the Working Group have been developed through discussion and, where relevant, looking at examples of best practice from other National Park Authorities and our constituent councils. The discussions centred around visibility, being transparent and officers and members working in partnership. They also included how to use the Members Forum more effectively to enable Members to be more aware of workstreams before being asked to make decisions at Authority and Committee meetings.

The Group will be reviewing the current Committee report template which will include considering workstreams and their visibility, for example budget setting and annual Authority Plan actions being more visibly aligned in their presentation.

This is the first report from the current Working Group and covers the following issues:

A. The Role of Members
B. Member Champions
C. Creation of a new Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group
D. Pre-Information for Members in advance of Annual Authority Meetings

The report sets out a number of recommendations on these issues which the Group first reported to the Member Forum meeting on 12 April and is now presenting their recommendations to the Authority meeting for approval for implementation.

A: The Member Role Description

The current Authority Member role description was developed by the Governance Review Working Group and approved by the Authority in May 2019. In the Group's recent discussions, it was felt that further clarification in the role description was required. The changes proposed were shared with Members at the Forum meeting in April and comments made reviewed. The proposed role description attached at Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATION

1.   **To approve the Member Role Description as set out in Appendix A.**

B: Role of Member Champions

The current Member Champion roles were agreed following consideration by the Governance Review Working Group and approved by the Authority in May 2020. However, it was stated in the appointment report to the annual Authority meeting in July 2023 that it was intended to review these roles within the next 12 months.

The Working Group considered the current Member Champion topics and how they worked. The Group felt that the current arrangements did not make good use of all Members' skills and expertise except those of a limited few and these were restricted to set topics. They considered whether or not there could be a better way to involve all Members in using their skills and expertise to support Officers. The proposed more effective use of the Members Forum to enable Members to have more understanding of and to discuss developing programmes and policies, before being asked to make decisions at Authority and Committee meetings, would help to ensure more Members were involved.

The Group are proposing that the Member Champion roles are discontinued and that no appointments are made at the annual Authority meeting this year. Instead they are proposing that a skills audit for all Members is implemented to gain more knowledge of Members' skills and expertise to enable better use to be made of those skills and expertise. A draft of the skills audit is attached as Appendix B. This would also enable Members with relevant skills and expertise to be involved in any project or area of work where such support would be useful and not limited to an agreed set of topics.

It is hoped that the new proposals, including the more effective use of Member Forums, will enable all Members to be more involved in the Authority's work and projects.

RECOMMENDATION

1.   **To discontinue the Member Champion role.**

2.   **To ask all Members to take part in a skills audit and to approve the proposed format set out in Appendix B.**

C: Creation of a New Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group

The Working Group reviewed how the Authority currently considers budget and audit reports and related issues and how the current Budget Monitoring Group works. The Budget Monitoring Group currently helps to focus on areas of attention and allows for an informal dialogue between Members, Officers and budget holders drawing attention to any issues as necessary during the year.

As part of their discussions the Group agreed that the Budget Monitoring Group was still useful but would be better with a wider scope to include audit reports and project risk monitoring and to be able to give more confidence to Members in making decisions at Authority meetings. It was noted that Audit comments had identified a lack of project monitoring by the Authority once projects had been approved and it was also noted that there was a lack of communication with Members both before and after projects were approved by the Authority.

From these discussions it was proposed that information on upcoming projects and feedback on approved projects could be presented to Members at the Member Forum meetings. The discussions also led to the proposal for an Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group to replace the current Budget Monitoring Group.

The new Monitoring Group would be a group of 5 Members, made up of the Chair and Vice Chair of Programmes and Resources Committee plus 3 other Members, who had dedicated time to understand internal and external audit reports before they are reported to Authority meetings. In response to the Audit comments the Group would also be able to understand movement in risks and progress in implementing projects approved by the Authority. The Group would still consider budgets but this would be expanded to include capital and income funding too. The Group would not make formal decisions but would be able to make recommendations to the Authority meeting and Programmes and Resources Committee.

The proposed draft terms of reference for the Group are attached as Appendix 2.

A future meeting of the Governance Review Working Group will be reviewing the current Committee report template and it is hoped that a refreshed template will help Officers to include fuller details around risk.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **To approve the proposals for reporting on projects to the Member Forum.**

2. **To approve the creation of a new Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group to replace the current Budget Monitoring Group.**

3. **To approve the terms of reference for the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group as set out in Appendix C.**

4. **To appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of Programmes and Resources Committee plus 3 other Members to the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group at the annual Authority meeting in July 2024.**

5. **To confirm that attendance at meetings of the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group is an approved duty for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances as set out in Schedule 2 of the Members' Allowance Scheme.**

D: Pre-Information for Members in Advance of the Annual Authority Meeting

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Following feedback from new Members last year about appointments made at the annual Authority meeting it was noted that more information needed to be made available to all Members. This is

to help them understand more about the appointments being made, the commitments required and what the various committees, groups and outside bodies did.

To do this a new area has been added to the Library section of the Authority's website with links to all the committees, groups, panels and outside bodies that the are appointed to at the annual Authority meeting. The links provide information about what the committees, groups and bodies do, how often they meet and where relevant who the Authority lead officer is. A link to the Library area will be sent to all Members as part of the preparations for the annual Authority meeting this year, together with the expressions of interest form and is also included here Library folder - Pre-Information for the Annual Authority Meeting: Peak District National Park

Attachments:
Appendix A   – Proposed amended Member Role Description
Appendix B   – Draft Member Skills Audit
Appendix C   - Draft Terms of Reference for the Audit, Budget & Project Risk Monitoring Group

Proposed Amended Role description of Members of the Peak District National Park Authority

Responsible to:	The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and other national, regional and local stakeholders as appropriate.
Purpose:	To ensure the Peak District National Park Authority furthers its statutory purposes and duties, through contributing to the leadership, scrutiny and direction of the Authority, ensuring balanced and informed decisions and good governance at all times.
Manages:	Members are directly responsible for the management and performance of the Chief Executive.
Functions:	*1. Leadership* • Be responsible, with other Members, to ensure that the Authority furthers its statutory purposes and duties. *2. Direction* • Influence the Authority to help it come to informed and balanced decisions • Contribute to the development of policies of national, regional and partner organisations as they affect the National Park • Set and maintain a culture that allows the highest levels of transparency and standards of good governance. *3. Decision making* • Set the overall strategic direction of the Authority through approving budgets, strategies, policies, programmes and procedures • Make decisions on significant projects or other matters that affect the Authority's resources, reputation, the special qualities of the National Park or its relationship with communities and other stakeholders • Make decisions on matters where significant objections or other representations have been received in relation to the Authority's work • Appointment and dismissal of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Heads of Service *4. Scrutiny* • Monitor and scrutinise the performance and effectiveness of the Authority's agreed work, ensuring value for money.
Approach to the role:	*All Members have equal status and in carrying out their duties will:* • Act at all times in the best interests of the whole of the National Park, regardless of how they have been appointed to the Authority • Accept collective responsibility as a Member for decisions made by the Authority, respecting decisions made by the majority of Members present and voting (subject to the individual right of freedom of expression) • Act as ambassadors for the Authority and be advocates for the whole of the National Park

	• Contribute knowledge and skills to the benefit of the Authority's policies and performance • Provide relevant advice from the national, regional and local perspectives • Engage with stakeholders as required • Uphold the Authority's agreed codes, values and principles • Follow the "Seven Principles of Public Life" set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Annex A).

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
MEMBERS' SKILLS AUDIT

Name of Member

Appointing Authority

Please complete all relevant sections below. This information will be held on file and will be used to better understand the skills and interests of Members so that these can be drawn upon as appropriate to help inform and deliver the work of the Authority.

By returning this form you are giving your consent for the information you give to be shared with other Members and Officers. The information will be made available on the Authority's intranet pages.

1. Experience

Please give details of any **relevant** employment experiences that you bring to the Authority

Employment (role, organisation and approximate dates)

Voluntary Work

Please give details of any **relevant** voluntary experiences that you bring to the Authority

Voluntary (role, organisation and approximate dates)

2. Relevant Skills Please list any relevant skills against the topics below:

Topic	Key skills and experience you have in this area	Tick below if an area of interest rather than having experience
Climate change		
Nature/ conservation		
Farming / land management		
Landscape		
Heritage		
Tourism		
Planning		
Housing		
Finance		
Fundraising		
Marketing / PR		
Media		
Strategy development		
Senior management		
Monitoring and evaluation		
IT / AI		
Human resource management		
Mentoring and coaching		
Legal		
Governance		
Education and training		
Community engagement		
Inclusion / equality		
Health and safety		
Safeguarding		
Other		

3. Qualifications

Please list any relevant and current (post-school) qualifications you have (Academic and Professional)

Qualification	Subject/Type	Details

Signature of Member

Date

Please return completed forms to the Customer and Democratic Support Team

Received by Customer & Democratic Support:

Date:

**DRAFT AUDIT, BUDGET & PROJECT RISK MONITORING GROUP
DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. **NEED FOR THE GROUP**

    The need for this Group has been prompted by the following.

    a. Audit - The Governance Working Group wishing to have a group of Members that have dedicated time to understand internal and external audit reports before Authority is requested to receive and agree the actions.
    b. Project Risk - The Governance Working Group wishing to understand movement in risks and progress in implementing projects approved by Committee due to the amount of funding. It is felt that there is little visibility of how project implementation is progressing and any movements in risk. Corporate risk will continue to be overseen by Authority, as part of performance reporting.
    c. Project Risk - The recent project management internal audit report including an action around creating a central list of projects approved by Committee so Members are aware of the status of the projects.
    d. Budget - Developing the existing Budget Monitoring Group to include capital as well as revenue funding.

2. **THE GROUP: COMPOSITION AND REPORTING PROCEDURES**

    a. The Group will usually comprise a maximum of five Members, including the Chair and Vice Chair of Programmes and Resources, that are appointed annually at the Authority's Annual General Meeting.
    b. The Group will agree a Chair (by majority at its first meeting if required).
    c. The Group does not make formal decisions however, it can make recommendations (which are agreed by a Group majority) to be considered by Authority or Programmes and Resources.
    d. The Group can invite input and advice from officers and Members as appropriate to support the operation of the Group.
    e. The Group's focus is on audit (internal and external), budget (capital and revenue) and project risk.

    The Group will provide a way for Members and officers to engage on internal and external audit, capital and revenue budget monitoring and project risk to provide Members with confidence these are being managed effectively and efficiently in advance of formal Committee meetings.

    The Group does not make any formal decisions as these reside with the Programmes and Resources Committee and the Authority. Any reports to all Members are to the Programmes and Resources Committee and the Authority, and can be a mixture of formal and informal. There is no requirement to publish agendas or make meetings open to the public.

    Attendance at formal meetings of the Group is classified as an Approved Duty for appointed Members to allow the payment of travel and subsistence expenses.

3. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Group has been created to consider and have oversight of internal and external audit, capital and revenue budget monitoring and project risk to provide Members with confidence these are being managed effectively and efficiently. It will meet on a quarterly basis. It will focus on the following areas.

Audit Monitoring

a. To be aware of the forthcoming years internal and external audit plan.
b. To consider reports from the internal and external auditor to understand the findings and any actions in advance of requesting Authority formally receive and agree the actions.
c. To have visibility of progress in implementing internal and external audit actions.

Budget Monitoring

a. To be aware of all capital and revenue expenditure and income compared to the projected budget.
b. To consider how any issues (under, overspend or income target issues) in the financial year are planned to be dealt with.
c. To be aware of project budget expenditure that a Committee approved and consider how any issues are planned to be dealt with.

Project Risk Monitoring

a. To have visibility of progress in implementing projects approved by Committee.
b. To be aware of risks and mitigation measures associated with projects that have been approved by Committee.
c. To consider any issues or movement of risks and mitigation measures for projects approved by Committee.