

AGENDA ITEM No. 7

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING

25 MAY 2007

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

1. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2007 - 08 (A197/WA)

Proposal

- 1 To approve the contents of the draft Best Value Performance Plan 2007-08, as a reflection of our achievements over the past twelve months and our focus of activity for the year ahead, prior to publication of the Plan by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2007.

2 RECOMMENDATION:

That the draft Best Value Performance Plan 2007 – 08 be approved with the completion of details delegated to the Chief Executive for publication by 30 June 2007.

Policy/Legal Background

- 3 National Park Authorities were brought within the Best Value legislation by the Local Government Act 1999 followed by Circular 10/99 with updated guidance provided in joint government Circular, "Guidance on Best Value and Performance Improvement for National Parks and the Broads Authority" (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 10/2003 and Defra 03/2003). This sets out how we might make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in our performance.
- 4 An Addendum to Office of Deputy Prime Minister Circular 3/2003 "Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans", published in February 2004, states that we must show in the Plan:
- A brief summary of our strategic objectives and priorities for improvement, drawn from our corporate /business planning processes and overall vision;
 - Arrangements for addressing our improvement priorities, including any opportunities and weaknesses identified in best value reviews and inspections, and the outcomes expected to be achieved as a result;
 - Details of performance over the past year and targets for the current year for the national Best Value Performance Plan indicators;
 - A statement that certifies that all contracts awarded in the past year, which involve a transfer of staff, comply, where applicable, with the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

- 5 The Guidance also emphasises that:
- The Plan is not an end in itself: it is less important than the planning process that underlies it (which must be integrated with corporate planning arrangements) and the planned improvements that result;
 - The Plan's primary audience is the Authority - elected Members and officers - so that improvements can be achieved, but the Government will use them to monitor progress towards its targets. We need to make copies available to the public and engage with them on performance improvement.
- 6 "Best Value Performance Indicators" guidance is produced annually by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) – now Department for Communities and Local government (DCLG), augmented by National Park family and local indicators. National Indicators remain unchanged from 2006 – 07.
- 7 The specific framework for the Plan was laid down in the Defra Financial Grant Memorandum of December 1999.
- 8 The Financial Grant Memorandum indicates that the Best Value Performance Plan is a 'bridge' between the National Park Management Plan and service specific and financial plans. In the case of National Park authorities, the Plan is also a financial planning and reporting document.
- 9 The national review of the Defra Financial Grant Memorandum has yet to be completed to bring it into line with Department for Communities and local Government (previously Office of Deputy Prime Minister) requirements specified in other guidance. Where there are discrepancies, we have sought to meet both sets of requirements.
- 10 The functions of National Park Authorities on which we are required to report to Defra are as follows:
- A Conservation of the Natural Environment
 - B Conservation of the cultural Heritage
 - C Recreation Management
 - D Promoting Understanding
 - E Development Control
 - F Forward Planning
 - G Corporate and Democratic Core, Administrative Support Services, Training and Development
- 11 Our previous Best Value Performance Plans were produced in March 2000 and 2001 and in June 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Key Issues

- 12 The Plan outlines our progress in continuously improving the services we provide and our targets for the future. It highlights the issues that we need to address in future for our customers, who include local communities and visitors. There are two main sections to the plan:
- Part 1 provides a summary of the context to which we are working and information about how we organise and manage ourselves. It highlights our corporate planning work based on the new National Park Management Plan and our progress on performance management, scrutiny and risk management in response to our Performance Improvement Plan as approved by Audit and Performance Committee in January 2007 (minute 10/07 refers)
 - Part 2 deals with our specific activities function by function within the prescribed 7 headings in paragraph 10 above. This highlights our progress at the service level and where we will focus our attention for the forthcoming financial year to achieve the

Authority's priority Key Corporate Actions as agreed at Authority in December 2006
(minute 100/06 refers)

- 13 Some information is not available at present and will be inserted into the Plan prior to publication:
 - Annex 10 – the overall financial statement
 - Financial details for each of the functional headings requested by Defra (and shown in each Part 2 section) for current and future years
 - Comparison of performance on National Park family indicators between ourselves and other National Park Authorities

- 14 As part of the performance management improvement work, the Authority's indicators are being refined and monitored more closely:
 - Key underperforming Performance Indicators will be identified by Management Team and monitored by them quarterly and by Audit and Performance Committee 6 monthly
 - National Park Family indicators will be reviewed during 2007/08 as part of the work of the cross-Parks Joint Improvement Group so no targets have been set for future years on these indicators
 - Local indicators for our own use, as supplementary to these, are being redesigned to reflect our new Key Corporate Actions. Therefore no targets have been set for current local indicators that are less relevant. New indicators will be developed during 2007/08 and monitoring on these for at least the last 3 months of 2007/08 is planned in all appropriate cases (examples of exceptions would be one-off surveys or where a completely new monitoring system needs to be developed)

- 15 There is a period of 1 week following the Authority meeting to allow for members to provide comments on detail to the author of the document.

- 16 The statutory deadline for publication of the document is 30 June and it will be available on the Authority's website by that date. Paper copies will be made available and summaries also distributed. A wide range of key stakeholders will be informed of publication. Key information will also be published in the Authority's 'Parklife' newsletter.

APPENDIX

Background

17 None

Resources

12 The proposals reflect the budget for 2007/08 that was approved by the Authority in February (Minute 11/07 refers). As noted then, the Authority has made cautious financial plans in the face of overall pressures on public finances.

Risk Management

13 The risk to the Authority of not having an approved plan in place to comply with our statutory duty and to drive performance improvement forward is mitigated by having a project plan in place for service and corporate planning and to secure publication of this document by the due date.

Human Rights, Equalities, Health & Safety

14 No human rights issues are apparent.

Consultees

15 This report was sent to Directors and Heads of Service and has taken into account their views.

Enclosures

16 Appendix 1 – draft Best Value Performance Plan.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

17 None

Report Author

18 Wendy Amis, Performance Officer – Human Resources and Performance

Publication date

19 17 May 2007