MEMBER / OFFICER GOVERNANCE REVIEW WORKING GROUP

1. THE WORKING GROUP

a) To comprise between 5-7 Members;
b) Members to agree a Chairman;
c) Either a formal or informal body, but its recommendations (albeit of a majority) to be reported direct to the Authority;
d) If formal, its Members could still meet informally to keep bureaucracy to a minimum, only meeting formally when decisions are required;
e) Should allow full participation from other Members and may consult the Members' Forum as it deems necessary;
f) Should welcome input and advice from Officers as appropriate.
g) Lead Officer is the Chief Executive and additional resources have been identified to support the work of the Group

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To undertake a review of the governance arrangements of the National Park Authority in so far as they relate to the making of decisions by both Members and Officers to ensure that they meet the present day needs of the organisation for responsive as well as efficient decision-making; and are presented in a clear, understandable and comprehensive manner; and to advise the Authority on any changes that may be required.

3. NEED FOR REVIEW

It is always healthy from time to time to review the internal working of an organisation to ensure that present practice is fit for purpose. Issues that are likely to arise include:

a) The respective functions of the Planning and ARP Committees and their relationship to each other and to the Authority;
b) The complex and duplicative nature of the Officer Delegation Scheme in its present form;
c) The involvement of Members in policy and other decision making;
d) The Members' role in monitoring and scrutiny, including.:
    - when and how Members are consulted about some proposed decisions by Officers;
    - when and how Members are informed of some decisions taken;
e) How Members can get items discussed;
f) Any new arrangements under the Officer Delegation Scheme consequent upon the new Officer structure.

4. INITIAL WORK PROGRAMME

Whilst a great deal can be done to present better the current arrangements, a radical and widespread change is neither sought nor expected, for example in the overall balance between Member and Officer decision-making. It is anticipated that the work will include an assessment of best practice elsewhere, such as governance arrangements in other National Park Authorities.

The suggestion is that the Working Group would undertake its role by focusing on discrete subject areas. For example:

Subject 1: Committee issues

1. Consideration of present committee delegation scheme;
2. Light-touch review of the two main committees and their relationship to full Authority; and to other committees and bodies sponsored by the Authority to further its business and which have Member involvement;
3. Look at other comparable national park authorities, including committee structures, meeting agendas, eg Lake District, South Downs, Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors.

Issues that may arise could include the role of ARP; the role of committees in responding to consultation from Government; how scrutiny can be developed; and how Members/the public can raise questions at meetings.

Subject 2: The role and accountability of Members

1. Review the various statements that set out the role of Members of the Authority to ensure they meet present day expectations;
2. Look at the Member/Officer Protocol, the statement made on the website on the role of Members and any other internal document addressing this issue. Consider any external advice, eg from DEFRA.

Issues that may arise could include the role of members in policy making; as spokesmen and spokeswomen; in scrutiny and holding the executive to account; and as a sounding board.

Subject 3: Officer Delegation Scheme

1. An initial general look to see whether any specific questions should be addressed at this stage.

Issues that may arise could include the consultation of senior leadership team on the level that delegation should be set; whether delegations be grouped solely by subject matter or solely under the name of each officer named; a call for officer suggestions for changes to the scheme; and regarding senior staff appointments.

Subject 4: Member Representatives

1. Look at the stated purpose of Member Representatives and their briefs.

Issues that may arise could include the need for the specific role; whether the role as stated is achievable; when Member Reps should be consulted; how Member Reps should report; and the relationship to national Secretary of State Members appointed for their particular expertise who are not Member Reps.

5. OUTCOMES

The Working Group will be a cooperative and collaborative process involving Members and Officers that will explore more effective ways of working in order to achieve positive outcomes for the Authority and improve all-round governance. These outcomes will include:

- more effective Member engagement and greater ownership of the policies and decisions of the Authority;

- an improved relationship between Members and Officers with more mutual understanding and better communications;
- a well-run and responsive organisation that is fit for purpose and adopts best practice.

In carrying out its task, the Working Group should have regard to the seven key principles that underpin the ways of working at the PDNPA whilst ensuring proper accountability and ethical governance:

- We always start with outcomes
- We always ask what's possible
- We always put the public first
- We always look for efficiency
- We always act with agility
- We always value our colleagues
- We always develop ourselves and others.