

REPORT OF ADMINISTRATION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

SUBJECT: MEMBERS' SURVEY 2013: RESULTS

Purpose of the report

1. To provide Members with an analysis of the recently undertaken Members' survey in relation to meetings and meeting papers, and
2. To canvass Members' opinion on the issues raised as a result.

Background

Members will be aware that a survey was recently carried out to assess whether the current arrangements in relation to meetings, and the distribution and content of meeting papers were satisfactory or whether they needed to be amended in some way. Eleven Members (61%) responded to the survey, the details of which were reported to the Member Development Strategy Working Group on the 27th February 2013. As a result of the responses received, the draft calendar of meetings has been produced (see Report No. 12/13 on the agenda for today's meeting), but an analysis of the responses is set out as follows:

Eight of the eleven respondents (73%) stated that they were happy with the current number of meetings held in one day and the number of days in a month on which meetings were held. Three Members considered that there should be more meetings per day, resulting in fewer days' attendance and consequently a saving on multi trips and expenses. All respondents preferred meetings to be held in the morning, commencing at 10.00a.m.

All eleven respondents were happy with lunch/refreshment arrangements.

Three Members considered that all meetings should be held at Pembroke Dock, while four suggested that meetings of the National Park Authority should occasionally be held at other venues across the Park. Three Members wanted Development Management Committee meetings to be held at various venues, with one suggesting that other venues could be used if the meeting was devoted to a particular application that would give a location perspective some value. Five Members suggested that meetings of the other Committees could be held in various venues around the National Park area.

With regard to the content of minutes, and reports to Committee, 91% of the respondents considered that enough information was provided, whilst one Member considered there was too much information contained in minutes of NPA meetings and that the reports to Development Management Committee could, at times, be overly repetitive. 64% of respondents would be happy to receive papers electronically, but 36% would still like a paper copy made available to them at the meeting itself. Three Members did not want to receive papers electronically, although two went on to say that they would be willing to accept papers electronically if the Authority were to provide them with an electronic tablet that could be brought to

meetings instead. However, one qualified his statement by saying that the use of tablets would remove the elements of verbal and visual contact at a meeting.

Members were also invited to provide comments/suggestions for improvement, and these are detailed below:

- Short breaks should be factored in during long meetings as decision making could suffer otherwise;
- A sound system should be provided to enable Members and members of the public to hear the debate better;
- Minutes should also record the names of the officers present at the meeting;
- Longer notice should be provided of meetings not included in the published calendar of meetings, especially workshops, and
- Proper time estimates for meeting duration should be provided.

Member Development Strategy Working Group comments

At the Member Development Strategy Working Group, the Chief Executive raised the option of holding meetings in the evenings in order to provide a better service to the Authority's customers. Working Group Members were not convinced that this was a viable option bearing in mind Members' other commitments; however, it was suggested at the meeting that a survey be undertaken of those members of the public who had attended previous Development Management Committees to explore whether it would have been more convenient for them to attend an evening meeting rather than one held during the day.

The electronic distribution of agenda papers and the use of electronic tablets were also discussed, and Members were of the view that this would help reduce agenda printing and postage costs.

Options

The survey results raise a number of issues in relation to meetings therefore, which should be considered by Members:

1. To maintain the status quo with regard to meeting time and venue;
2. To hold one National Park Authority meeting per Municipal Year at an alternative venue, and/or
3. To hold meetings of other Committees at alternative venues;
4. To hold meetings of the Authority and its Committees during the evening;

Option 4 above has been included as officers are of the opinion that, as a public service, consideration should also be given to the opinions of its customers – particularly those who have an interest in planning applications. This could be done by means of a survey as indicated previously in the report.

With regard to the distribution of agenda papers by electronic means, it is suggested that a pilot exercise be undertaken with some Members to trial the use of electronic tablets or similar, with a view to rolling it out to all Members if successful.

Financial considerations

Were the status quo to be maintained with regard to timings and venue of meetings, there would be no additional costs to those already budgeted for. The use of

alternative venues around the Park area would result in venue hiring fees, possible additional travelling expenses for some Members (although this may be compensated by less travelling for others) plus additional officer time out of the office to attend meetings (at present, officers do not have to attend the entire meeting to await presentation of their report(s)).

The trial of electronic tablets would involve an initial outlay by the Authority, although this would be compensated for over time by a reduction in printing and postage costs.

Risk considerations

None.

Compliance

The report complies with Outcome 8 of the Corporate Strategy: The Authority is recognised as meeting good practice standards in terms of governance, providing value for money and listening to the views of residents, visitors and partners.

Human Rights/Equality issues

The report can demonstrate that it takes into account the requirements and wishes of Members in delivering democratic services.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

No implications.

Welsh Language statement

The report has no implications for the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme.

Conclusion

The results of the Members' survey indicate that no major changes are required with regard to meetings of the Authority and its Committees. However, discussions at the Member Development Strategy Working Group suggest that minor changes could be introduced to improve both the Member and customer experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That a survey be undertaken of those members of the public who had attended previous Development Management Committees to explore whether it would have been more convenient for them to attend an evening meeting rather than one held during the day;**
- 2. That one meeting of the National Park Authority be held at an alternative venue each Municipal Year,**
- 3. That consideration be given to holding at least one meeting of the Authority's Review Committees at an alternative venue each Municipal Year, and**
- 4. That a pilot exercise be undertaken with some Members on the use of electronic tablets as a means of receiving agenda papers and that volunteers be sought.**

Background papers:

Members' survey results

Report to the Member Development Strategy Working Group: 27th February 2013

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