

Peer Review
Report by Chief Executive

Summary: This report responds to the motion adopted by the Broads Authority at its meeting on 27 January 2017.

Recommendation: That the Committee considers the motion passed at the Broads Authority for the Committee to consider the “need, scope and terms of reference for a peer review involving the National Park Authorities and independent experts into the governance arrangements of the Broads Authority and how they can be modernised.”

1 Introduction

1.1 At the meeting of the Broads Authority on 27 January 2017 the following motion was passed by ten votes in favour, six votes against and no abstentions.

“We ask that the Financial Scrutiny and Audit Committee considers the need, scope and terms of reference for a peer review involving the National Park Authorities and independent experts into the governance arrangements of the Broads Authority and how they can be modernised.”

1.2 A briefing note on peer reviews has been circulated to Broads Authority Members and is attached as an appendix to help consideration of this matter.

Background papers: NPAPA Peer Assessments 2005 and 2011

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Broads Plan Objectives: None

Appendices: APPENDIX 1 - Briefing on peer reviews

Briefing on Peer Review

Background

The Audit Commission’s Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection regime, introduced in 2002 to drive improved performance and “best value”, was rejected as ineffective for National Park Authorities because of their different size, responsibilities and governance arrangements. Therefore The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives helped design a more effective assessment regime of the parks. The National Park Authorities Performance Assessment (NPAPA) involved a team led by an independent facilitator and comprising a local authority Chief Executive, and a Member, Chief Executive and Member of staff drawn from three other National Parks. They spent a week in each Authority examining the whole organisation against a set of Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs). The process included the preparation of a comprehensive Self-Assessment which took several months of work and was followed by the Team’s visit, their report and the preparation of an Action Plan. Defra fully supported this process.

When the Government dropped CPA National Parks England (the 10 English Parks) also reviewed the position and concluded that, particularly with the cuts in National Park Grant in mind, it wasn’t appropriate to continue with such a resource intensive process. Defra’s view has been that it is for National Parks England (NPE – the ten National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority in England) to lead on this. I would therefore expect that the first step in answering this question would be a discussion between the Chairs of the 10 National Park Authorities in England.

The Broads Authority has taken part in the two rounds of NPAPA. The first was in 2005. The second in 2011 – reported to Members in January 2012. Equally I have participated in two reviews of other National Parks – the North York Moors and the South Downs. The result of the first review in 2005 was as follows:

KLOE Themes	Assessment
What is the Authority trying to achieve?	
Quality of vision	Strong
Quality of Authority’s plans	Strengths outweigh Weaknesses
Setting priorities	Strengths outweigh Weaknesses
How has the Authority set about delivering its vision?	
Organisational capacity	Weaknesses outweigh Strengths
Working in Partnership	Strong
Performance management and Learning	Weaknesses outweigh Strengths
What has the Authority achieved / not achieved to date?	

Achievement in delivery of purposes and duties	Strengths outweigh Weaknesses
Achievement of improvement in delivery of purposes and duties	Strengths outweigh Weaknesses
Developing the effectiveness of the organisation	Strengths outweigh Weaknesses

This was based on the following 4 point scale:

Strong: High achieving with few outstanding improvement issues to address

Strengths outweigh weaknesses: Making strong progress towards achieving the standard. Some improvements still required but these are minimal compared to the distance travelled so far.

Weaknesses outweigh strengths: On the move with evidence of progress being made but there is further to go in making improvements than the distance travelled so far or in seeing the changes create an impact.

Weak: Little evidence of achievement, considerable improvement required. Clear focus and a structured approach to improvement are necessary.

The 2011 Review used a different scoring system as follows:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements – **performs poorly**
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements – **performs adequately**
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements – **performs well**
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements – **performs excellently.**

The result was:

Key Line of Enquiry	Peer Assessment
1. Quality of Vision	Performs Well
2. Setting and Using Priorities	Performs Well
3. Achievement of Outcomes: Conservation	Performs Well
4. Achievement of Outcomes: Promoting Understanding and Service Delivery Managing the navigation area for the purposes of navigation	Performs Well
5. Achievement of Outcomes: Wider Sustainable Development	Performs Well
6. Organisational Capacity, Use of Resources and Governance	Performs Well

7. Leadership & Improving Performance	Performs Adequately
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There were two suggestions under Leadership and Performance KLOE:

(i) As the benefits of the organisational change become embedded, consider when the appropriate time may be to relax organisational constraints and allow the skills, knowledge and innovation of staff to be used more fluidly.

(ii) As part of the review of consultative structures determine the arrangements for engaging with key stakeholders including the role of the Broads Forum.

On the positive side for that KLOE the report had the following to say:

“Partners recognise the strong and visible leadership of the Chief Executive and Chairman. The profile of the Chief Executive is good and his contributions are well regarded in his attendance at countywide meetings of local authority chief executives. Within the Authority there is recognised leadership provided by the Chairman, Chief Executive, lead Members and the Management Team with good collective responsibility among senior managers and Members. At a national level senior managers are seen as leaders in the navigation field.

The strategic leadership is not complacent about what still needs to be achieved. There is recognition that the Authority is on a journey and has not reached the end. One of its great strengths is that it is prepared to take big decisions, with appropriate identification and managing of risk, followed by targeted actions for delivery.

Member development arrangements are good. A robust strategy is in place to develop members that includes: member induction; mentors; a continuous development programme with presentations, site visits, and training; and an annual development appraisal.

Key building blocks are in place. The reviews, reorganisation, cost cutting and structural decisions taken over recent years will help the Authority be in a better position to deliver on its priorities and meet the aspirations of its users, partners and stakeholders.”

The Planning Service Review was undertaken at the Broads Authority’s request in 2015 by the Planning Advisory Service. They observed Planning Committee meetings and interviewed members and officers. The report was positive saying that:

“In general terms we have concluded that the Broads Authority Planning Committee is performing very well both in general, and in relation to the discharge of its functions under the Broads Act 1988 in particular.”

LGA Peer Review

For it to be a peer review, our comparators are the National Park Authorities and not mainstream local authorities and one would expect that Members and members of staff from other National Park Authorities, familiar with the legal and organisational frameworks

within which the Broads Authority operates, would be involved. If a further whole organisational review was wanted then it would ideally be part of a programme of third round reviews involving all ten English Parks so that we could learn from each other. This proposition would require further investigation to determine the other parks' appetite for another round of reviews because of the heavy demand on their resources.

For the process to be both worthwhile and successful there needs to be clear evidence of need for the peer review the "Why", and also the scope needs to be clearly defined, the "What". Once that is done it would be helpful if Members could assess the level of priority such a review is accorded in the Authority's work programme.

JP

24/1/2016