

Broads Authority

30 April 2021

Agenda item number 12

Agenda item on feedback from outside bodies

Report by Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance

Purpose

To consider whether there is a more effective method for members to report to the Authority on the work of outside bodies to which the Authority makes nominations and has representation, rather than the current standing item on the agenda.

Recommended decision

To consider the issues raised in the report.

- 1.1 At the Authority's meeting in January, the Chair invited comments on the effectiveness of the standing item on Broads Authority agendas to receive feedback from members appointed to represent the Authority on outside bodies. The Chair was concerned to make sure the item had a purpose and a structured basis for being on the agenda. He noted that the present agenda item was vague and too similar to 'Any Other Business' (AOB). It was agreed that officers would bring recommendations for members' consideration to a future meeting.
- 1.2 It is relevant to recognise that there is a distinction between items that are for discussion on an agenda, because they raise strategic issues on which a decision is required, and those that are there for information only, for members to raise factual questions.
- 1.3 It should also be noted that 'Knowles on Local Authority meetings'¹ confirms that AOB should not be on an agenda: "Following changes to the Local Government Act 1972 introduced by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the practice of 'Any Other Business' was discontinued because an item of business may not be considered at a meeting of a principal council unless requisite advance notice has been given." Indeed, the Authority's own Standing Orders say at 3.1 (n) that the Order of Business should include "any other business specified on the agenda". Of course, notices of motion may be brought about things that relate to the Authority's functions or area, which would include items about the work of an outside body.

¹ Knowles on Local Authority Meetings; 8th Edition pub 2016

- 1.4 It is clearly appropriate that members should be able to bring before the Authority strategic matters they consider important for other members' and the public's attention. There is an existing process for this, which is to raise the issue with the Chair and Chief Executive. If there is a strategic issue about the work of an outside body that requires a formal decision by the Authority, then it would be necessary to make that the subject of a separate report, with a recommendation for action.
- 1.5 Routine reporting for information about the work of outside bodies can be undertaken in a number of ways. One option is that each member representative puts forward a short report once or twice a year, or on a rolling basis, about the work of the outside body. Any such reports could be checked in advance to make sure they did not, for example, include any sensitive or exempt information. Members and the public would be able to see the report when the agenda was published, and members would have time to raise questions as appropriate. This procedure is what a number of local authorities do in relation to their outside bodies.
- 1.6 Members' views are invited on the options for reporting about the work of outside bodies to which the Authority makes nominations and has representation.

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