



Lake District National Park

Governance Committee: 24 September 2025
Draft Minutes Subject to Committee Approval

Agenda Item: 2

Governance Committee

MINUTES of a meeting of the Governance Committee held at the National Park Office, Murley Moss, Kendal at 10.00 am on 30 July 2025.

Present

Ms J A Drake (Chair)
Mr W Clark
Mr M Kidd

Mr R G Minshaw
Mrs S Stolberg
3 vacancies

Also in attendance

Chair of the Authority: Ms T Hunt MBE

Apologies

Independent Person: Mr A Southorn
Independent Person: Mr D Tweddle
Jane Butterfield, TIAA

22/25 Appointment of Chair

Mr Kidd nominated Ms Drake to be appointed as Chair and Mr Minshaw seconded the appointment. There were no other nominations.

Decided: That Ms J Drake be re-appointed Chair for the coming year.

23/25 Appointment of Deputy Chair

Mr Kidd nominated Mr Clark to be appointed as Deputy Chair and Mr Minshaw seconded the appointment. There were no other nominations.

Decided: That Mr W Clark be appointed as Deputy Chair for the coming year.

24/25 Apologies

Apologies were received from Independent Persons, Mr A Southorn and Mr D Tweddle, and from Ms J Butterfield (TIAA)

25/25 Minutes

Decided: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

26/25 Chair's Announcements

The Chair announced to the Committee and members of the public that the meeting was being livestreamed and that a digital sound recording of the meeting would be made.

27/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of a registrable interest or disclosable pecuniary interest relating to any of the business of the Committee.

28/25 Questions

There were no questions relating to the business of the Committee.

29/25 Public Participation

There were no questions, petitions or deputations of a general nature relating to the business of the Committee.

30/25 Freedom of Information Requests Received and Complaints Made to the Information Commissioner for the Year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

The Authority Solicitor presented a substantial overview of the annual report, summarising the number and nature of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Requests (EIR) received during the reporting period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

A total of 77 requests were received, up from 65 the previous year. Of these, 51 were FOI requests and 26 were EIRs. The Authority responded to 66 requests within the statutory timeframe, with 11 responded to out of time, though all requesters were notified of expected delays. No internal reviews were requested, and no complaints were made to the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Authority Solicitor highlighted the range of topics covered in requests and explained that, although eight data breaches had occurred, none were reportable, and mostly due to human error.

The Authority Solicitor explained that, in cases of complex requests, such as those involving historical rights of way documents, significant time and resources are required, contributing to delays in response times. Members were assured that persons making a request were kept informed when delays occur.

Members expressed their appreciation of the clarity of the report and the explanation for late responses.

Members' questions about an apparent increase in requests, the nature of the complaints received, and exemptions used to withhold information, were answered in full by the Authority Solicitor.

The Authority Chair expressed the Committee's appreciation for the work involved in handling FOI and EIR requests, acknowledging the significant resource demands and the diverse nature of topics received.

Decided:

- a. Members noted the Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests received during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025; and
- b. Members made no further suggestions to improve the Authority's services in the future.

31/25 Complaints Received for the Year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

The Authority Solicitor presented the report that identified the key areas of complaint, any discrepancies in the figures, and details actions that have been undertaken to improve performance and the recording of complaints for the year 2024 to 2025.

The current two-stage complaints process was briefly outlined, and a summary of the number, nature and outcome of complaints was provided. It was noted that most complaints related to planning matters, often as a continuation of objections to planning decisions. These were typically not upheld, as the process had already addressed the concerns raised.

It was highlighted that not all complaints are recorded and reasons for this were explained to Members. It was acknowledged that the Authority is reviewing its complaints processes to ensure appropriate records are kept and to facilitate effective response times.

Members supported continued efforts to identify trends and improve complaint handling and suggested further exploration of ways to record compliments and contextualise complaint data.

Decided:

- a. Members noted the content of the report and the key areas of complaint, the actions undertaken to improve performance, and identified trends in coming years; and
- b. Members supported action to improve performance and suggested further areas for improvement.

32/25 Complaints to the Ombudsman for the Year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

The Authority Solicitor presented the report that identified the complaints made to the Ombudsman and detailed the allegations, decisions, and lessons learned for Ombudsman complaints made during the year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Although the previous year's report had indicated no complaints, there had been three complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman during that period that had been later communicated to the Authority during the current year.

The Authority Solicitor provided details of each complaint and no questions were raised.

Decided:

- a. Members noted complaints made to the Ombudsman during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025; and
- b. Members made no suggestions to improve the Authority's services in the future.

33/25 Complaints Received Against Members for the Year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

The Authority Solicitor presented the report identifying the areas of complaint and which suggested actions to improve performance for the coming year.

One complaint was received concerning the conduct of a Member of the Authority. The incident related to a request for last-minute changes to Committee meeting dates, which conflicted with established scheduling protocols.

The item was presented for noting, with no further questions raised.

Decided:

- a. Members noted complaints made against Members during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025; and
- b. Members made no suggestions to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the Authority.

34/25 External Audit Update

The Head of Resources introduced the External Auditors Liz Luddington and Ben Hall (Grant Thornton) who had attended in person to provide a progress update.

Liz Luddington provided a verbal update to Members indicating that the Financial Audit and Auditor's Annual Report (Value for Money) were progressing well. The draft Audit Findings Report is expected to be ready for the next Governance Committee.

Ben Hall presented the progress report to Members. It was noted that substantive testing had commenced, with strong engagement from management and adherence to the agreed timetable and that all audit deliverables are on track.

Members were briefed on upcoming changes in the local audit framework, including the establishment of a new regulator and potential structural reforms.

Questions were raised regarding sector updates and the relevance of audit reforms. Liz Luddington responded that, although the consultation process had now closed, no timeline had been published to indicate when changes would occur.

Members welcomed the auditors' presence at the meeting and expressed appreciation for the clarity of reporting.

Decided:

- a. Members noted the update from the External Auditors.

The Committee passed the following Resolution:

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items. This was because exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Act, may be disclosed during discussions.

Part 2

35/25 Internal Audit Update

The Head of Resources presented the report which provided an update on progress delivering the 2025/26 internal audit plan. It also provided an update on the implementation of recommendations outstanding from internal audit reports previously issued. There were no new internal audit reports ready for Member review, which was in line with the agreed internal audit plan.

Implementation of previously raised recommendations was also reviewed. Members commented that although it was important to see that progress was on track it was more important to be able to see that recommendations were being implemented correctly.

Decided:

- a. Members noted the IA Progress report on implementation of the 2025/26 IA plan (Annex 1);

b. Members noted the current progress in implementing recommendations (Annex 2 and 3); and

c. Members noted the progress in implementing the Annual Governance Statement action plan (Annex 4)

(The meeting concluded at 11:01)