

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 18 NOVEMBER 2014**

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 10:30am.

Present:

Sebastian Anstruther	David Burden	Norman Dingemans (Chair)
Lewis Doyle (Independent Member)	Gill Mattock	Carole Nicholson (Independent Member)
Jim Sheppard	Margaret Paren (ex officio)	

Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Hélène Rossiter (Director of Corporate Services), Catherine Vaughan (Chief Finance Officer), Michelle Herrington (Principal Accountant, BHCC), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Mark Dallen (Internal Audit Manager), Anne Rehill (Performance and Project Manager), David Cranmer (Development Management Lead), Debbie Hartman (Human Resources Manager) and Stella New (Member Services Support Officer).

**APOLOGIES**

45. Apologies were received from Gary Marsh.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

46. There were none.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2014**

47. The minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on 18 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

48. Independent Committee member Carole Nicholson joined the Committee table at 10.32am

**MATTERS ARISING**

49. In response to questions officers clarified:

- All officers on the pension scheme were now under the West Sussex Pensions Fund.
- The transition and timescale for the reporting of Planning Performance to the Governance Committee was being finalised, and would be in place for Q3.

**URGENT MATTERS**

50. There were none.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

51. There were no members of the public present.

**PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT**

52. The Committee considered the report from the Performance & Project Manager (Report GOV27/14).

53. The Committee commented:

- With regard to the Rampion Wind Farm evaluation:
  - Officers were commended on the outcome, particularly given the SDNPA's infancy at the time of involvement.
  - The evaluation could benefit from noting the relatively late stage of the SDNPA's involvement, as well as the important work contributed by partners.
  - The reduced energy output resulting from the reduction achieved in turbine numbers.
- The inclusion of financial reporting within evaluations and case studies would assist the Committee's decision making with regard to resource implications.
- The Case Studies provided valuable reassurance for the local community about the work of the SDNPA.
- It was acknowledged that officers involved in Planning Inquiries could benefit from additional training.

54. In response to questions officers clarified:

- Evaluations were carried out for large scale projects that might involve partnership working, and could be shared with partners where this was appropriate.

## Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee

### Agenda Item 3

- Case studies were intended for internal and external audiences, and related to smaller scale projects, detailing outlines, project deliverables and how these aligned with Partnership Management Plan outcomes.
- A contextual summary would be added to future evaluations and case studies, to include the timescale and budget.
- With regard to the Rampion Wind Farm evaluation:
  - There was no formal record of officer time spent, and therefore resource costs, however the only financial outlay was the commission of an engineer's report at a cost of £3K.
  - The pipeline route had been selected by E.ON, and the panel had to assess the application before them.
  - The pipeline allowed for any additional cables to be laid with minimal disturbance.
- Infrastructure projects of a national scale were relatively rare.
- Dedicated teams of officers, advisors and consultants could be allocated to future large infrastructure projects and planning inquiries, with cost implications.

55. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1) Noted the project evaluations
- 2) Agreed to make the following recommendation as a result of the learning from the evaluations
  - That a report considering the allocation of a dedicated team of officers to large infrastructure projects be brought to a future Policy and Programme Committee meeting.

## QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

56. The Committee considered the report from the Performance & Project Manager (Report GOV28/14).
57. The Committee commented:
- Whilst reporting by exception would reduce the amount of projects being reported, the Committee was required to consider all projects, providing an overview across the whole organisation.
  - It was important to consider the timing of project decision points within the budget setting process.
  - Their concern regarding the delayed status of a number of Local Plan Evidence projects, in particular the Landscape Viewshed study.
58. In response to questions officers clarified:
- Numbers of planning applications would in future be included to give context, and information presented in a bar chart format to show trends.
  - The cover report would in future highlight any changes that may have occurred since generation of the quarterly figures.
  - For operational reasons the funding of some projects was sometimes spent towards the end of the timeframe.
  - Major projects were reported to the Policy & Programme Committee.
  - There were 2 stages to the assessment of Gipsy & Traveller Sites i.e. needs analysis and site assessment.
  - The Local Plan Project Board kept track of Local Plan projects.
  - The Landscape Viewshed Study was now amber as the budget issue had been resolved and work rescheduled.
  - The Corporate Plan was a 3 year rolling plan set and agreed by the Policy Programme Committee and Full Authority, and frequent changes to high level indicators could adversely affect meaningful trend analysis.
  - There would be opportunity to discuss the budget and corporate priorities at the Budget Member Workshop on 3 December, and assess any changes to indicators that may be required.
59. Committee member David Burden left the meeting room at 11.30am.

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60. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Noted and approved the Quarter 2 Performance Report
  - 2) Agreed to raise their concern with the Local Plan Member Working Group that a number of Local Plan Evidence projects were behind schedule.

### BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER 2, 2014/15

61. The Committee considered the report from the Chief Finance Officer (Report GOV29/14).
62. The Committee commented:
- Consultancy costs should be incurred by exception.
63. In response to questions officers clarified:
- Outturn figures would be available for the South Downs Centre pending the final stages of contractor negotiation by the cost consultants.
  - Idox licenses were not named, however there were more users than originally planned due to take up by partnering Local Authorities.
  - A report on Idox would be scheduled to a future meeting of the Governance Committee.
  - The Members' decision to secure legal protection for the Shared Identity was an unforeseen cost, whereas the cost of website hosting arrangements due to delay of the new website could potentially have been foreseen.
  - The scheme of vehicle replacements had been revised to replace only two vehicles this financial year.
  - The funding of vehicle replacement had been proposed from a reserve fund specifically for vehicle replacement, rather than the General Reserves fund.
64. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the forecast financial position as at Quarter 2 and the mitigating action as detailed in section 5 of Report GOV29/14

### TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

65. The Committee considered the report from the Performance & Project Manager (Report GOV30/14).
66. The Committee commented:
- Training in Treasury Management would be beneficial for the Committee, and could be extended to other interested Authority Members.
  - Following the training the Committee could then consider whether an independent review was appropriate.
  - The training needs of Members were assessed at their annual review with the Chair of the Authority.
  - It was important to ensure the right software was being used appropriately, with the right controls.
  - The current treasury management arrangements were of benefit to the SDNPA.
67. In response to questions officers clarified:
- Whilst pooled arrangements were of benefit to smaller organisations in terms of resource and resilience, the associated lack of autonomy could represent a degree of conflict.
  - An independent review could help identify relative risks and benefits, and explore alternative provision and potential for divergence in investment strategy.
  - Training could better equip the Committee to appropriately question Treasury Management arrangements, and manage associated risks.
  - Contracts were scrutinised by the Senior Management Team to ensure good value for money, and managed from within the Authority by the Business Services Manager.
  - The contract with Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) for Treasury Management and associated charges could be made available to Members.
68. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Noted the contents of Report GOV30/14.

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- 2) Agreed that independently provided Treasury Management training for Members of the Governance Committee and other interested Members of the Authority should be undertaken at an approximate cost of £1,500, and that consideration then be given as to whether an independent review of the provision of Treasury Management should be undertaken.

## INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS AND IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

69. The Committee considered the report from the Internal Audit Manager (Report GOV31/14).
70. In response to questions officers clarified:
  - The full Internal Audit was reported to the Director of Corporate Services and the Section 151 Officer, with any unresolved issues reported to the Governance Committee.
  - The Internal Audit team at BHCC maintained a CPD delivery plan of 5 days per annum, and strict arrangements were in place to record training and competencies.
71. Clarification would be sought regarding the planned implementation date for Planning Income 2013-14; however the complex system of accounting for income derived from Local Authorities on behalf of the Authority could result in delays.
72. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted progress against the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan and the implementation of recommendations previously made.

## UPDATE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

73. The Committee considered the report from the Human Resources Manager (Report GOV32/14).
74. The Committee commented:
  - The Authority had a responsibility to educate, train and further the careers of its staff, which built in turn on the reputation of the National Park.
75. In response to questions officers clarified:
  - Cycle to Work was a salary sacrifice scheme.
  - The Authority currently paid for all employee training, with a requirement to pay back proportions of the cost dependent on leaving date.
  - Staff training costs were approved by Members as part of the budget setting process.
  - The forthcoming review of the Learning and Development policy would consider the prioritisation of training including mandatory training such as Health & Safety.
  - There had been large numbers of applicants for the majority of advertised posts.
  - A number of newly qualified RTPI planners had been recruited and were being trained in-house for Development Management posts.
  - Customer service was a key element of all Performance Management and Development competencies.
  - The recent Leadership and Management training would assist managers in setting, monitoring and reporting objective targets.
76. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.
77. The Chair took the opportunity to thank Catherine Vaughan, the current Section 151 Officer, for the support, help and guidance she had given the Authority.

## Chair

The meeting closed at 12:56pm.