

Report to	Resources and Performance Committee
Date	24 November 2011
By	Director of Corporate Services
Title of Report	2011-12 Staffing in the South Downs National Park Authority
Purpose of Report	To provide information about 2011-12 staffing and budget including interim staff

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. note the contents of the report which was requested by Members;**
-

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out background information about the 2011-12 staffing in the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) as requested by the Resources and Performance Committee on 8 September 2011.
- 1.2 The current structure for 2011-12 is detailed including clarity over interim staffing.

2. Background

- 2.1 The SDNPA came into being on 1 April 2010. The funding for the National Park for 2011-12 and beyond was uncertain, not least because of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Despite this, there was a need to develop the staffing structure for the organisation. A prudent view was taken of the likely "core" funding that would be available at the end of the CSR, the 2014-15 financial year. Using this funding level a provisional structure was created in July 2010. Based on this assessment recruitment to certain roles on a temporary basis could begin.
- 2.2 Using the provisional structure it was possible to commence work on identifying the staff who would transfer to the SDNPA from the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC) and people were notified of this at the end of July 2010.
- 2.3 Work on writing job descriptions and developing a pay system (with associated terms and conditions) began at this time. This was agreed with Members in October 2010.
- 2.4 Recruitment was phased to meet the capacity of the officer team at any point in time and the volume of posts that could be handled by the recruitment team. High priority posts needed most urgently were filled first, for example posts to initiate work on the National Park Management Plan or to ensure the delivery of the statutory Planning function.
- 2.5 A decision was taken to phase the recruitment of Directors and Chief Executive over several months to safeguard business continuity and ensure retention of corporate knowledge which has shaped the culture, values and approach in the organisation. Recruitment of Directors began in November 2010 and all Director appointments are now in post. The appointment of the permanent Chief Executive is expected to be completed in November 2011 with the permanent post holder taking up the role before the end of the financial year.

3. 2011-12 staffing budget

- 3.1 The SDNPA funding was agreed in January 2011 and this was sufficiently close to the original planning assumption that the core staffing could be confirmed as a basis for the 2011-12 budget that was agreed by the Authority in March 2011.

- 3.2 It was recognised that this staffing level would need to be kept under review in the light of experience in the first operational year, and that the provisional staffing structure drawn up in July 2010 would need to change as the organisation evolved. The Chief Executive has delegated powers to amend the staffing assumptions.
- 3.3 One key characteristic of the budget was that the level of external funding for the SDNPA will reduce over the 4 years to 2014-15. The core staffing structure is designed to be affordable in the final year when funding is at its lowest. However in the interim years there is the opportunity to appoint staff on fixed term contracts to undertake one-off projects and complete the establishment of the organisation. The current staffing plans therefore make provision for such short term posts in some critical areas (e.g. 2 year posts for the preparation of the planning Local Development Framework).
- 3.4 The 2011-12 budget was based on a permanent structure of 83.5 full time equivalents (FTE) and adjusted budget provision for staffing costs in 2011/12 is £3.578 million. These are the key indicators that help Members monitor staffing levels and budgets
- 3.5 The recruitment timetable underlying the budget assumptions has proved to be over optimistic. Recruitment has taken longer than planned for a number of reasons: agreement on the transfer of staff from the South Downs Joint Committee required more time than had been planned; recruitment to a number of posts was unsuccessful and had to be repeated, in some cases more than once; the resource required to recruit some 50 staff had to be balanced against the requirements to carry out other activities as the organisation became operational. This has led to the use of some interim staff for longer than initially planned. In some cases the requirement has changed. For example recruitment to the property, procurement & premises post was unsuccessful, and increasing workload has led to the recruitment of three interim contractors pending a longer term solution.
- 3.6 The staffing structure in 2011-12 can be seen in **Appendix 1**. As at 10 November 2011 there are:
- 65.8 FTE in the structure (fulltime and part-time employees on permanent contracts)
 - 6 posts covered by interims who will be replaced by permanent employees
 - 5 vacant posts to which we are actively seeking to recruit
 - **77.8 FTE** core staffing level (the sum of the three figures above)
- Other posts:
- 2 posts covered by interims who will not be replaced
 - 6 vacant posts to which we are not seeking to recruit at this stage (within Operations)
 - 3.6 externally funded posts
 - 8.4 posts covered on fixed term contracts (1 of which is currently vacant but recruitment for which is underway)
- 3.7 At Quarter 2, 2011/12 there is a projected overspend of £0.840 million from interim agency and contractor costs which are mainly offset by a £0.736 million underspend in permanent employees resulting in a net overspend of £0.104 million on total staffing. This is summarised in the table below:

Service	Salary Budget 2011/12 £'000	Interim Budget 2011/12 £'000	Total Budget 2011/12 £'000	Salary Forecast 2011/12 £'000	Interim Forecast 2011/12 £'000	Total Forecast 2011/12 £'000	Variance £'000
Chief Executive's Service	70	112	182	51	173	224	42
Corporate Services	589	41	630	368	504	872	242
Strategy & Partnerships	917	19	936	849	232	1,081	145
Operations	1,005	0	1,005	830	0	830	(175)
Planning	997	104	1,101	744	207	951	(150)
Total SDNPA	3,578	276	3,854	2,842	1,116	3,958	104

- 3.8 When the 2011-12 staffing structure was agreed, it was accepted that the structure would need to be flexible to meet changing demands. To date the following variations have taken place:
- a) Some posts from the original structure are being considered in more detail and in discussion with others including external partners before final decisions to recruit are taken. This includes the originally planned Farm and Land Management Advisers (3 posts) and the Community Engagement Officers (3 posts) within Operations.
 - b) Some additional short term support (on fixed term contracts) has been introduced:
 - Mineral and Waste Support officer – 2 years;
 - Partnerships Officer to support the preparation of the elements of the Management Plan – 2-3 years;
 - Temporary Planning Administration Manager to enable the permanent post holder to support the implementation of the Planning system – 9 months; and
 - Project officer to support the Chief Executive (including during the period of change to a new Chief Executive) – 9 months.
 - c) Some fixed term posts which are separately or externally funded have been added to the staffing, for example:
 - Heathlands project manager (funded from the Grants budget)
 - d) Some permanent additions to the staffing establishment have been made:
 - An additional receptionist role has been filled to handle the higher than expected inquiries from the public and other stakeholders.;
 - The Communications Team has been increased in 2011-12 by 0.5 FTE role to support the extensive engagement programme. The continuation of this post will need to be considered as part of the 2012-13 budget;
 - Replacing the former role in Corporate Services covering Procurement, ICT and Estates with 3 separate roles to reflect size of the workload in these area;
 - Including a Contract Compliance Officer to manage the agency agreements with local planning authorities; and
 - The External Funding team has been strengthened by 0.5 FTE to reflect the success of the Sustainable Communities Fund and the desire to invest in seeking other sources of external funding.
- 3.9 The financial effects of the above changes and the use of seconded / interim staff in 2011-12 was reported in summary to the last meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee (Budget monitoring for Quarter 1) and an update, for Quarter 2, is reported elsewhere on this agenda.

4 Use of short term contractors

- 4.1 The SDNPA has used staff engaged on a contractor basis to provide short term capacity to establish the new organisation, as it was not possible to proceed to recruitment of permanent staff until after the transfers from the South Downs Joint Committee had been confirmed. Contractors have been used in a variety of roles including senior management (e.g. Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services), communications (e.g. Head of Communications), planning (e.g. Head of Planning and Policy leads), strategy and partnerships (e.g. strategy leads and external funding officer) and corporate services (e.g. recruitment).
- 4.2 Contractors are recruited via established agencies able to call on a wide field of potential applicants. They are normally paid at daily rates including an agency fee. Whilst the day rates of agency staff can in some cases appear relatively high, the charge is an inclusive figure that includes the Agency rate. Interim staff are only paid for the days worked (not for periods of sickness absence, holiday or training). In addition there are no ongoing liabilities for the employing organisation, such as redundancy payments when an interim completes their work

for the Authority or pension contributions.

- 4.3 The expenditure on permanent staff and interim staff has been closely monitored and reported to the Resources and Performance Committee (and to the Audit Committee at the year end). Because of the slower than predicted recruitment there is an underspend on permanent staffing and a largely corresponding overspend on agency staff during the current year.

5 Current use of contractors

- 5.1 The intention has consistently been to phase out the use of interim staff as soon as possible but in a way that did not cause disruption or discontinuities.

- 5.2 As at 10 November 2011 there are 8 interim staff in the organisation. Of these:

- 5 are filling posts that are permanent in the Authority's structure and where recruitment is underway for a permanent post holder or is due to be completed:
 - Chief Executive Officer (recruitment underway)
 - Head of Communications (recruitment underway)
 - ICT Manager – recruitment planned imminently
 - ICT Support – recruitment planning in the new year
 - Procurement Manager – recruitment planning in April 2012
- 3 are filling posts which will come to an end because there is no corresponding permanent role
 - Estates Manager – due to end in Dec 2012 after the Capron project is complete
 - Project Manager (IDOX) – due to end in Mar 2012 once the IDOX project is complete
 - Recruitment Adviser – due to end in Mar 2012 once most major recruitment has finished.

6 Staffing in 2012-13

- 6.1 The staffing establishment will need to be reviewed as part of the preparation of the business plan and budget for next year.

7 Resources

- 7.1 The costs of staff, whether permanent, secondment or interim, is met from the SDNPA's budget.
- 7.2 The SDNPA has taken a prudent view of the staffing that can be afforded at the end of the four year spending (and funding) plan set out by the Government.
- 7.3 In the short term there is funding to support short term appointment to carry out specialist work, complete the establishment of the organisation or to support one-off programmes of work (such as the initial preparation of the first Management Plan) for which there is a short term requirement for additional capacity.
- 7.4 The use of secondments / interim staff is due to end by 31 March 2012 except in a small number of specific cases where short term support is needed (e.g. the move to Capron House).

8 Risk management

- 8.1 There are risks surrounding the determination of a permanent staffing structure for the SDNPA. The organisation is still evolving and there will be a need to retain flexibility and ensure that emerging changes in the capacity of individual teams is properly considered.
- 8.2 Employees represent a significant cost to the annual budget, so close control of the staffing establishment and employment costs is needed

9 Human Rights, Equalities, Health and Safety

9.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

10 External Consultees

10.1 None.

HÉLÈNE ROSSITER

Director of Corporate Services

Contact Officer:	Helene Rossiter
Tel:	01730 811766
email:	Helene.rossiter@southdowns.gov.uk
Appendices	Appendix 1 - Staff structure chart
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive Officer, Director of Planning, Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Head of Operations, Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, and Monitoring Officer

