

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Agenda Item 3

RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Held at Cowdray Hall, Midhurst at 2pm

Present:

Sebastian Anstruther
Deborah Urquhart (Chair)

Jeremy Leggett
Pete West

Barry Lipscomb
Margaret Paren (ex officio
Member)

Charles peck (ex officio
Member)

Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Helene Rossiter (Director of Corporate Services), Andrew Lee (Director of Strategy & Partnerships), Catherine Vaughan (Chief Finance Officer), Jonathan Mycock (Heathland Project Manager), Brendan Flynn (Estates & Admin Manager), Phil Belden (Director of Operations), Jan Conway (South Downs Centre Project Manager) and Fiona MacLeod (Member Services Manager)

OPENING REMARKS

36. The Chief Executive Officer advised that Catherine Vaughan, Chief Finance Officer, was about to take on the role of Acting Chief Executive Officer at Brighton & Hove City Council until a permanent appointment could be made. He introduced Nigel Manvell, currently Head of Financial Services at Brighton & Hove City Council, who would take over as Acting Chief Finance Officer on her behalf with effect from 10 September 2012. Sue Chapman would continue to support the Resources and Performance Committee in her role as Deputy Chief Finance Officer.
37. The Chair expressed her thanks to the Chief Finance Officer for her help and guidance and wished her well in her new role.
38. The Chief Executive Officer introduced Alan Brough, the Finance and Procurement Manager, who began with the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) on 6 August 2012 and Brendan Flynn, the Estates and Administration Manager who began with the Authority in February 2012.

APOLOGIES

39. Apologies were received from Jo Carr and Tom Tupper.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

40. None.

MINUTES

41. The minutes of the Resources and Performance Committee meeting held on 21 June 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

URGENT MATTERS

42. None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

43. There were no members of the public present.

PRESENTATION BY THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

44. The Committee received a presentation that provided an overview of the Strategy and Partnerships Directorate, its people, resources and activities (copy available on request) followed by a questions and answer session.

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

45. The Director of Strategy and Partnerships and other officers clarified the following in response to Members' questions:
- 'one off' pieces of work had been included in the Communications Team expenditure information;

Jeremy Leggett joined the meeting at 2.25pm.

- the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) funding was not time limited and the Authority was allowed to set its own rules regarding reserves funds to be carried forward. Such resources were carefully monitored, and allocated to specific projects or budgets wherever possible. The aim was to keep this to the minimum, consistent with the smooth operation of the Authority;
- the budget pie chart was based on all posts being filled, for example the Communications Team would only be fully resourced once current recruitment had been completed;
- it was likely that the responsibility for overall income generation currently undertaken by the External Funding Team would be discharged by a cross cutting team in the future;
- brand management and commercial business development would be picked up under the pillars being developed as part of the South Downs Management Plan (SDMP) and the Communications & Engagement Strategy.

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER I 2012/13

46. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Chief Finance Officer (Report RPC 13/12) advising the Committee of the overall financial position of the Authority as at Quarter I for 2012/13. There were no significant issues to be drawn to Member's attention but it was highlighted that the capital programme comprising of the budgets for the South Downs Centre, pool vehicles and the Western Area Scheme were now dependent upon the Estates Strategy.
47. Officers clarified the following in response to Members' questions:
- implementation of the Idox system had been completed on time;
 - the Idox project was extremely complex, involving 15 local authority host systems, and a phased implementation would not have been possible;
 - the teething problems with the Idox planning system were technical issues which were not inherent in the system itself but which arose from its interaction with the separate systems and procedures of the host authorities;
 - the costs of specific targeted assistance to clear a backlog had been shared with one local authority where the teething problems had been particularly severe;
 - many of the issues raised by local authorities were unconnected with the Idox system;
 - Idox specialists had been recruited on a monthly basis to provide additional carefully targeted support.
48. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) notes the overall position as at Quarter I 2012/13; and
 - 2) approves a capital variation for a mower as detailed in para 4.2 of Report RPC 13/12.

SOUTH DOWNS WOODED HEATHS PROJECT

49. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Director of Strategy and Partnerships (Report RPC 14/12) on the development of the South Downs Wooded Heath's project's application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
50. The Heathland Project Manager reminded the Committee of the background to the project and drew Members' attention to the amount of funding sought for Stage 2 of the project. This was matched funding of £150,000 over a 5 year period
51. The grant criteria must meet 3 main aims, namely learning; heritage conservation; and participation. A presentation on the project will be given before the Authority meeting on 18 September 2012.

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

52. The Committee praised the recent Member tour of heathland, agreed that this was a very worthwhile project and asked that it should be covered in future Authority publications and other relevant communications.
53. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) approves the development of this project and, subject to receiving Heritage Lottery Fund grant-aid, agree to the project proceeding to Stage 2

UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ESTATES STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

54. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 15/12) that provided an update on the work in progress to develop an Estates Strategy for the SDNPA, and sought the Committee's views on the recommendations made within the report.
55. The Committee received a presentation of photographs of the SDNPA Area Offices from the Estates & Administration Manager (copy available on request) which summarised the current condition of the area offices and laid the basis for the development of the strategy.
56. Discussion took place on the current condition of each premise:
- Authority premises need to provide office accommodation for the Operations Team, tool and equipment storage, workshop facilities, facilities for the Volunteer Ranger Service and a public face for the Authority. It was recognised that these needs may not all be met at current premises;
 - a commitment to Health & Safety (H&S) has been a top priority for the Authority, together with resolution of outstanding lease issues;
 - Health & Safety (H&S) issues were addressed as soon as they were identified;
 - the strategy will also acknowledge the strong existing partnership working at the current Area Offices;
 - East Sussex County Council are still deliberating on the future of Seven Sisters Country Park, but the SDVRS base there is secured on a long lease;
 - the current lease between Hampshire County Council and the Forestry Commission at Queen Elizabeth Country Park is nearing its end, discussions are on-going and the NPA is involved in partnership regarding both an Area base and public face for the SDNP;
 - the SDNPA is working with the Weald and Downland Museum on a HLF bid for a new building, which, if successful, should help consolidate the Area base and provide a NP public face;
57. Once further work had been undertaken with partners and the Operations Directorate, the full strategy would be brought back to the Committee. This would be done as soon as possible but the timing of some elements of the work depended upon the actions of partners and were therefore out of the direct control of the Authority.
58. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) approves further investigation work to establish a resolution to the issues at the central West Area office, including the option to investigate the possibility of sourcing a single site to support both the central West and Central east Area Offices and workshops;
 - 2) approves that the SDNPA works with Hampshire County Council and the Forestry Commission on the future plans for Queen Elizabeth Country Park to ensure suitable provision is available for the SDNPA Western Area Office. Further approves that, alongside this work, as part of risk mitigation, the SDNPA investigates other suitable premises in alternative parts of the Western Area that could support a Western Area Office and workshop;

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

- 3) approves that the SDNPA works with Brighton & Hove City Council to assist in the production of a development plan for Stanmer Park that will allow the SDNPA to establish its strategy for staying on site;
- 4) requests that further investigation work be done into what type of area premises are required, for what purpose and in what location; and
- 5) Members are updated at the next meeting on the resolution of Health & Safety issues.

PROCUREMENT OF SUPPORT SERVICES

59. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 16/12) that provided an update on the procurement of support services to the SDNPA and a summary of the key contracts.
60. A report will be taken to a future Committee meeting on the Human Resources (HR) Strategy.
61. In response to a question, the Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that an electronic document and record management system (EDRMS) was being investigated by Corporate Services for the retention and storage of documents and it was possible that this may be delivered in partnership with the New Forest National Park Authority. An EDRMS had been included in the original specification for the Idox system, but after investigation it was deemed the solution offered by Idox in that regard was not suitable for the needs of the Authority.
62. **Resolved :** that the Committee:
 - 1) notes the contents of Report RPC 16/12; and
 - 2) agrees the SDNPA should review its criteria for assessing future procurement of support services

SOUTH DOWNS CENTRE UPDATE

63. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 17/12) updating the Committee on recent progress on the South Downs Centre. The Director of Corporate Services highlighted the recent public exhibition held on 22 August, the positive responses to the design proposals, and the plan for the submission of the Listed Building consent and planning applications.
64. The South Downs Centre Project Manager explained that the ongoing issues regarding the completion of the buildings and legal agreements were being worked on. The delays would not have any impact on the critical path for the project provided that completion took place by the end of September 2012.
65. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
 - 1) notes the contents of Report RPC 17/12

Chair

The meeting closed at 5.08 pm