

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 13 FEBRUARY 2013

Held at Cowdray Hall, Midhurst at 2pm

Present:

Sebastian Anstruther

Jo Carr

Barry Lipscomb

Tom Tupper

Deborah Urquhart (Chair)

Pete West

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), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Phil Belden (Director of Operations), Sue Chapman (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Alan Brough (Finance & Procurement Manager), Jan Conway (South Downs Centre Project Manager), Anne Rehill (Performance and Business Planning Manager) and Fiona MacLeod (Member Services Manager).

Authority Members in attendance: Graham Ault (Independent Person), Norman Dingemans, Sue Saville, Sue Seward, and Andrew Shaxson.

PART I

APOLOGIES

120. Apologies were received from Nick Bennett and Jeremy Leggett.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

121. None.

MINUTES

122. The minutes of the Resources and Performance Committee meeting held on 14 November 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

123. With reference to minute 86, the Chief Executive Officer re-iterated that the procurement framework provided additional support for landowners, and, following a recent meeting with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Country Land & Business Association (CLA), a working arrangement had been reached.

124. With reference to minute 115, three SDNPA-branded Toyota Prius vehicles would be delivered on 15 February, and the three new replacement Land Rovers would be retrofitted with benches to increase passenger capacity, prior to the financial year end.

125. With reference to minute 101, the Geographical Information System (GIS) tenders had been received and evaluated. The new GIS provider would be in place by summer 2013 and until then interim arrangements are in place with our current provider.

URGENT MATTERS

126. The Chair was of the opinion that, by reason of special circumstances, an item on the progress of the South Downs Centre should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency (further to S.100B(4)(b) Local Government Act 1972). The special circumstances were that the revised cost estimates had been received after the Agenda for the meeting had been published, and that the Committee was required to provide advice and guidance on the position ahead of consideration at the full Authority meeting on 19 February 2013.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

127. There were no members of the public present.

PRESENTATION BY THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

128. The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Planning that provided an overview of the Planning Directorate, its people, resources and activities (copy available on request).
129. The Director of Planning and other officers clarified the following in response to Members' questions:
- There was no provision for Neighbourhood Plans in 2013/14 budget as guidance on funding from government was awaited
 - Neighbourhood Plans could be seen as labour intensive, and in some cases, Village Design Statements would be more appropriate
 - Parishes should be encouraged to work in clusters
 - There may be a shortage of capacity and specialist skills in parishes when the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is in place
 - A strategic community led Planning Toolkit was being developed
 - A system was in place to monitor Service Level Agreement (SLA) performance with host authorities
 - Quarterly reports were taken to the Planning Committee on the Recovered Service authorities and the 5 day turnaround on application processing was highlighted as an achievement
 - Should the recession end and more applications come to the Authority, planning fee income would increase accordingly to cover and additional resources required
130. The Committee would welcome similar presentations at future meetings.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS (2.55pm)

131. **Resolved:** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business on the basis that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within the following Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). Further, it was considered that the public interest in withholding the relevant information from the public outweighed the public interest in disclosing it, on the basis that it included commercially sensitive information received in a competitive tendering exercise under a duty of confidence, where that exercise had not yet been determined.

SOUTH DOWNS CENTRE UPDATE

132. The Director of Corporate Services reported on the refurbishment of the South Downs Centre and discussions took place between Members and Officers regarding proposals.
133. **Resolved:** that any remaining members of the public and press be re-admitted to the meeting which continued in public session at 4.00 pm.

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER 3, 2012/13

134. The Committee considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer (Report RPC 01/13) advising the overall financial position of the Authority for 2012/13 as at Quarter 3. In relation to para 5.4 of the report, the Deputy Chief Finance Officer clarified that the Authority was benefitting from investment with Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) rather than investment in BHCC.
135. Officers clarified that the final overspend on the complex IDOX project covered consultancy costs for the new modules that had been implemented, including testing and training.
136. A suggestion was made that future quarterly reporting is enhanced to detail the original budget, virements made, and the revised budget lines for ease of reference and understanding.

137. The Chair requested that a Post Implementation Review (PIR) and lessons learnt from the IDOX project be brought to a future Committee meeting.
138. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) notes the overall financial position as at Quarter 3;
 - 2) approves the budget virement in respect of the Major Partnerships Fund to transfer £0.308 million to earmarked reserves detailed in paragraph 3.12 of Report RPC 01/13; and
 - 3) approves a capital variation for the purchase of an exhibition trailer as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of Report RPC 01/13

Pete West left the meeting at 4.30pm

BUDGET 2013/14 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

139. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Report RPC 04/13). Members' attention was drawn to the detailed breakdown in the budget book supplied, and that the Major Partnerships Fund figure in Appendix 5 to the report should read 300, not 500, in column 4.
140. Officers clarified the following in response to Members' questions:
- The GIS officer was a specialist role and was necessary as the Authority and external partners/stakeholders became more reliant on GIS functionality
 - An ICT Strategy covering all Authority systems was being developed and would be considered as a future Committee meeting
 - When the South Downs Management Plan is in place, the Sustainable Communities Fund Panel will consider if a percentage of applications could be themed to emerging priorities
 - Following recommendations outlined the Peer Review Report a review of the Authority's staffing structure would be considered
 - It was possible to approve an amount of reserve without a decision having been made on how it should be spent

Andrew Shaxson left the meeting at 5pm

141. **Resolved:** that the Committee recommends that the South Downs National Park Authority:
- 1) approves the revenue 2013/14 Budget as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 to Report RPC 04/13;
 - 2) approves the use of revenue reserves as set out in section 4 of Report RPC 04/13;
 - 3) approves the capital programme as set out in section 5 of Report RPC 04/13; and
 - 4) notes the Medium Term Financial Strategy and resources projection

Sue Chapman left the meeting at 5.05pm

QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

142. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Performance and Business Planning Manager (Report RPC 02/13) providing the most recent monitoring information against the 2012/13 Business Plan objectives.
143. Discussion took place on the development of an Estates Strategy and the Director of Corporate Services explained that feasibility studies were underway at two Area office locations. Regular updates are being brought to the Committee. Comment was made that options for each geographical area must be identified in turn, rather than focus on one location, and staff must be supported in the locations and premises they already work in.
144. A meeting to discuss draft Terms of Reference for the Communications and Engagement Group had taken place. Work was being commissioned on the identity for the South Downs National Park using the conduit of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.
145. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) notes Quarter 3 monitoring against the 2012/13 Business Plan.

CORPORATE PLAN 2013/16

146. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 03/13) on the proposed Corporate Plan and recommending any changes prior to consideration for approval by the Authority. Many of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) were closely aligned to the South Downs Management Plan, and the Corporate Plan would evolve to reflect developing KPI's from the Management Plan.
147. An update sheet on financial information in the Corporate Plan had been provided to the Committee and published on the web site prior to the meeting.
148. The Committee's attention was drawn to the section on priorities and objectives in the report. The Director of Corporate Services clarified that the Operational Plan and Budget, and the Improvement Plan would be included in the Plan when brought before the full Authority
149. The Committee welcomed the production of this revised style of Corporate Plan.
150. **Resolved:** that the Committee
- 1) notes the proposed draft of the Corporate Plan for 2013/16; and
 - 2) agrees that final changes to the Corporate Plan to be recommended to the South Downs National Park Authority are agreed between the Committee Chair and Director of Corporate Services following consultation with Members of the Resources & Performance Committee

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT & ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2013/14

151. The Committee considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer (Report RPC 05/13) and introduced by the Committee Chair.
152. **Resolved:** that the Committee recommends that the South Downs National Park Authority approves:
- 1) the Treasury Management Policy Statement 2013/14 and Treasury Management Practices 2013/14 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to Report RPC 05/13; and
 - 2) the Annual Investment Strategy 2013/14, including the ethical investment statement and benchmark risk factor of 0.05%, as set out in Appendix 3 to Report RPC 05/13

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

153. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 06/13) presenting the updated documents for consideration.
154. The Chair requested that an amendment be made to section A.4.1 of the Financial Procedures to build in that all Authority Members have sight of the Annual Statement of Accounts.
155. With reference to section B.2.4.2 of the Financial Procedures, the Committee was content for the increase in capital expenditure to £20,000 approval level, subject to appropriate quarterly reporting to the Committee.
156. **Resolved:** that, subject to minute 156, the Committee recommends that the South Downs National Park Authority approves and adopts the revised Financial Regulations and Procedures, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to Report RPC 06/13, with immediate effect

APPROVALS PROCESS FOR PROJECTS

157. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Strategy and Partnerships (Report RPC 07/13).
158. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) notes existing mechanisms for project funding and grant making; and

- 2) approves the establishment of a 'Star Chamber' at officer level to improve the consistency of scrutiny in delivering the existing financial delegations

CHAIR CLOSING REMARKS

159. The Chair thanked Tom Tupper for his support whilst on the Resources & Performance Committee and welcomed his knowledge and input.

Chair

The meeting closed at 5.50 pm