

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 17 SEPTEMBER 2013**

Held at Cowdray Hall, Midhurst at 2pm

Present:

Sebastian Anstruther

Ken Bodfish

Jo Carr

Jeremy Leggett

Barry Lipscomb

Deborah Urquhart

Margaret Paren (ex officio  
Member)

Norman Dingemans (ex officio  
Member)

Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Keith Reed, (Deputy Director of Planning ), Andrew Lee (Director of Strategy and Partnerships), Phil Belden (Director of Operations), Alan Brough, (Finance and Procurement Manager), Neil Slatter (External Funding Manager) and Fiona MacLeod (Member Services Manager).

**APOLOGIES**

40. Apologies were received from Vaughan Clarke and Pete West.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

41. Jeremy Leggett declared a public service interest in Agenda item 10 (Review of Major Projects Panel and the Star Chamber) as Chief Executive Officer of Action in Rural Sussex.
42. Sebastian Anstruther declared a public service interest in Agenda item 11 (South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Purchase of New and Replacement Vehicles) due to his involvement with the Arun & Rother Connection River Restoration Project.

**MINUTES**

43. Subject to minute 28 amended to replace 'compliant' with 'complaint' and 'comment' with 'complaint', the minutes of the Resources and Performance Committee meeting held on 20 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record.
44. With reference to minute 16, the Director of Planning updated the Committee that the report information was being validated by the relevant local authorities for all application considered in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) area prior to submission to government.

**URGENT MATTERS**

45. None.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

46. There were no members of the public present.

**NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

47. The Committee considered that the Appendix to report RPC 24/13 at item 15 on the agenda required discussion which would involve the disclosure of exempt information.
48. **Resolved:** that in respect of items 12 and 15 on the agenda, the public, including the press, shall be excluded from the meeting 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 a member of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial and business affairs of a tenderer submitted in a competitive procurement process. Further, it is considered that, in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the

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information. While there may be a public interest in disclosing the information, namely transparency in the process for the award of a public service contract, this is outweighed by other factors in favour of maintaining the exemption, namely the need for tenderers to be assured that the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information, submitted within a competitive procurement process, will be respected.

**BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER I, 2013/14**

49. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Finance and Procurement Manager (Report RPC 19/13) setting out the SDNPA's current financial position as at the first quarter of operation in 2013/14. A timetable for the Budget and Corporate Plan 2014/15 was tabled at the meeting for information.
50. The Committee's attention was drawn to the change of format for the budget reporting, which now provided more meaningful analysis. It was agreed that the consultancy spending would be broken down, explanatory narrative would be included in future reporting, and additional information about the three Objectives in the Revenue Forecast Outturn by Corporate Plan.
51. In response to a question on the employee underspend, Chief Executive Officer was pleased to confirm that the staffing restructure had made provision for nine apprenticeship posts.
52. Members and officers made the following comments:
- The IT contract was due to finish in April 2015 and any new contract would be made as robust as possible as part of the procurement process;
  - Certain IDOX functionality was no longer required and this cost saving would be offset against any future consultancy needs;
  - The Committee would be involved in early strategic discussions on the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) Action Plan, priorities and budget;
  - The date for confirmation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) settlement for 2014/15 had not been communicated yet, and the Committee was reminded that this was received at the end of December in 2012 for the 2013/14 settlement.
53. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) Notes the overall financial position as at Quarter I 2013/14.

**QUARTER I PERFORMANCE REPORT**

54. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Chief Executive Officer (Report RPC 20/13) providing monitoring information for Quarter I April to June 2013.
55. Members' attention was drawn to the new format for reporting information using the Aspireview performance management system, which increased the level of detail and substance whilst at the same time reduced the amount of officer time necessary to produce the information. As the system only went live in May 2013, there was limited historic data available for this meeting.
56. Whilst the new format was welcomed, Members and officers made the following comments:
- Links to the Corporate Plan to be strengthened to reflect the reasons for adoption of measures, and relevant paragraphs;
  - More narrative to be provided on the Objective I indicators;
  - Where appropriate narrative to read 'deferred' rather than 'late' for more accurate reporting;
  - Red Amber Green (RAG) status should not be shown where a task had not yet started;
  - Milestones should be included in the Aspireview reporting;
  - Aspireview would include input from partners in the future;

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- Consideration should be given to providing more timely and relevant reporting rather than strict quarterly reporting; however it was acknowledged that some information was only collected quarterly;
  - Reassurance was welcomed on the relationship between the Actions for each objective and ownership by Heads of Teams or Strategic Management Team (SMT).
57. Discussion took place on the relevance of some items included on the Performance Information table that were not scheduled to start until 2014 e.g user testing of the sense of place toolkit. The Director of Strategy and Partnerships stressed that the identification of actions and their measurable deliverables for inclusion was still 'work in progress' and would be refined for future reporting to the Committee.
58. The Director of Planning would bring further analysis on the targets for determination of major planning applications to a future meeting, and reiterated that a fuller picture would build up as more reporting data became available.
59. A report on the planning process and IDOX would be brought to the November 2013 Committee meeting.
60. **Resolved:** that the Committee:
- 1) Notes and approves the Quarter 1 Performance report; and
  - 2) Considers no further action or response is required as a result of the information in the report.

**A FRAMEWORK FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT, REVIEW AND EVALUATION**

61. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Finance and Procurement Manager (Report RPC 21/13) proposing an approach to the governance of projects.
62. Members and officers made the following comments:
- Provision of in house project management expertise should be progressed;
  - Innovation in project management should be encouraged subject to risk assessment appropriate to type of project;
  - The definition of what constitutes a project should be included in the proposed Project Governance Process;
  - Must be able to record and view 'lessons learnt' centrally i.e. Intranet;
  - Need to achieve of common level of understanding by SDNPA staff if working on an internal/external project;
  - A small piece of consultancy work would be undertaken on the document retention process, however audit trails exist on the contract register, centrally maintained documents, and electronic tendering;
  - Confirmation was requested that staff contracts have been amended to include information management and to ensure that staff do not destroy information created by them in the course of their employment.
63. **Resolved:** that the Committee
- 1) Notes the progress on developing a governance framework for projects and agrees the next steps.

**REVIEW OF MAJOR PROJECTS PANEL AND THE STAR CHAMBER**

64. The Committee considered a report introduced by the External Funding Manager (Report RPC 22/13) describing the deployment of the grant funding by the SDNPA over the last five months via the Major Projects Fund.
65. Members and officers made the following comments:
- Consideration could be given to amend the Flow Chart to show points in the process for communication to relevant partners;
  - Dependant on volumes, consideration could be given to notify all Members when successful expressions of interest were received/notified;
  - Project closure should be included in the flow chart;

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- The development of the National Park project database would include the evaluation/approval process on line;
- Future reporting would include the link to PMP e.g. Wooded Heaths
- Scrutiny should be given to large projects overall and not just the SDNPA elements (e.g. partners/overall budget for transforming cycling in the South Downs) via the Aspireview system with partners as part of the current reporting to Resources and Performance Committee;
- The concept of oversight and scrutiny by lead members of the Resources and Performance Committee was not supported;
- Quarterly reporting to the Committee should be considered;
- Governance to be addressed as part of the new Committee structures;
- Members should be encouraged to contribute on projects where their skills were appropriate;

66. **Resolved:** that, the Committee:

- 1) Notes the investment of the Major Projects Fund.

**SDNPA PURCHASE OF NEW AND REPLACEMENT VEHICLES**

67. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Finance and Procurement Manager (Report RPC 23/13) on the progress of vehicle renewals and the further purchases planned for the 2014 financial year end.

68. The Finance and Procurement Manager confirmed that the SDNPA's insurers were content with the seating changes made to the three new Land Rovers. The old vehicles would be sold at auction on 19 September 2013.

69. **Resolved:** that, the Committee:

- 1) Notes the additional capital expenditure to replace the pick-up truck written off in an accident;
- 2) Notes the progress on the purchase of Land Rovers and the display vehicle; and
- 3) Notes the deferred disposal of one pick up truck for use in the Arun and Rother Connections River Restoration Project.

**EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

70. **Resolved:** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the following items 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 Paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972: Paragraph 3, being information relating to the financial and business affairs of a tenderer submitted in a competitive procurement process.

**SCANNING MANAGEMENT SERVICE CONTRACT – PROGRESS REPORT**

71. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 24/13) and confidential Appendix that described the procurement and decision making process leading to the award of the Scanning Managed Service Contract to Idox.

72. The Committee and officers discussed the scores following the outcome of the tender exercise and made the following comments:

- The principle behind the tender exercise was that the tenderer with the lowest price would achieve the highest score on price;
- European Procurement Rules do not currently permit a supplier's previous performance to be taken into account in the award criteria when evaluating a contract;
- No criteria was permissible to factor in for previous knowledge and experience of a tenderer;

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- Reassurance was given that the decision making process was open and transparent;
- There would be no drift on price as the Idox contract would be on a fixed price, unlike their current contractual arrangements with the South Downs National Park Authority;
- Consideration would be given to reviewing the current criteria for price and quality for future procurement;

73. **Resolved:** that, the Committee:

- Notes the progression and outcome of the tender exercise leading to the award of the Scanning Managed Service Contract..

Deborah Urquhart left the meeting at 4pm

The meeting resumed in public session.

**ESTATES AREA OFFICES UPDATE**

74. The Committee received a verbal update from the Director of Operations. The Committee would receive a brief written report at future meetings.
75. East Area Office (Stanmer) and Stanmer Park
  - Redecoration work had been completed.
76. West Area Office (Queen Elizabeth Country Park)
  - A planning application had been submitted for the extension for a further two years of the temporary planning consent in the QE compound;
  - Options for the provision of dry undercover working space were being investigated;
  - Options for extra workstation space in the QE offices were being investigated;
  - The notice period for QECP was between 1 and 2 years;
  - A report would be brought to the Committee prior to any decision on the future of the West Area Office
77. Central Area Office (Singleton)
  - New lighting was being installed;
  - Plans were being implemented to improve tool storage and workshop facilities for Ranger staff.
78. Wealden Heath (Midhurst)
  - Redecoration work had been completed;
  - A new meeting room was available for SDNPA staff to use;
  - Structural repairs to the workshop and supporting steel doors undertaken by West Sussex County Council;
  - Desk space identified to support the Arun and Rother Connections project.
79. South Downs Centre
  - Programme of work was on schedule for completion by the contract due date of 28 March 2014 and within the revised approved budget of £3.9m;
  - To date all labour on site has been from the local area, other than a small number of specialists;
  - External work had included replacement pitched roof to Capron House, slate roof works to the Memorial Hall and other repairs;
  - Internal work had included installation of new lintels and timber sub frames to windows, strip out and demolition in both buildings, and start mechanical and electrical installation in the Memorial Hall.
  - Future work will include the completion of pitched roof works, works on flat roofs, external insulated render works prior to installation of replacement metal windows, preparation for the lift installation;
  - The Member Advisory and Staff Project Groups met on 22 August 2013 with a further meeting planned in September.

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**SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER SERVICE (VRS) - SUPPLEMENT**

80. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Operations (Report RPC 25/13) providing specific details of various volunteer services and wider VRS roles. The Director of Operations highlighted that resources for the VRS (vehicles, equipment and clothing) had been improved and were fit for purpose.
81. A proposal on the balance between the interaction of VRS Action Plan and the Authority would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee by the Director of Operations.
82. **Resolved:** that, the Committee:
  - 1) Notes the changes to the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service that have taken place since the South Downs National Park Authority came into operation; and
  - 2) Is aware of potential developments, dependent on future local authority working.

**Chair**

The meeting closed at 4.30pm