

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 19 NOVEMBER 2013

Held at Cowdray Hall, Midhurst at 2.30pm

Present:

Ken Bodfish

Barry Lipscomb

Margaret Paren (ex officio)

Vaughan Clarke

Deborah Urquhart

Norman Dingemans (ex officio)

Jeremy Leggett

Pete West

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Phil Belden (Director of Operations), Hélène Rossiter (Director of Corporate Services), Alan Brough (Finance and Procurement Manager), Anne Rehill (Performance and Business Planning Manager), Vicky Paterson (HR Manager), Mike Bleakley (Planning Service Development Lead), Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Rebecca Haynes (Member Services Officer) and Kate Lanham (Interim Member Service Support Officer).

APOLOGIES

83. Apologies were received from Jo Carr and Sebastian Anstruther.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

84. During item 10 Pete West declared a Public Service interest, as a member of Brighton and Hove City Council.

MINUTES

85. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

86. Under any Matters Arising from the minutes. The Social Value Act was raised in connection with the SDNPA's use of local businesses. Officers clarified that the SDNPA's procurement strategy does encourage the use of local labour and 97% of labour for the South Downs Centre came from within 30 miles of the site. The exception was the replacement metal windows in the 1930s wing which were a specialist task for which the skills were not available in the local area. Tenders have been structured to encourage local companies to submit tenders.

URGENT MATTERS

87. There were none.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

88. There were no members of the public present.

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER 2, 2013/14

89. The Committee considered a report introduced by the Chief Finance Officer (Report RPC 26/13) setting out the SDNPA's overall financial position for 2013/14 as at Quarter 2.

90. In response to questions officers clarified:

- The £56,000 net overspend was an increase from £21k at quarter 1 and officers were working to reduce this to zero by the end of the financial year
- Collabor8 was inherited from the South Downs Joint Committee and a briefing note on this project could be reported to a future meeting

91. **RESOLVED:** that the Committee noted the overall financial position as at Quarter 2 2013/14 (report RPC26/13)

QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

92. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 27/13)

93. The Committee's attention was drawn to the objectives of the Corporate Plan and the positive results
- The stage I bid of the 'Heathlands Reunited' project had been submitted
 - There had been a significant increase in the number of volunteer days
 - The Wetlands Project was underway and the Manager for this would be in post early 2014
 - The Project Manager was in post for LiDAR
 - The Cycling initiative was underway and new leisure routes were in place. Design and feasibility work was underway for a further 55km of new or improved cycle infrastructure within the SDNP
 - The Sense of Place toolkit had been rolled out to 80 locations and partners, exceeding the target
 - The behaviour change campaign had gone well
 - Discussions had commenced with local colleges regarding the creation of a pilot apprenticeship programme
 - The refurbishment of the South Downs Centre was on time and on budget
 - All objectives will be linked to the Partnership Management Plan once adopted by the Authority.
94. In response to questions, officers clarified:
- The report had been produced through teams uploading information onto the information management system Aspireview. Support mechanisms had been put in place to increase the use of this system across all directorates
 - Improvements could be made around planning performance to improve the information the Committee receives
95. The Committee requested:
- Feedback on the extent to which officers and partners were using Aspireview
 - That a mechanism for in-year prioritisation within objectives be developed as part of the Corporate Planning process for this year
96. **RESOLVED:** that the Committee noted and approved the Quarter 2 Performance report (Report RPC27/13)

SDNPA PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE – REVIEW OF IDOX UNIFORM IMPLEMENTATION

97. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Planning (Report RPC 28/13)
98. The Director of Planning highlighted:
- Unlike most traditional planning authorities the arrangements were more complex for the SDNPA
 - The report highlighted where the issues were for the Authority, the reputational risks, the pressure of the scanning contract and the use of consultants leading to overspend in these areas
 - The costs associated with the introduction of the system were known
 - The System Administrator position had been recruited and this would reduce consultancy costs
 - Local authorities were now using the system well, reducing errors and the volume of calls to the helpdesk
 - Lessons had been learnt, the Authority was working closely with host authorities and the use of their IT systems and was in an improved position going forward

99. In response to questions, officers clarified:
- The package of IDox included fixed processes, amendments to this could be made during the upgrading process
 - The volume of the documents to be scanned had been underestimated as had been the workload since all personal information needed to be removed before publishing on the website. The scanning exercise was only the first stage of the process
 - The Authority was moving towards a 50/50 split on electronic documents to reduce the amount of scanning required. The aspiration of the Authority was to be fully electronic, this would involve encouraging Parish Councils to use electronic versions of documents
 - The pre application work had not been factored into the process in the set-up but was now fully accommodated
 - The new contracts were related to each case and not per document
 - Hampshire County Council was not an IDox user, which complicated matters at the beginning of the process
 - Given the project task the Authority had performed well especially as IDox had not been utilised in this way previously.
100. Committee Members commented:
- A good report and helpful to assess the lessons learnt
 - As the 8th largest Planning Authority in the country, the SDNPA introduced a unique process across 15 local authorities, which was recognised as a huge task and a big risk to the Authority. When the SDNPA was formed, the Government was keen to implement the host authority arrangements
 - Each time the risk register is discussed at the Standards & Audit Committee, the Committee consciously decide if they need to refer items back to the Resources and Performance Committee.
101. **RESOLVED:** that the Committee noted the implementation of the IDox UNiform system and associated costs.
102. The Chief Finance Officer left the Committee at 3:25pm

UPDATE ON PEOPLE STRATEGY

103. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 29/13).
104. It was highlighted:
- Since November 2011 the Authority was committed to report annually on the work of the HR Team
 - Significant progress had been made in regard to Health and Safety and a consultancy arrangement had been set up with the Health and Safety Advisor at the Peak District National Park. This arrangement ensured a consistent approach. The advisor would be on site for 15 days a year, was responsible for auditing area offices and providing assistance via the telephone. There was a budget of £10k for this arrangement. He was currently trialling a training programme for Members in the Peak District and the SDNPA will feed back to Authority Members on this. Health and Safety was currently audited by Brighton & Hove City Council.
 - All key policies and procedures were now in place
 - The SDNPA had formed a good relationship with Unison through the Staff Joint Consultative Committee
 - Following the restructure, the HR Team focus would be developing the new line managers and Heads of Teams
 - The Performance, Development & Review process had not received any appeals in its first full year of operation.

- A number of Colleges had been visited to discuss working together on apprenticeship schemes. Two areas have been identified, with two pilots to be run, taking on a Business Administration apprentice and a Ranger apprentice.
- All interviews for those 'at risk' following the restructure had been completed and the SDNPA would start moving towards the transition stage.
- The restructure follows the staff survey, peer review, member workshops etc., to move the NPA into its delivery phase.

105. In response to questions, officers clarified:

- Roughly 50% of all training was job specific and this type of training was not included in the plan
- Staff training costs were covered in the budget of the HR Department in order to be more cost effective and all training requests were processed by the HR Team
- The restructure changes were explained:
 - £420,000 increase in permanent staff positions included the 2 pilot apprenticeship schemes; staffing figures would increase from 98.6 FTE to 108.9 FTE, subject to Member agreement through the budget process
 - There was a shift of officers now working on the Partnership Management Plan to the Local Plan
 - Savings had been made in some areas, such as centralising administration and providing an effective management structure for this
 - More support for volunteers
 - Four new roles in Planning : WSCC M&W work, Planning Policy, Development Management lead & assistant enforcement officer
 - Four new Assistant Ranger posts
 - A new External Funding Officer and a new Sustainable Economy Officer
- The apprentices would be employed full-time, and this time would include training and time at college. It was hoped that external funding could be found for this purpose. £130,000 is the estimated cost of 9 apprentice posts. Discussions had been held with 3 colleges to ensure a geographical spread and the use of resources across a range of specialisms. Apprentices would be covered under the SDNPA policies and procedures in the same way as permanent Authority staff.
- Approximately 20% of SDNPA staff contribute to Unison through payroll
- Recruitment of staff would continue as the Authority was under the 98.6 FTE roles at the present time and recruitment for additional posts in excess of this figure would commence once the budget had been agreed by Members and would be staggered so it would not put undue pressure on the HR team
- A rationale document was available on the intranet to justify all the additional staff posts and this would be discussed at the workshop on 10 December 2013.

106. **RESOLVED:** that the Committee noted the progress update against the people strategy.

ESTATES AND AREA OFFICES UPDATE

107. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate Services (Report RPC 30/13).

108. The Committee commented:

- they were aware that Brighton & Hove City Council were also under budgetary constraints but needed to ensure they remained committed to the project at Stanmer Park
- there was a need to ensure that resources were available for the Estates Strategy

109. In response to questions officer clarified:

- In regard to the Eastern Area Office, this was currently dependent on the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Stanmer Park. Brighton and Hove City Council's

resources had been stretched on this and it was not possible to deliver the transport appraisal required on time, so it had been considered prudent to delay the submission until August 2014, to ensure a quality bid was put in. If successful it was likely that work could start on the park and traditional farm buildings in 2017.

- The Chair of the Authority had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Brighton and Hove City Council which was due to be reviewed. This would be a good opportunity to reaffirm the commitment on both sides.
- There is a good relationship with Hampshire County Council regarding the Authority's use of Queen Elizabeth Country Park.

110. **RESOLVED:** that the Committee noted the update on the estates and area office portfolio.

Chair

The meeting closed at 4.17pm