

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority Standards & Audit Committee
Date	5 March 2013
By	Director of Corporate Services
Title of Report	Updates on actions arising from the Annual Governance Statement
Purpose of Report	To advise the Committee on progress on the 7 actions for 2012-2013 from the 2011-2012 Annual Governance Statement

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to;
1) note the progress made on the actions arising from last year's Annual Governance Statement.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance. The Code sets out agreed criteria against which the effectiveness of the governance framework will be assessed. The framework comprises all those matters by which the Authority is directed and controlled to deliver its statutory duties and responsibilities.
- 1.2 The Annual Governance Statement is the conclusion of an annual review of the effectiveness of the framework. Actions are identified in the statement to ensure that the SDNPA achieves continuous improvement of its systems and processes.

2. Governance Issues Identified

- 2.1 Set out below are the 7 actions identified for 2012 – 2013 together with a brief note of progress achieved to date.

2.2 Development of a comprehensive approach to equality and diversity

The SDNPA engaged consultants to support the development of its approach to Equality and Diversity. After consultation and workshops with staff and volunteers, a full policy and toolkit will be in place by March 2013. Training on the use of the toolkit is also taking place during March 2013.

2.3 Development of an environmental management strategy

A Sustainable Development Action Plan and Strategy for the SDNPA were approved by the Senior Management Team in October 2012. The Action Plan is regularly reviewed by an internal sustainability group. It will be approved as an appendix to the Corporate Plan and associated improvement plan for 2013-16. Progress on the actions in the plan will be reported as part of the SDNPA improvement plan, which will be approved at the SDNPA meeting in March 2013.

2.4 Review processes for approval and ongoing monitoring of externally received grant funding, particularly when undertaken in partnership

Internal Audit have carried out a review of grant funding during this financial year which has concluded "Reasonable Assurance", which gives confidence that grant monies have been

used appropriately. This review was primarily focused on the allocation and monitoring of grants from the Sustainable Communities Fund and Major Partnerships Fund.

The Major Partnerships Fund process manages the funding application until the Major Partnerships Panel makes a decision on what projects should be funded. At this point Brighton and Hove City Council (providers of finance support to the SDNPA) transfer the budget to a project cost centre which the project lead manages in line with corporate project management procedures. This is stipulated in the flow chart which has been developed to support the process. Once verified by project leads, financial information is validated by the relevant Director.

2.5 Completion of the review of the effectiveness of the Audit Committee

A workshop was held on 29 of May 2012 with Audit Committee members and the effectiveness of the Committee was reviewed. Whilst recognising the need for continuous improvement, the Committee noted the progress being made.

2.6 Introduction of e-procurement and the roll out of purchasing cards where appropriate

The use of e-procurement through the Brighton and Hove City Council purchasing system was introduced to SDNPA in April 2012. Designated approval routes for all Purchase Orders are in place, and requisitioners and approvers have been trained on the use of the system. Management reporting and ad-hoc enquiries are available from the database.

Corporate Purchasing Cards have also been introduced as appropriate, accompanied by card management that has all transactions authorised by card holders and approved by line managers. Training has been provided for all card holders and approvers on the use of the system and the correct use of cards.

2.7 Review of the skills and expertise needed to manage capital works

SDNPA now has an Estates and Administration Manager who is appropriately qualified in capital works associated with facilities and estates. The only capital works currently being undertaken are those to Capron House. SDNPA has engaged external expert advice to support this project. SDNPA also has a dedicated project manager for this project who is suitably qualified and works closely with the external advisers.

2.8 Ongoing monitoring and assurance of procurement processes

The Finance and Procurement Manager is involved with all significant procurement exercises to ensure that they are conducted in accordance with public procurement rules, financial regulations and the general principles of achieving best value. A check on procurement spend through reports generated from payables is carried out monthly to ensure that any significant levels of spend are with contracted suppliers. A review and revision of contract standing orders, financial regulations and associated guidance has been carried out during the year. Any changes were reported to the Resources and Performance Committee in February 2013. A central contracts register is also in place. Internal Audit are also in the process of carrying out a review of procurement, which is being finalised.

2.9 For the future, when the Annual Governance Statement is produced, it is proposed that the actions are captured and incorporated into the SDNPA improvement plan, where they can be monitored regularly as part of that plan.

3. **Resources**

3.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report but the actions identified in the Annual Governance Statement are directed towards improving the cost effectiveness and performance of SDNPA.

4. **Risk management**

4.1 Implicit in the actions arising from the Annual Governance Statement are an examination and mitigation of the risks associated with the systems and processes of SDNPA.

5. Human Rights, Equalities, Health and Safety

5.1 One of the actions from the 2011/2012 Annual Governance Statement was the production of a comprehensive approach to equality and diversity. As noted above a full policy and toolkit will be in place by March 2013.

6. External Consultees

6.1 None

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Appendices	None
SDNPA Consultees	Monitoring Officer

Background Documents	Annual Governance Statement 2011/2012
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