

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 22 NOVEMBER 2018**

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 1pm

Present: Tim Burr, Jo Carr, Chris Dowling, Daniel Humphreys, Helen Jackson (Chair), Graham Morrison and Russell Oppenheimer

Independent Members of the Committee: Tom Fourcade

Ex-officio Members: Norman Dingemans

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside Policy & Management), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Anne Rehill (Performance and Projects Manager), Steven Bedford (Principal Accountant), Robin Parr (Head of Governance) and Catherine Sydenham (Committee Officer).

Also Attended by: Liz Gent (Project Management Officer); Mark Rose (Funding Co-ordinator), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager), Veronica Craddock (Landscape Officer) and Colin Carre (Heathlands Reunited Project Manager).

**OPENING REMARKS**

91. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management opened the meeting and chaired the meeting for Items 1&2.

92. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management welcomed all those present and stated that:

- The meeting was being webcast by the Authority and would be available for subsequent on-line viewing. Anyone entering the meeting was considered to have given consent to be filmed or recorded, and for the possible use of images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purpose. Further information regarding rights under the GDPR were available on the SDNPA website.
- SDNPA Members had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority fulfils the National Park Purposes and Duty. Members regarded themselves first and foremost as Members of the Authority, and would act in the best interests of the National Park as a whole, rather than as representatives of their appointing body or any interest groups.

**ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

93. Apologies were received from Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish, Mark Dunn, Philip Ede, Graham Morrison, Carole Nicholson, Margaret Paren and Pete West

**ITEM 2: ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRS**

94. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management informed the Committee that nominations for the positions of the 2 Deputy Chairs closed 5 working days before the meeting and as Sebastian Anstruther and Helen Jackson were the only nominations, Sebastian Anstruther and Helen Jackson were duly elected as Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first meeting of the Committee after the Authority AGM in 2019.

95. At this juncture, in the absence of Ken Bodfish, Helen Jackson assumed the Chair for the meeting.

**ITEM 3: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

96. There were no declarations of interest.

**ITEM 4: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2018**

97. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 27 September 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:
- Minute 69, 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet add the words 'if performance was not to be manipulated' to the end of the sentence so that it reads '*The extension of time was a valuable tool available to all Local Planning Authorities in England but had to be used carefully if performance was not be manipulated*'.
  - Minute 70 add the word 'Manager' after 'Performance and Projects' so that it reads '*Performance and Projects Manager*'
  - Minute 72 4<sup>th</sup> Bullet 2<sup>nd</sup> line add the word 'of' between culture and philanthropy so that it reads '*culture of philanthropy*'

**ITEM 5: MATTERS ARISING**

98. Members were informed that the work on guidance for members concerning interests with regards to grants allocated in their local areas was still on-going and would be circulated on completion.
99. The project management review findings would be presented at the 28 February 2019 Committee.
100. The Chief Executive updated members on the work of the Enterprise and Investment Task and Finish Group and informed the Committee that East Sussex County Council had delayed their decision making on the disposal of the Seven Sisters Country Park which affected the SDNPA timetable but work was continuing with the development of the business plan.
101. Tom Fourcade joined the meeting.

**ITEM 6: URGENT MATTERS**

102. There were none

**ITEM 7: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

103. There were no public speakers

**GRANTS & PROJECTS**

**ITEM 16: MID-YEAR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND UPDATE**

104. The Project Management Officer introduced report PR49/18 and reminded members of the report content. The Funding Co-ordinator assisted with answering member questions.
105. The Committee commented that:
- The report made no mention of the NPA decision to transfer the funds earmarked for the SCF into the new joint endowment with the South Downs Trust.
  - The recent Member Day highlighting a handful of SCF funded projects was very useful and should be repeated.
  - It would be useful for members in their roles as ambassadors of the SDNPA to have snippets of project case studies that they could share on their local social media sites and with their local communities.
  - They would like a report to a future committee on how members could best promote, raise awareness and share information about the projects that the SDNPA supports.
106. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- The SCF was working closely with the communications team to improve the publicity

- around the fund including regular press releases, tweets and posts.
  - Since the start over 200 SCF projects had been funded, an investment by the SDNPA of nearly £2m.
  - A celebration event would be held to coincide with the establishment of the endowment with the South Downs Trust.
  - Over the coming year 2019-20, online interactive mapping would be developed to allow people to see the location and types of projects funded in their locality.
  - Relatively few projects were funded outside the SDNP, but the criteria allowed for a 5 mile buffer zone.
107. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received the current position of the Sustainable Communities Fund.

## AUDIT

### ITEM 8: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2018/19: MONTH 6

108. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR43/18 and reminded members of the report content.
109. With regard to the proposed purchase of a flail mower, Members had a wide ranging discussion on scrub management bearing in mind that this habitat was an important element in the ecology of the South Downs. As part of this it was queried whether investing in a scrub management machine was the correct approach. In response Officers confirmed that the acquisition would not be changing the criteria used to target areas for clearance, but would help reduce the risks of volunteers working on steep slopes, as the remote controlled tracked machine was capable of tackling steep gradients up to 60 degrees.
110. The Committee commented that:
- In future they would like to see capital project requests reported as separate reports not through the budget monitoring report.
  - Clear messages should be conveyed to the public about the ecological importance of targeted scrub management works.
  - Further research was needed to the importance of scrub as an ecosystem.
  - There was the potential for a conflict of interest in outsourcing the finance function to Brighton and Hove City Council and then being advised by its section 151 officer to invest its funds in that Council. Further information should be provided to the Committee, and if considered necessary a report should be made to a future Policy and Resources Committee.
111. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The scrub management machine could be available to partners at cost, but not used to generate a profit for the Authority, unless certain criteria were met.
  - Each year the Authority approves the investment strategy and all profits arising from the investment were returned to SDNPA.
  - The interest rates were different with the investments with Santander, Lloyds and BHCC due to the term of the investment, the short term investments have a lower return.
112. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee
- 1) Noted the 2018/19 revenue forecast position as at month 6.
  - 2) Noted the 2018/19 capital forecast position as at month 6 and approve variations to the capital programme.
  - 3) Noted the reserves position as at month 6.
  - 4) Noted the Treasury Management overview and position as at month 6

## PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES

### ITEM 9: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

113. The Performance and Projects Manager introduced report PR44/18 and reminded members of the report content.
114. The Committee commented that:
- The new format was very clear and structured and easy to read across from the corporate plan.
115. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Project Managers don't assess their own RAG ratings, rather these are created independently by the Performance and Projects Manager against a set of criteria. The criteria would be circulated to members.
  - The staff survey had received a 93% response rate and the results would be discussed with staff at the 'All Staff Event' in December. Results would then be communicated to members.
116. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee
- 1) Received the Quarter 2 performance report

### ITEM 10: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

117. The Head of Governance introduced report PR45/18 and reminded members of the report content.
118. The Committee commented that:
- Risk 2, Finance and Budgets, should be split with income generation having its own risk.
119. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the Corporate Risk Register as at November 2018.

### ITEM 11: AREA OFFICE AND ESTATES UPDATE

120. The Director of Countryside and Policy Management introduced report PR46/18.
121. The Committee commented that:
- Congratulations were passed onto Officers on the progress made in securing fit for purpose accommodation for the area offices.
122. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Open sessions at each of the area offices would be scheduled for each year as they were a valuable tool for members to see first-hand the work of area ranger teams.
  - The new Stanmer Depot accommodation for the Eastern Team was not a long-term solution but can meet business needs for a number of years until progress was made in converting the Long Barn.
123. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the current and proposed activity in relation to Area Office accommodation.

## STRATEGY

### ITEM 12: PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE

124. The Chair of the Partnership Management Plan Task and Finish Group and Director of Countryside Policy and Management gave a verbal update on the work of the Task and Finish Group and reported that:
- The latest timeline was tabled.
  - A second workshop would be held on the 24 January 2019 and was open for all Members to attend.
  - A plan for Communications and Engagement had been developed
  - The next Task and Finish Group would be held on the 3 December and was open for all Members to attend.
  - The theme of the current Parish Workshops was the Partnership Management Plan and had been well attended and received.
125. The Committee commented that:
- The Parish Workshops were only attended by the Parish Councils and it would be useful for more local groups to also be invited.
126. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The outcomes in the PMP were written in the past tense because they were statements of aspiration for 2050.
127. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the verbal update

### ITEM 13: AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE

128. The Major Planning Projects and Performance Officer gave a verbal update on the work of the Task and Finish Group to date and reported that:
- Efforts of the T&FG have been focussed on the implementation of the actions approved at NPA in July 2018.
  - Grants of up to £30,000 per permanently available affordable housing, funded through section 106 contributions, launched in summer 2018 and had been well received by development partners. It was hoped that the first grant would be awarded in 2019.
  - SDNPA were continuing to prioritise pre-application planning advice.
  - Under the auspices of the Rural Housing Network, SDNPA had led and authored a submission to Government for a pilot proposal for a Revolving Rural Land Bank. There were 4 pilot areas, with 2 in the North of England and 2 in the South of England (including Hampshire). The pilot proposal is being considered by Government.
  - Affordable Housing was also being progressed through other SDNPA work streams such as Neighbourhood Plans and Whole Estate Plans.
  - From November 2018 viability appraisals submitted by developers/applicants, including reports from where they have been assessed by a third party on behalf of the Authority, would be published.
  - Further work on how private sector could be invested in affordable housing would progress in spring 2019.
129. The Committee commented that:
- It would be useful to contain information about the SDNPA grant scheme in the planning e-newsletter to help raise awareness and explain the scheme to parishes.
130. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Officers would include a section on the new affordable housing grant scheme in the

- next planning e-newsletter
- SDNPA actively encouraged Parish Councils to speak directly to the Authority.

131. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the verbal update.

## GRANTS AND PROJECTS

### ITEM 14: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

132. The Landscape Officer introduced report PR47/18, reminded members of the report content and gave a presentation.

133. The Committee commented that:

- It was pleased to see work progressing on the Green Infrastructure Framework and that there would be a communications plan developed. Members urged that the language used should be clear, relevant and jargon free.
- There was concern that creating a brand for the Green Infrastructure Framework (equivalent to the New Forest Green Halo) could undermine the core SDNPA brand and dilute the message.

134. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Communication with communities needed to be local and practical.
- There was a whole range of partnerships already in place to underpin the work at national, regional and local level.
- There was ongoing pressure for development on the boundaries of the National Park, and without strong GI policies from neighbouring authorities and good design there was concern that the SDNP would become the sole green resource for these new developments. The Green Infrastructure Framework sought to work with partners and developers to avoid this.
- Green Infrastructure such as installing rain gardens or urban tree planting could also be retrospectively fitted to developments.

135. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the work carried out to date on the Green Infrastructure Framework and the forward plan for developing the Authority's Green Infrastructure activity approach.

### ITEM 15: Q2 AND MID-YEAR PROJECT UPDATE

136. The Project Management Officer introduced report PR48/18 and reminded members of the report content and updated members on the following:

- The RAG status had not changed since Q1.
- The Rampion Monitoring project was currently amber having been delayed due to bad weather and the collapse of Carillion. Works were due to be completed by the end of 2018.
- Truleigh Hill project was amber due to the difficulties around the fencing but was now close to finishing. There would also be new interpretation work.
- Heathlands Reunited project was also on amber.
- Green Infrastructure project was also on amber and may need the project parameters to be amended.
- Sediment and Mitigation actions for the River Rother Partner project will be marked as completed as although the PHD paper is still awaited all the other outcomes were achieved.
- Stanmer Park project is currently in the final tender stages and would proceed in 2019.
- Active Access project is currently amber due to numbers attending walks being low.
- The following project have been awarded funds from the strategic fund: Truleigh Hill landscape project; Audio trails (funding received via the South Downs Trust); Petersfield

- Museum; and the Inn Crowd.
  - Projects awarded but not yet underway pending decisions by partners: Beacon Hub; Egrets Way Phase 4&5; and Changing Chalk (awaiting the outcome of Heritage Lottery Fund bid).
  - The Strategic fund balances showed a surplus because they only take account of the projects currently committed to and this fund needs to underpin the delivery of the next five year Joint Action Plan for the Partnership Management Plan.
137. The Committee commented that:
- It would be useful if future information could clearly identify who the lead partner was and what the targets and timescales were for each project.
  - The project shelf was useful to members and they would like to see the Elm Tree and Flint Wall mapping projects progressed.
  - Members would like to be involved in the early stages of project initiation.
  - It would be useful if reports could contain links to Project Initiation Documents.
138. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Active Access was a partner project led by ESCC with SDNPA being a delivery mechanism, WSCC had not made a bid therefore work could not take place there.
  - A consultant was currently working on the Discover England project until the new Tourism Strategy Lead started in January 2019. Part of the Project Management Officer role was to cover any gaps in staffing in order that project momentum was not lost.
  - Member training will be provided on the new project management system.
139. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received and reviewed the mid-year overview of project delivery and the current budget position of the Strategic Fund.
140. Jo Carr and Russell Oppenheimer left the meeting
141. The chair informed the Committee that the meeting from this point onwards the committee was not quorate. As per standing orders, at the discretion of the chair the meeting continued but would not be making any resolutions.

## ITEM 17: PROJECT EVALUATION – HEATHLANDS REUNITED YEAR 2

142. The Heathlands Reunited Project Manager introduced report PR50/18 and reminded members of the report content.
143. The Committee commented that:
- There was a reputational risk if the project did not deliver.
  - The Heathlands Reunited project was an example of a large collaborative partnership project which was dependent on partners and stakeholder playing their part to deliver the outcomes. Lessons learnt here should not be restricted to the Heathlands Reunited project and should be shared across other multi partner projects within the Partnership Management Plan.
144. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Due to a change in the project manager the project had temporarily lost momentum, but the new project Manager had now built strong relationships with the partners and progress was accelerating.
  - The capital works programme was behind but additional resource would not help at this stage as it related to seasonal delays on the ground works.
  - Currently there was a potential shortfall in the income from partner contributions due to partners using their own capital works as match funding to draw down the money from Heritage Lottery Fund. The potential shortfall related to the possibility that only 500ha of Heathland may be restored against the project target of 600ha. There were a

number of solutions to address the shortfall such as different partners taking on different responsibilities, requesting a deadline extension with the Heritage Lottery Fund or added additional resource.

- The capital variance of £136,000 is a credit and not a deficit.
- The target of engaging more than 300 volunteers was behind schedule and the Project Manager was seeking additional resource, through a secondment, for additional community engagement resource. The costs of this would be met from with allocated budgets and would hopefully be in place by Spring 2019.

145. Due to the committee not being quorate the recommendation was not put to the committee.
146. Member, Helen Jackson, informed the Committee that through the South Downs Trust the H.B. Allen Charitable Trust had donated more than £100,000 towards the repair and maintenance of the South Downs Way. Credit was given to Sophie Ritson's hard work for securing the grant.

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 3.40pm