Report to	**Policy & Resources Committee**
Date	**30 September 2021**
By	**Head of Governance & Support Services**
Title of Report **(Decision)**	**Annual Governance Statement and Updated Local Code of Corporate Governance**

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

1. **Approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21 to accompany the Authority's Statement of Accounts; and**

2. **Note the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance.**

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1.   Introduction

1.1   Under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 the Authority is required to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control. The findings of that review must be considered by a committee of the Authority, or by the Members of the Authority as a whole. Following that review, an annual governance statement, prepared in accordance with "proper practices in relation to internal control", must be approved. The approved statement must then accompany the Authority's Statement of Accounts. It is the role of the Committee to review the outcome of the annual review of governance arrangements and approve the Annual Governance Statement, ensuring it contains any actions for improvement.

1.2   The "proper practices", in accordance with which the Annual Governance Statement is to be prepared, are set out in guidance¹ to local authorities (including National Park Authorities) issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief executives (SOLACE).

1.3   This report presents the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21 for approval.

2.   Policy Context.

2.1   The SDNPA has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Management Team and other officers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Principal Audit Manager's annual internal audit report, the work done to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance, and also by responding to comments and recommendations made by external auditors and others.

2.2   The Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Head of Governance have liaised to review the organisation's governance arrangements and prepare a draft Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21, in compliance with the new guidance, and which records the ongoing

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¹

Entitled "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework" as amended in 2016

work that has been undertaken to establish and review governance arrangements. The draft Annual Governance Statement is set out in **Appendix 1** to this report.

2.3 No significant governance issues have been identified. The actions for further improvement in 2020-21 are listed in paragraph 5.2 of the draft Annual Governance Statement (**Appendix 1**).

2.4 The outcome of this process has been that the Authority's Governance arrangements are considered to continue to be fit for purpose.

3. Issues for consideration

3.1 The guidance advises that it is up to each authority to set out its commitment to the seven core principles of corporate governance detailed in the guidance, determining its own governance structure, or local code, underpinned by these principles and ensuring that it operates effectively in practice. The core principles are:

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

- Developing the Authorities capacity, including the capability if its leadership and individuals within it

- Managing risks and performance through robust internal controls and strong public finance management

- Implement good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

3.2 In respect of each core principle, the guidance offers more detailed advice concerning the requirements of good corporate governance and includes an example of how an annual governance statement may look.

4. Local Code of Corporate Governance

4.1 In exercise of the authority delegated to him, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, has made the necessary amendments to the Local Code of Corporate Governance. As required by the terms of the delegated authority, these amendments are now being reported to the Committee. The Local Code of Corporate Governance, is set out at **Appendix 2** to this report for Members information

5. Options & cost implications

5.1 This process is mandatory and therefore there are no alternatives.

5.2 The costs associated with undertaking this work are met from within the Authority's core budget.

6. Next steps

6.1 Subject to approval the Annual Governance Statement will be submitted along with the Authority's Statement of Accounts.

7. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any	There are no implications arising from this report

Resource implications?	
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Effective governance supports the efficient operation of the organisation
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	There are no implications arising directly from this report. Any equalities implications arising from the activities or actions outlined in the Code of Corporate Governance and annual Governance statement are considered and addressed as part of the Authority's ongoing delivery.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Are there any Data Protection implications?	There are no implications arising from this report
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy:	The report adheres to the principle of Promoting Good Governance as set out in the Authority's Sustainability Strategy.

8.   Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

8.1   The carrying out of an annual review, together with the reporting of its outcome to the Committee, is a legal requirement and provides assurance that arrangements are adequate and operating effectively in practice and, where gaps are identified, that action is planned to address this for the future.

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Appendices	1 - Draft Annual Governance Statement
	2 - Local Code of Corporate Governance
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Finance Officer and Head of Internal Audit.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	Report to Policy and Resources Committee July 2018

South Downs National Park Authority

Annual Governance Statement 2020-21

Review Date   Annual
Responsibility   Chief Executive
Approved by   Policy& Resources Committee

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY 2020/21

1. Scope of Responsibility

1.1   Through carrying out its general statutory duties and responsibilities in connection with the two national park purposes, the South Downs National Park Authority (the SDNPA) seeks to work for and with the local community to foster the social and economic wellbeing of communities within the National Park.

1.2   The SDNPA is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

1.3   The SDNPA also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

1.4   In discharging this overall responsibility, the SDNPA is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of the Authority's functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

1.5   The SDNPA has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework. The Local Code of Corporate Governance sets out agreed criteria against which the effectiveness of the governance framework will be assessed. This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the Local Code and meets the requirements of Regulation 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 for the Authority to prepare an annual governance statement.

2. The purpose of the governance framework

2.1   The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the SDNPA is directed and controlled. The frameworks also include the Authority's activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the SDNPA to monitor the achievement of its strategic priorities and to consider whether these priorities have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services. It is also a driver for the delivery of the Authority's outcomes and objectives, by contributing to the Authority's culture and empowering staff and members to act.

2.2   The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

2.3   The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority's aims, objectives and policies, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

2.4   The governance framework has been in place within the SDNPA for the year ended 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and Statement of Accounts.

3. The Governance Framework

3.1   The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the SDNPA's governance arrangements are summarised below.

Vision and Leadership

3.2   The SDNPA's purposes, vision and intended outcomes for residents, visitors and other service users are identified in a range of policy documents set out in our Local Code of

Corporate Governance. The overarching vision for the management of the South Downs was agreed in July 2012 and is included in the Partnership Management Plan (PMP), which was launched in 2014. The review of the PMP was completed in 2020 and an updated PMP published. The plan was originally developed with partners and delivery partnerships have been put in place to ensure the objectives are met. The Authority has also established a refreshed South Downs Partnership, with updated terms of reference, an independent Chair and representatives from across a wide range of key sectors, linked to the PMP in order to support delivery of the PMP and embed the PMP across those organisations and sectors operating within the national park.

3.3   The Policy and Resources Committee has revised its agenda to include a standing item report on the delivery of the PMP ensuring that the four key PMP themes, Climate Change, Health & Wellbeing, Rural Economy and Nature Recovery have been kept under review, with each meeting of the Committee during 20/21 focussing on one of the themes. The Committee has also organised workshops, which have involved key partners, to ensure delivery against these themes is monitored and scrutinised.

3.4   The Local Plan sets out how the National Park Authority will manage development over the next 15 years. This is based on the statutory purposes and duty for national parks. The Local Plan builds on the framework of the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan. The PMP sets out an overarching strategy for the management of the National Park and the Local Plan policies deliver many of the outcomes and policies set out in the PMP.

3.5   The SDNPA's Corporate Plan sets out the high-level objectives and priorities for the organisation and sets out detailed proposals for the forthcoming financial year.   The Corporate Plan also sets out our values. The Corporate Plan action plan has been reviewed during this period and updated by the NPA to ensure this aligns with the current budget position and organisational priorities.

Service Quality

3.6   Progress against the SDNPA's objectives, and the National Park Authority performance indicators is identified via quarterly and annual performance reporting to the Policy and Resources Committee and Planning Committee. The Performance Management Framework reflects the development of high-level objectives for the Partnership Management Plan. Performance is monitored by the Policy & Resources Committee with policies and strategies in place to ensure that the SDNPA makes best use of resources. The approach to performance monitoring is set out in the Performance Management Framework. Key data sets, as specified by Defra are reported to allow for national data comparison.

Decision Making

3.7   The SDNPA's Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations, Contract Standing Orders and other procedures prescribe how the Authority operates and how decisions are made to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Standing Orders are regularly reviewed and changes recommended to the Authority at least annually to ensure these reflect best practice and latest legislative requirements. Financial Procedures and Financial Regulations have both been updated during 20/21. The Authority responded positively to the implementation of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, which during the 20/21 period enabled national park authorities to hold meetings in public by electronic means, in order to operate effectively during the period of the pandemic. The Authority undertook a thorough review of its Standing Orders and associated processes and agreed to make temporary updates to its Standing Orders, to be effective for the period during which the regulations applied, in order to enable the Authority to make full use of the flexibilities granted by the regulations. These updates made provision for the attendance at meetings of Members and

members of the public by virtual methods, the publication or provision of meeting documentation by electronic methods and the conduct of meetings.

3.8   Virtual Meetings under the new regulations took place for the NPA and each of its Committees and monitoring of performance, finance and ongoing updates to the Corporate Risk Register to also reflect issues arising from the pandemic situation has continued throughout the pandemic period. In addition, the Authority has put in place arrangements so that the Chief Executive's urgency powers can be used in consultation with a wider group of individuals in order to ensure that the ability to take urgent decisions on behalf of the NPA can continue in a situation of widespread illness.

3.9   Member training and engagement activity continued during this period using on-line 'virtual meeting' software. A programme of 'micro forums' was introduced which were on line workshop style events aimed at ensuring Members continue to play their full role in guiding the development of Authority policy.

3.10   Following the decision of the High Court in relation to virtual meetings the Authority has reviewed its arrangements for meetings and has returned to face-to-face meetings for NPA and Committee meetings. Extra steps have been taken to ensure the safety of staff, Members and the public by ensuring compliance with stringent risk assessments, compliance with government guidance and the use of new room layouts and equipment to ensure social distancing can be maintained when it is required to be. The delegations to the Director of Planning have also been amended to enable the operation of the planning function via delegated powers should it not be possible for the Planning Committee to meet as a result of the removal of powers to hold virtual meetings, although to date this additional power has not been exercised.

3.11   As face to face meetings have returned, the Authority has ensured that its NPA and Committee meetings remain open to the public, with a public gallery being available at all meetings and members of the public being able to attend and contribute to meetings as required by legislation. The Authority will continue to use virtual meetings where it is appropriate and effective to do so e.g. for informal meetings outside of the committee structure, although more face to face meeting will resume as the restrictions continue to lift and it is deemed safe to do so.

3.12   There is a programme for reviewing and updating key documentation. We have a research and evidence strategy, which ensures that comprehensive, good quality data is available to base our decisions on and allow us to monitor progress. Committee reporting templates ensure these capture all relevant information to inform member decision making and promote consistency. These templates have been periodically reviewed to ensure they are effective and provide Members with the necessary information for them to deliver their decision-making responsibilities.

3.13   Each of the SDNPA's committees has distinct terms of reference, which are kept under review and, where necessary, updated by the NPA. In response to some of the findings of the Landscapes Review, with the aim of increasing the range of voices heard in its decision making and consideration of issues, the Authority made provision for the appointment of up to three additional Co-opted Members to join the Policy and Resources committee and amended the Scheme of Member's allowances to provide all co-optees with an allowance,. This process is ongoing but has so far resulted in the appointment of two additional Co-opted Members.

3.14   Meetings of the Authority and its committees are held in public (save for individual items of a sensitive nature properly considered in private session, in line with LGA 1972) with publicly available agendas and minutes published on the Authority's website. Members of the public may ask questions and make representations on relevant matters at meetings in accordance with a defined protocol for public engagement, which enshrines the rights of the public to address meetings. As indicated, the Authority continued to meet using virtual

meeting technology during the Covid 19 Pandemic and complied with the regulations to ensure decision-making continued to operate effectively and legally, and ensuring members of the public, could continue to engage and contribute to the decisions being taken by the Authority and its committees.

3.15   The Authority continues to webcast meetings of the Full Authority, and its committees. An archive of webcast meetings in the last 6 months is maintained and is publicly available through the Authority website and You Tube. Work to move to paperless meetings, which has been delayed due to remote working and prioritisation of the delivery of decision making during the pandemic will be resumed in 2021/22.

3.16   The Authority operates a series of "task and finish groups" to undertake in-depth work and analysis of key issues, prior to presentation to committee or the Authority for decisions. Each Group has terms of reference which are agreed by its parent committee or the full Authority and are supported by senior officers and where appropriate specialist advisors. In order to ensure the effective use of task and finish groups, the NPA has agreed a standing delegation to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority to also set up Member task and finish groups, ensuring that groups can be established in response to issues as they emerge.

3.17   The Authority's governance framework is kept under review by the Head of Governance, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer who are responsible for ensuring that the framework complies with changes in legislation, regulations, codes or guidance issued by government departments, regulatory bodies or relevant professional bodies. Committee and Officer Delegations and terms of reference are also kept under review to ensure that the governance framework reflects changes in roles and responsibilities of committees, members and/or the executive. The scheme of delegations and committee terms of reference have been updated during 20/21 to ensure they reflect new ways of working as well as the performance of additional functions such as in relation to the establishment of Teckal Company by the Authority. Changes have also been made to the scheme of delegation to provide for the effective operation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme, and to provide clarity around the processes related to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

3.18   The roles and responsibilities of the Members and officers are defined in Member/Officer job descriptions and there is a Local Protocol for Member and Officer Relations. The roles of Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer are filled. The SDNPA has a range of contracts for key support services. This includes the provision of the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer functions. In reaching this decision the SDNPA took into account the governance requirements of CIPFA's Statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010). A review of Member role descriptions has been undertaken during this period and updated role descriptions, including ones for the Chair and Deputy Chair specifically, were agreed by the Authority. In addition, the Local Protocol for Member and Officer Relations was revised to reflect the revised Member Code of Conduct adopted by the Authority during this period.

3.19   The contract for the provision of financial services and Chief Finance Officer support has operated during the year. The CFO function continues to be performed under this contract by the CFO, appointed by the Authority, and the CFO's nominated Deputy Chief Finance Officer at Brighton & Hove City Council.

3.20   There are arrangements for consultation with the Monitoring Officer, CFO or Deputy CFO on key decisions and advice to the Authority and its Committees. Arrangements are in place for the CFO's nominated deputy to attend management meetings on the CFO's behalf in order to ensure a sound understanding of the organisation's key priorities and risks. Contracts for the provision of ICT and legal services have also operated during the year.

3.21   During this year the Authority has completed its acquisition of Seven Sisters Country Park. In order to support delivery of the improvements the Authority wishes to see at the site it

has established a Teckal company (South Downs Commercial Operations Limited) which will enable activities for a commercial purpose to be undertaken. The implications of this have been reviewed and the scheme of delegations and committee terms of reference have been updated to ensure monitoring and oversight of the activities of the company and the performance of shareholder functions. Other NPA decisions taken during the year leading to the incorporation of the company included the approval of the Memorandum and Articles of the company, agreeing equity for the company and making Director appointments. Consideration was given to the need to reduce the risk of conflict of interests for Members and officers. An operating agreement which will govern the activities undertaken by the company on the Seven Sisters Country Park site is still being developed. A new Stakeholder advisory group has also been established which will enable key partners (including East Sussex County Council and the Teckal Company) to be kept informed of the Authority's plans for the site and enable input to inform future decision making regarding future plans at Seven Sisters Country Park.

3.22   An operating agreement and business plan will be agreed by the Authority during 2021/22 which will establish the parameters for the activities to be undertaken by the Company at the Country Park. These will be kept under review by the Policy and Resources Committee and NPA (which will, both directly and through the Chief Executive, act also in its capacity as Shareholder for the new Teckal Company).

Risk management

3.23   The SNDPA has established a systematic strategy, framework and processes for managing risk. A corporate risk register is maintained and has been reviewed on an ongoing basis at meetings of the Policy & Resources Committee as well as being subject to regular review by Operational Management Team (OMT). This enables relevant risks to be identified and evaluated, with consideration given to appropriate mitigation strategies. Directorate level risk monitoring is in place. Risk is also monitored at project level. There is an escalation process from project and directorate risk registers to the corporate risk register.

3.24   Risk assessments have been undertaken on key Authority processes to ensure compliance with regulations in effect doing the pandemic and these have informed how the Authority has operated during the pandemic – including the delivery of volunteer tasks, site visits and on the ground activity by Ranger and Planning teams.

3.25   The Authority's insurance arrangements have been kept under review and updated as new risks identified.

Conduct and behaviour

3.26   There are Codes of Conduct for Members and officers, in place and performance appraisal processes for both. Training is given to new Members on the Code of Conduct as part of the induction process and refresher training is provided. There is a Register of Members' Interests. The Authority operates successor standards arrangements for the conduct of Members following the implementation of the Localism Act 2011. The Appointment Management & Standards Committee is responsible for monitoring the ethical framework of the Authority. The Authority has appointed two independent persons to oversee complaints about the conduct of Members and extended these appointments during this period.

3.27   The Member Code of Conduct, and the associated complaints process have been reviewed and updated buy the Authority . The revised Member Code of Conduct aligns with the updated Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies issued by the Cabinet Office which those Members appointed by the Secretary of State are also required to comply with. The Authority also made changes to reflect the best practice identified though the Committee on Standards in Public Life's review of local government ethical standards.

Throughout the year individual and collective guidance has been issued to Members on the management of standards issues.

3.28 The Local Protocol for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters have also been updated to reflect the changes made to the Member Code of Conduct.

3.29 Specific action has been taken to address the potential for a perceived conflict of interest involving the S151 Officer, in relation to treasury management and these arrangements have been subject to a review by the external auditor to ensure they are robust and mitigate any risks associated with the treasury management function.

3.30 An annual update on complaints received is considered by the Policy and Resources Committee, so that the Authority can seek service improvement. The SDNPA has a Whistleblowing Policy, with confidential reporting arrangements in place to enable internal and external whistle-blowing. There is an Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy in place.

3.31 Competencies are incorporated into the performance and development review process for staff and a staff and member working group have developed and communicated a series of corporate values.   The last full staff survey was undertaken in 2018, however a number of surveys have been undertaken during the pandemic to ensure staff welfare is monitored and Senior managers and Members are kept appraised of any issues resulting from new ways of working during the pandemic. The Senior Management Team (SMT), working with the Operational Management Team (OMT) have developed a series of actions, informed by the staff surveys, to ensure recovery from the pandemic and new ways of working are effectively managed as the pandemic recovery phase continues. These new ways of working will impact upon a range of matters, including the operation of the staff performance and review process and a range of policy areas which will be updated during 21/22.

3.32 The Authority has commissioned external consultants to work with us on the development of an action plan to assist in improving the Authority's Equality, Diversity and inclusion work. This has included staff and member surveys and sessions in order to ensure all staff and members have an opportunity to participate in this work.

Financial accountability

3.33 The SDNPA's Financial Regulations and Procedures, revised during this period, provide a framework for the management of the Authority's financial affairs are subject to ongoing review. The SDNPA has an approved Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy and Annual Investment Strategy detailing its approach and risk appetite for managing financing, treasury and non-treasury investments. Monitoring of the operational budget is conducted during the year and findings incorporated into the budget planning process.

3.34 Payment of allowances to Members is made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and an independent review of allowances has been undertaken and approved by the NPA during this period resulting in a new allowances scheme with effect from March 2020. A subsequent single-issue review of the allowances scheme was also undertaken following an NPA decision to consider payment of an allowance to Co-opted members of the Policy and Resources Committee.

3.35 Members have a key role in providing assurance that the Authority's funds are used economically, efficiently and effectively in accordance with agreed policies. The financial strategy and budget is agreed by the Authority following scrutiny by all Members via a series of workshops. The Policy & Resources Committee receives regular reports on budget monitoring and treasury management performance and has a membership that includes two independent members who have relevant finance and governance experience. This committee undertakes the core functions of an audit committee. This ensures the provision of appropriate skills and experience in the scrutiny of the Authority's arrangements for financial control and risk management and enhances transparency.

3.36   The Authority has maintained its approach of allocating budgets to the Authority's Theme Programme Boards enabling these boards to be more responsive to opportunities to deliver projects on the ground. The work of the Boards is presented to P&R Committee and is driven by the objectives set out in the PMP and Corporate Plan. Budget allocations are agreed by the NPA through the budget setting process and reflect the relative priorities of the Authority, as well as the differing needs of each of the boards. The boards are led by senior managers within the Countryside and Policy Management directorate, who are each accountable for the spend and delivery against targets. During this period, as part of a programme focussed on moving out of lockdown, the Authority approved a recovery fund which was administered by the Theme Programme Boards to respond to emergency and urgent needs of partners and stakeholders under considerable stress due to Covid-19 prioritised by need and the critical role which the particular project may play in delivering the PMP. The allocation of funds from the recovery fund was monitored by quarterly reporting to the Policy and Resources Committee.

3.37   The Authority's accounts are subject to external audit on an annual basis and reported to the Policy & Resources Committee at a public meeting. An Internal Audit service is provided under a service level agreement by Brighton & Hove City Council's Internal Audit Services. The outcome of internal audits are reported to the Policy and Resources Committee and the full reports are sent to the Chair and Deputy Chairs and the Independent Members of the committee. An independent and external review of internal audit to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards was carried out in January 2018. The Authority's external auditors, Grant Thornton review the appropriateness of internal audit arrangements and accordingly place reliance on the work done where applicable.

3.38   The scheduled Procurement and Contract Management audit which was not completed in 2019/20, due to the need to allow the Authority to respond to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic was completed during this period.

3.39   The Authority has also embedded processes to oversee the delivery of the Infrastructure business plan and for allocating monies generated though the community infrastructure levy.

3.40   All contracts since June 2013 have been procured through e-sourcing using the In-tend system, or through National frameworks.

Constructive working relationships between officers and Members

3.41   Compliance with relevant legal requirements and the SDNPA's procedures is facilitated by a range of controls. Policies are in place to regulate how the Members and officers use the resources available to them.

3.42   The SDNPA receives legal advice and Monitoring Officer support as appropriate via separate contracts with West Sussex County Council and Hampshire County Council. This advice includes input into significant Committee/Authority papers. In 2019-20 no formal reports by the Monitoring Officer, further to section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, were necessary.

3.43   Senior managers and Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs meet monthly in an informal capacity to horizon scan and consider the forward management of Authority business. Although this is not a decision making body it allows for a constructive dialogue between officers and Members and ensure activity is informed by a wide range of views.

3.44   The Authority has changed its practices to create a small number of Members who are not appointed to committee, but rather work more closely with officers on specific policy areas or activities, such as health and wellbeing and the rural economy. This has resulted, for the first time, in not all Members being appointed to serve on the Authority's committees and has enabled Members , who may have had difficulty in attending scheduled Committee meetings, to participate in and contribute to the work of the Authority. All Members are still

required to attend NPA meetings and other Member development and engagement activities.

3.45   The induction of new Members has been reviewed and delivered online, including a virtual tour of the National Park and online roundtable sessions with SMT and Committee Chairs and Deputies to ensure that new Members joining the Authority during the pandemic have been able to fully engage in the work of the Authority.

Skills and Learning for staff and Members

3.46   Member and Officer learning and development needs are identified and met through induction programmes, the Performance and Development Review process, the Learning and Development Policy for officers (with individual staff learning and development plans) and the Member Development Protocol. There are annual Member discussions about development needs between individual members and the Chair of the Authority. There have been a number of formal and informal training sessions for Members on various aspects of their responsibilities and to aid the development of policy. This has included sessions on Climate change, biodiversity, and planning as well as delivery of the member induction programme. The Covid 19 pandemic cut short the 2019/20 Member development programme as it became impossible for Members to meet together in person. on line workshop style events aimed at ensuring Members continue to play their full role in guiding the development of Authority policy have been continued and have covered topics such as Climate change, Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, Health and Wellbeing and Nature Recovery.

3.47   An e-learning platform is maintained as part of a blended approach to training delivery. This includes a series of mandatory courses to be undertaken by all staff as well as optional courses focussing on personal development and growth. These courses are also available to Members. For staff, completion of courses is linked to the annual performance assessment process.

3.48   Mid and end of Project evaluations are reported to the Policy and Resources Committee and key learning is identified from these and used to inform the development of future projects and ways of working, this is also reviewed by an officer working group to ensure best practice is shared within the Authority.

3.49   Budget managers have access to one to one support for budget management and also briefings on financial procedures and administration, further budget management and closedown. All financial guidance and procedure notes are available on the Authority's Intranet. Contract management training has been provided to relevant staff, with a particular focus on the Countryside and Policy Management Directorate.

Clear relationships with Partners and the public

3.50   A key element in the SDNPA's guiding principles is working with partners and community groups. The SDNPA has therefore developed and maintained a range of relationships and arrangements with other agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure that they are able to engage with and contribute to the work of the Authority. The SDNPA has an Accord with Natural England and Memoranda of Understanding with the South Downs Network and South Downs Land Management Group. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Local Councils within the South Downs is also in place and communications with parishes and local communities has been improved through a new approach to parish workshops introduced during the pandemic – including on-line webinars and Q&A session meeting on a more frequent basis. The Authority has continued Member appointments to a number of local and national partner organisations and groups including the South Downs Local Access Forum, Campaign for National Park's and the South Downs National Park Trust. The Authority's Public Affairs Strategy has been updated during this period.

3.51   We continue to work with neighbourhood planning groups across the breadth of the National Park, to prepare neighbourhood plans that respect the purposes and duty of the National Park Authority and enhance the special qualities the National Park

3.52   A revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been adopted during 2020/21. This has been updated to reflect changes to the planning system during the pandemic, to include the new format parish workshops, reference the adopted South Downs Local Plan (which has been adopted since the last review of the SCI), minimum consultation requirements and a new protocol for neighbourhood planning and pre application advice.

3.53   Whole Estate Plans are seen as a key way of deepening engagement with estates and landowners, and these plans are subject to consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee, and involve visits to the estate to help Members and officers understand the issues facing land owners in the National Park. A review of the processes associated with the delivery of WEPs has also been undertaken and new practices introduced to ensure Members engage with emerging WEPs at the most appropriate time.

3.54   The Authority uses a range of methods to maintain regular contact with its communities and wider public for example the e-newsletter and planning newsletter which provide regular updates to 6,000 subscribers on the work of the Authority and activities within the National Park. With most work going virtual due to the restrictions put in place around the pandemic , much communications delivery has come to rely in part or entirely on digital platforms.

3.55   During 2020/21, three virtual festivals were held, Wild Chalk in July 2020, Secrets of the Heath in September 2020 and Dark Night Skies in February 2021. Together, these festivals reached over 500,000 people. Digital channels were also used to maximum effect, increasing the social media following by 46% and our website visitors by 208%.

3.56   In December, the NPA approved a new Communications & Engagement Strategy and Public Affairs Strategy and these are guiding our work going forward. We are continuing to develop the valuable new engagement skills gained during the pandemic to ensure we have skilled, flexible, creative, innovative and representative communications and engagement that are so central to the National Park going forward. The impact and reach of the Authority's communications work was presented to Members as part of the Annual review report.

3.57   The Authority, working with the South Downs National Park Trust has launched a Nature recovery campaign with the aim of increasing awareness of the 33% (13,000 ha) ambition;

•   to secure inward investment of at least £100m through public, private and charitable finance; and
•   to mobilise and inspire landowners, communities and the public to take action.

The campaign will be a focal point for the work of the Authority with regards to nature recovery and will involve significant fund raising activities from a range of sources to help achieve the 33% for nature target.

3.58   The Authority has in place appropriate policies for in relation to Equalities issues and every report considered by the NPA or its committees considered whether the decision would impact upon groups with protected characteristics, with full equalities impact assessments being undertaken where this is considered necessary. The delivery of EDI training for all staff has contributed to the effectiveness of this. The Authority has sought to engage with all communities across the national park and through its communications, engagement and outreach work has improved awareness of the National Park across a wide range of groups. An EDI action plan is being developed which will further support the embedding of this work in the Authority and will contribute to the work of the Authority and the National Park itself in providing access to all individuals and communities.

3.59   The Authority has also created youth ambassador roles to strengthen engagement with young people across the National Park and has in place the appropriate safeguarding policies and mechanisms, all approved through the Authority's HR Team.

3.60   The SDNP Citizens Panel currently consists of over 700 people living within or near the National Park. Panel members are surveyed twice a year on a variety of subjects, most recently on visitor management, our website and social media content, volunteering, Heathlands Reunited and the Take the lead campaign. The Research Team writes all research questions in collaboration with colleagues and only includes questions where we are able to act on the research results and recommendations. All feedback from the Panel is shared with the relevant colleagues/teams and this information is utilised in their work. Panel members also participate in ad hoc studies such as testing our website and reviewing our Local Plan Policies maps. In addition, a Citizens Panel e-newsletter is sent to panel members bi-annually, keeping them updated with the latest developments in and around the Park as well as informing them how their survey responses have shaped or contributed to our work as an Authority.

3.61   Following the establishment of the South Downs National Park Trust by the Authority, the Authority has implemented protocols, agreements and practices to manage its relationship with the Trust, whilst ensuring shared aims. Although the Trust is an independent body, the NPA appoints two members to its board and the chair of the Trust is invited annually to present to the Authority on its work and this took place during this period. A midyear update on the activities of the Trust is provided by officers. The Trust complies with the reporting requirements of the Charity Commission and Companies House and keeps its governance and policy framework under review to ensure it is robust and fit for purpose. The Trust also publishes an annual report.

3.62   During this period, the Authority has adopted a set of climate change commitments and associated actions plans which have been informed by a member workshop and work being undertaken by key partners.

4.   Review of Effectiveness

4.1   The SDNPA has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Management Team and other officers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the work done to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance, and also by responding to comments and recommendations made by external auditors and others.

4.2   The annual review exercise, which incorporated a review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance, was initiated by the Head of Governance and the Monitoring Officer and included consultations with the Strategic Management Team, the Chief Finance Officer and the Internal Auditor.

4.3   The Internal Audit Annual Opinion is that Reasonable Assurance can be provided that an effective system of internal control is in place at the SDNPA for the year ended 31 March 2021. Of the seven audits undertaken, there were five reasonable assurance opinions given in the year, along with two substantial assurance opinions.

4.4   The SDNPA's Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer have also provided assurance that there have been no significant control issues which have:

•   Required the need for formal action or reporting in their respective roles,

•   Required the need for significant additional funding not already provided for within the approved budget,

•   Had a material impact on the accounts; or

- Resulted in significant public interest, damaging the reputation of the Authority.

4.5 Although a review of the effectiveness of the Governance arrangements is reported once per year to the Authority, the process of gathering evidence and monitoring performance is continual and is managed through reports to the Authority and its Committees, and through the improvement planning process. Management action required to maintain effective governance arrangements evident from reports and from other management reporting processes is taken throughout the year.

4.6 We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. The areas already addressed and those to be specifically addressed with new actions planned are outlined below.

5. Governance issues

5.1 No significant governance issues have been identified. The following key areas of work have been conducted during 2020-2021:

- Introduction of temporary governance arrangements to enable the Authority to hold meetings in public by electronic means in order to operate effectively during the early pandemic period
- Continuing review of policy framework with updated policies agreed by the appropriate decision making bodies throughout the year
- Finalising the processes associated with the delivery of WEPs
- Finalising the revision of the Member Code of Conduct
- Induction of new Authority Chair / Deputy Chair
- Induction of 5 new Secretary of State appointed Members
- Review of governance arrangements to ensure adequate provision in place to address any issues arising from the establishment of the Authority's commercial arm

5.2 The following actions were previously identified for completion during 2020/21 but due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic have not been possible to deliver. These activities will be included in the actions for 21/22

- Further embedding of processes related to paperless meetings
- Delivery of Member Code of Conduct training
- Implementation of changes arising from the review of the staff PDR process
- Review of governance structures to ensure learning from Covid 19 Pandemic is embedded in governance arrangements

5.3 Actions for 2021-2022 include the following:

- Further embedding of processes related to paperless meetings as face to face meetings return
- Delivery of Member Code of Conduct training
- Implementation of changes arising from the review of the staff PDR process
- Embedding necessary governance changes as a result of the establishment of a Teckal company
- Review of governance structures to ensure learning from Covid 19 Pandemic is embedded in governance arrangements
- Review the position regarding the use of byelaws at Seven Sisters Country Park
- Review organisational policies as part of new ways of working as part of a move to a blended style of working

- Consideration of model councillor code of conduct recently published by the Local Government Association to identify whether further revision of the Member Code of Conduct is needed
- Finalising the operating agreement with the Authority's Teckal company

5.4   We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Chair   Chief Executive Officer

Date:
On behalf of the SDNPA

Code of Corporate Governance 2021

1.   Introduction

1.1   Corporate Governance has been defined as follows:

"…the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved."

1.2   The term 'local code of governance' essentially refers to the governance structure in place within the organisation although, in practice, the governance structure will consist of a number of codes and documents. The development and review of the local code of governance helps to ensure that proper governance arrangements are in place and serves as a means of increasing credibility, accountability and public confidence in the organisation.

1.3   The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) has produced a local code of corporate governance which is based upon the guidance published jointly by CIPFA[2] and SOLACE[3] entitled 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework' which applies to National Park Authorities. The Guidance sets out seven core principles of corporate governance, together with various supporting principles in respect of each core principle. The SDNPA's Local Code of Corporate Governance, set out below, incorporates these principles and identifies the source documents, good practice and other means of demonstrating the SDNPA's compliance with the principles of good governance.

The SDNPA's Values

1.4   The SDNPA has agreed the following statement as an expression of the values that will govern the behaviour of its staff and Members:

Working for the National Park….

We will:

- Have a common goal determined by the National Park's Purposes and Duty
- Champion the National Park's aspirations
- Communicate clearly and listen well
- Be flexible, encourage innovation and welcome challenge

….working together

We will:

- Trust and respect people within and outside the SDNPA
- Work in an open way
- Work as one organisation which is mutually supportive
- Be committed to working in partnership with others to develop shared priorities and gain mutual benefits

….to deliver results

We will:

- Ensure our approach and decisions are informed by evidence
- Be positive and enthusiastic: take the initiative
- Be seen to add value in all that we do.

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[1] 'The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2016).

[2] The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

[3] The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers.

In addition the Authority will act in accordance with the Nolan principles:

SELFLESSNESS: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

INTEGRITY: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

HONESTY: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

2. Monitoring and Review

2.1 All Members and officers of the Authority share responsibility for good governance. In particular, the Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for receiving the Annual Governance Report prepared by the External Auditor as well as the Annual Governance Statement prepared jointly by the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer.

2.2 Delegated Authority is given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee to make any necessary amendments to the Local Code of Corporate Governance. Where the Local Code has been amended, it shall be reported annually to the Policy and Resources Committee

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
We Will:	Evidenced by:
Behave with integrity: • Ensure members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation Ensure members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) • Lead by example and using the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions • Demonstrate, communicate and embed the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Annual Governance Statement approved by the Policy and Resources Committee • Appointment, Management and Standards Committee role in standards matters for members • Independent persons appointed • Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy in place and reported on annually to Committee • Arrangements for handling complaints against Members considered by the Independent Persons **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Members' Code of Conduct • Register of Interests for Members and declarations of interests made at meetings and recorded in minutes • Officer Code of Conduct and associated declarations of interest • Financial Regulations • Contract Standing Orders • Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality for Members and Officers • Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy • Whistleblowing Policy • Local Protocol for Member and Officer Relations • SDNPA Values and Competencies • SDNPA's Guiding Principles **Operational Procedures** • Induction programme for new Members and staff including standards of behaviour expected • Annual performance appraisal for staff and Members • Procedures for dealing with perceived conflicts of interests e.g. in relation to treasury management advice • Report template for decision making • Key processes audited and reported on • Individual guidance issued to members in relation to managing standards issues. • Process in place for disclosure of Related Parties and Outside Interests

Demonstrate strong commitment to ethical values: • Seek to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance • Underpin personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation • Develop and maintain robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values • Ensure that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the organisation	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Appointments, Management and Standards Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Memoranda of Understanding with various partners and Natural England Accord • Members' and Officer Codes of Conduct • Whistleblowing Policy • Equality and Diversity Policy • Procurement guide • Recruitment Procedure • Contract Standing Orders • Treasury Management Policy & Annual Investment Strategy (Ethical Investment Statement) • SDNPA Values and Competencies • SDNPA's Guiding Principles • Partnership management plan sets out approach to partnership working **Operational Procedures** • Member/officer performance appraisal process • Equality and Diversity Training • Report template requires consideration of ethical issues • Job descriptions • Staff competency framework • Treasury Management practices
Respect the rule of law • Ensure members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations • Create the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members, are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements • Strive to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders • Deal with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively • Ensure corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Statutory Officers appointed by the Full Authority • Committee structure in place with terms of reference • Monitoring Officer in place • Officer support for committees **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Whistleblowing policy • Financial Regulations, Contract Standing orders and Procurement Guide • Codes of conduct • Anti-fraud and corruption policy • Scheme of delegations **Operational Procedures** • Report templates set out legal considerations for all decisions • Member induction programme and development protocol • Provision of legal advice to officers and members to ensure compliance with law

	• Compliance with CIPFA's statement on the role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Govt (CIPFA 2015) • Job descriptions • Internal and external audit • Annual Management Assurance statement to the External Auditor • Register of member and officer interests and related party interests • Engagement at National level with regards to reviews of available powers and their use

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
We Will:	Evidenced by:
Be open • Ensure an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness • Make decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided • Provide clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear • Use formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** Authority and Committee meetings accessible to the public with various meetings webcast • Publication of agendas and reports in line with Local Government Act 1972 requirements • Member workshops • Decision Records • Public participation at SDNPA meetings **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Partnership Management Plan • 2050 vision • Communication and Engagement Strategy • Statement of Community Involvement • Financial Regulations and Standing Orders • Corporate Plan • Annual review • Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy • Whistleblowing Policy • Publication Scheme • Access to information policy • Member Allowance Scheme • SDNPA Guiding Principles • SDNPA Values and Competencies **Operational Procedures** • Report template • Financial statements • Annual performance reporting • Information published in respect of expenditure over £250 • Tracking spreadsheets used for key

	public consultations recording changes as a result of consultation • SDNPA website (includes - publicly available information including committee papers, who the Members are and what they do, who the officers are and how the public can input and influence Authority decisions) • Citizens' Panel • Farmer and parish engagement workshops • Parish newsletters and member attendance at parish meetings • Publication of South Downs View • E-newsletter and Planning E newsletter published
Engage with stakeholders • Effective engagement with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably • Develop formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively • Ensure that partnerships are based on: – trust – a shared commitment to change – a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Oversight of projects with partners and stakeholders by Policy and Resources Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Development of the National Park Partnership Management Plan • Corporate Plan • Communication and Engagement Strategy • Public affairs strategy • Memoranda of Understanding with various partners including shared values and Natural England Accord • Statement of Community Involvement • Guidance to Members on outside bodies **Operational Procedures** • New South Downs Partnership established • National Park Authority performance indicators • Visitor survey • Formal mechanism for evaluation and learning from major pieces of work and important partnerships. • Tracking spreadsheets used for key public consultations recording changes as a result of consultation • Planning Customer Survey • Individual campaigns and communications activity • Parish workshops • Farmer breakfasts • Citizens' panel • Seven Sisters Country Park Stakeholder group

Engage with individual citizens and service users:	Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:
• Establish a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes • Ensure that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement • Encourage, collection and evaluation of the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs • Implement effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account • Balance feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity • Take account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users	• Complaints, Compliments and Comments reported on annually. • Joint meetings between Authority Members and South Downs Partnership • Approval of Whole Estate Plans by Policy and Resources Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Process in place for disclosure of Related Parties and Outside Interests • Community Involvement in relation to planning matters • Memoranda of Understanding with various partners and Natural England Accord • Corporate objectives and success measures (in the Corporate Plan) • Communication and Engagement Strategy • National Park Authority performance indicators • Performance Management Framework • Rights of Way Accord **Operational Procedures** • Meetings with partner Local Authorities within the NP to discuss shared issues /priorities. • Engagement of youth ambassadors in the work of the NPA • Local Access Forum • Quarterly and annual performance reporting • Consultation on the development of the PMP, delivery framework and Local Plan. • Planning Service Customer Survey and associated action plan • Tracking spreadsheets used for key public consultations recording changes as a result of consultation • Citizens Panel • E-newsletter and planning e-newsletter

Principle C:	
Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	
We will:	Evidenced by:
Define outcomes: • Have a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • PMP and other strategic documents approved by NPA and/or committees

indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions • Specify the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer • Deliver defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available • Identify and manage risks to the achievement of outcomes • Manage service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available	**Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Statement of Community Involvement in relation to planning matters • Memoranda of Understanding with various partners and Natural England Accord • Purposes and Duty set out in legislation and incorporated into all strategic documents. • Corporate Plan based on the shared vision for the SDNP agreed with partners • National Park 2050 vision • Publication of the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) including the development of measures as a basis for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Vision • State of the Park Report • Risk Management approach • Local Development Scheme • Neighbourhood Plans • Local Plan • Public Affairs Strategy **Operational Procedures** • 5 yearly review of PMP • South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment • Annual review • Risk management processes
Consider the social, economic and environmental benefits: • Consider and balance the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision • Take a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints • Determine the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs • Ensure fair access to services	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Considerations tabled as part of committee reports • Membership of Policy and resources Committee expanded through additional Co-optees to broaden input into the committee deliberations . **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Development of 5 year medium term financial strategy • Development of position statements on key topics • Equalities policy and on line training • Annual Review • SDNPA Improvement plan which is regularly reviewed and includes key points raised via feedback and from other sources

	• Treasury management policy
	Operational Procedures
	• Approvals Process for Projects and project evaluation
	• Sustainability Action Plan
	• Volunteer Ranger Service Action Plan
	• Support for South Downs Volunteering Network
	• Report template
	• Evidence base maintained to inform decision making
	• Application of Sandford Principle in decision making
	• Enhanced role of theme programme boards in project decision making

Principle D:		
Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.		
We will:		Evidenced by:
Determining interventions: • Ensure decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided • Consider feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts		**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • SMT Strategic session discussions • Chair's briefing • Committee chairs and SMT discussions • Conduct of Authority and committee meetings enabling officers' presentation of reports for Member consideration and discussion. **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Corporate Plan based on the shared vision for the SDNP agreed with partners • SDNP Vision published following wide engagement with stakeholders and partners providing the strategic steer for the South Downs • Partnership Management Plan, • Local Plan • Publication of the Partnership Management Plan including the development of impact measures as a basis for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Vision • Financial Regulations and Contract Standing orders • Standing orders for Regulation of Authority Proceedings and Business

	Operational Procedures
	- Budget setting process - Committee reporting template and approvals process - Citizens' panel
Planning interventions: - Establish and implement robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets - Engage with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered - Consider and monitor risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks - Ensure arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances - Establish appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured - Ensure capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly - Prepare budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan - Inform medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy , taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term - Ensure the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage - Ensure the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** - South Downs Partnership - Annual budget processes involving approval by the NPA and oversight by the Policy and Resources Committee - Committee review of Corporate Risk Register - Performance reporting to Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** - Corporate Plan includes performance measures based on the shared vision for the SDNP agreed with partners - PMP including performance measures - Corporate Plan - PMP refresh undertaken with a member task and finish group - Social Value Act implications consideration for all decisions taken at committee. - Performance reporting to Committee - Project appraisals reported to Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** - Medium Term Financial Strategy - Corporate plan and budget setting cycles interlinked **Operational Procedures** - Social value implications of decisions part of standard reporting template - Budget setting process includes Members

Optimise achievement of outcomes:	Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:
• Ensure the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints • Ensure the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term • Ensure the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage • Ensure the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning	• Budgets monitored by Committee • Annual budget setting process through workshops and Authority meetings • Link between budget process and Corporate Plan • PMP refresh undertaken with a member task and finish group • Social value implications act consideration for all decisions taken at committee. • Performance reporting to Committee • Project appraisals reported to Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Corporate plan and budget setting cycles interlinked **Operational Procedures** • Social value implications of decisions part of standard reporting template • Budget setting process includes members and senior managers

Principle E:	
Developing the Authority's capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it.	
We will:	Evidenced by:
Develop capacity: • Review operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness • Improve resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently • Recognise the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved • Develop and maintain an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • PMP performance monitoring by Policy and Resources Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Organisational structure focussed on delivery model form PMP • Member/officer induction and appraisal programmes • Learning and Development Policy for officers and individual staff • Improvement plan • IT strategy **Operational Procedures** • Member Development Protocol and individual Member development meetings • Appropriate job profiles used in recruitment • Learning and Development Plans

	• Training events • Learning and Development Plan • Performance and development review scheme • Staff survey and associated action plan developed • E-learning platform with mandatory courses linked to annual performance review for all staff • Members and staff induction programme
Develop the capability of leadership: • Develop protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained • Publish a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body • Ensure the Leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority • Develop the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks • Ensure that there are structures in place to encourage public participation • Take steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections • Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Committee Chairs and SMT meetings • Appointments, Management and Standards Committee Terms of reference **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Job descriptions and performance and development review process for Members and officers, including the Chair of the SDNPA • Member Development Protocol • Standing orders contain scheme of delegations to officers • Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy • Financial Regulations and Standing Orders • Scheme of Delegation • Communication and Engagement Strategy • HR policies in place **Operational Procedures** • Chief Finance Officer support procured and compliance with both the *CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government* and the *CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations* • Monitoring Officer support contract in place • South Downs Partnership • Conditions of employment • Contract management in respect of externally provided services • Member workshops on key issues • Leadership and Management development training • Advertising Member vacancies • Induction programme for all • Annual Member 1-2-1 process with Chair of the Authority

• Ensure arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing	

Principle F:
Managing risks and performance through robust internal controls and strong public finance management

We will	Evidenced by:
Manage risk • Recognise that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making • Implement robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively • Ensure that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Regular risk reporting to Committee • Annual Health and Safety reporting **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Risk Management Strategy, risk register template and risk appetite statement • Insurance policies • Whistleblowing Policy • Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy • Health and Safety policies and procedures • ICT User Policy and information security policy in place • Treasury Management Policy **Operational Procedures** • Risk assessment as part of service planning • Corporate Risk Register reviewed by the Operational Management Team, and SMT • Annual Management Assurance statement to the External Auditor
Manage performance • Monitor service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review • Make decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook • Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making • Provide members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Chairs and SMT meetings • Chair's briefings • Committee terms of reference include regular performance monitoring **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Financial Regulations and Procedures • Standing Orders **Operational Procedures** • Strategic sessions • National Park Authority performance indicators reported quarterly or annually as appropriate including corrective action as necessary to relevant committees • Appropriate systems in place to

plans and on progress towards outcome achievement. • Ensure there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements)	support monitoring performance against measures • Operational management team monitoring of performance • Statutory requirements for decision making met • Improvement Plan • Committee Report templates
Develop robust internal control • Align the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives • Evaluate and monitor risk management and internal control on a regular basis • Ensure effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place • Ensure additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor • Ensure an audit committee or equivalent group/ function, which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** Policy and Resources Committee with terms of reference reviewed annually • Independent members on the Policy and Resources Committee • Training for Committee members • Publication of reports and meeting minutes showing declarations of interest made • Statement of Community Involvement approved by the NPA • Risk management strategy • Audit plan agreed by Policy and Resources Cttee and regular audit reporting to Committee • Annual Governance Statement **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Standing Orders • Scheme of Delegation • Financial Regulations • Anti-fraud and corruption policy • Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Guide • Members' and Officer Codes of Conduct • Communication and Engagement Strategy • Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy • Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Guide **Operational Procedures** • Policy framework kept under review by Operational Management team • Effective internal audit function resourced and maintained
Manage data • Ensure effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Major Project approval and monitoring by Committee • Performance data reported quarterly **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Security arrangements in place in

• Ensure effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies • Review and audit regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring	IT contract • Information security policy • Acceptable use of ICT policy • GDPR Policies and practices implemented **Operational Procedures** • Systems for managing performance data • Data Protection Officer • Data protection policies in place • Training on data protection • Data processing agreements where appropriate • Role of Research and Evidence Officer in validating data for PMP and other indicators • Methodology sheets developed for • Corporate plan measures and PMP indicators
Have strong public financial management • Ensure financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance Ensure well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • External Auditor's value for money opinion • Quarterly budget monitoring reports to Committee • Annual budget approved by Authority • Annual Statement of Accounts approved by Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Financial statements • Financial Regulations and procedures • Medium Term Financial Strategy **Operational Procedures** • Chief Finance Officer support procured and compliance with both the *CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government* and the *CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations*

Principle G: Implement good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

We will	Evidenced by:
Implement good practice in transparency • Write and communicate reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Annual Governance Statement approved by Committee • Annual and quarterly performance reporting to Committee • Report template • Decision Records • Webcasting of meetings

• Strike a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand	**Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Statement of Community Involvement • Communication and Engagement Strategy • Standing Orders • Scheme of delegation • Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy • Publication Scheme • Code of Corporate Governance • Access to information policy • SDNPA Guiding Principles • SDNPA Values and Competencies **Operational Procedures** • SDNPA website • Visitor survey • On-line South Downs Forum consultations • Tracking spreadsheets used for key public consultations • Corporate Plan • Annual review • Financial statements • Contributions to parish newsletters and attendance by members at parish meetings / agms
Implement good practice in reporting • Report at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way • Ensure members and senior management own the results reported • Ensure robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement) • Ensure that this Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate • Ensure the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:** • Annual and quarterly performance reporting to Committee • S151 officer reporting requirements • Annual Governance Statement approved by Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Corporate Plan 2016-21 **Operational Procedures** • National Park Authority performance indicators reported quarterly or annually as appropriate including corrective action as necessary to relevant committees • Report template • Annual review document • Financial statements • Summary versions of Corporate Plan and Partnership Management Plan

Develop assurance and effective accountability	**Committee Oversight & Scrutiny:**
• Ensure that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon • Ensure an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon • Welcome peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations • Gain assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement • Ensure that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met	• Audit Plan and reports to Policy and Resources Committee • Regular Attendance of internal and external audit at Policy and Resources Committee • Independent members appointed to Policy and Resources Committee **Corporate Policies and Strategies:** • Annual Governance Statement • Statement of community involvement • Internal audit function delivered by contract and meets PSIAS requirements • Risk Management Policy • SDNPA Risk Registers **Operational Procedures** • Audit actions are formally logged and followed up and reported to committee • OMT role in looking at audit recommendations as part of service improvement