

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 29 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 10:30am.

Present:

Vaughan Clarke	Norman Dingemans (Chair)	Sebastian Anstruther
Carole Nicholson (Independent Member)	Karen Roberts	Gill Mattock

Also present (for all or part of the meeting)

Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning) Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Mark Dallen (Internal Audit Manager), Robin Parr (Head of Governance), Jean Chambers (Planning Performance and Technical Manager), Kris McGrath (External Audit), Paul King (External Audit), Jon Wayte (Safety Officer)

### **ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

42. Apologies were received from Lewis Doyle, Jim Sheppard, Margaret Paren, Neville Harrison and Alun Alesbury.

### **ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

43. There were none

### **ITEM 3: MINUTES**

44. With the amendments of:

- Page 5 minute 27 fifth bullet: the word 'produces' to be replaced with 'producers'
- The minutes of the meeting on 5 July 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING**

45. Minute 39: The Head of Governance advised that the recruitment process for the Independent Person was now underway, and applications would close on 14 October 2016.
46. Minute 15: The Head of Business Services advised that no progress had yet been made with regard to the appointment of an external auditor, and work would be ongoing until late 2017 before an appointment is made. It was confirmed that issues relating to exit clauses from any contract entered into would be considered at the appropriate time.

### **ITEM 5: URGENT MATTERS**

47. There were none.

### **ITEM 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

48. There were no requests from members of the public to address the committee.

### **ITEM 7: Budget Monitoring report for Quarter 1 2016-17**

49. The Committee considered the report from the Chief Finance Officer (Report GOV18/16).
50. During discussion the Committee was advised that:
- It was correctly stated that the Authority currently had no capital programme. An estates reserve was held, but there were currently no detailed plans to spend this. It was expected that this may change in the next 12 months.
  - The Corporate Strategy staffing overspend related to additional costs incurred in the recent restructuring, these costs were no longer being incurred.
  - Investment income was difficult to predict and it was the view of Officers that a lower level of income from investments would be achieved this year compared to previous years.
  - There was a commitment to filling vacancies in the Planning Department and the turnover of staff in planning was not unique to this Authority, but was being experienced across the whole sector.

51. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the forecast underspend of £86,000 as at Quarter I

#### **ITEM 8: Letter of Representation and Audited Statement of Accounts 2015/16**

52. The Chief Finance Officer presented the report (Gov19/16) stating that the accounts were required to be signed off by this committee on behalf of the Authority, and no enquiries had been received during the public inspection process.

53. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the adjusted misstatements to the 2015/16 accounts as set out in Appendix 4 of the report.
- 2) Noted that there were no enquiries received during the public inspection of the accounts.
- 3) Approved the Letter of Representation as set out in Appendix I of the report.
- 4) Approved the audited Statement of Accounts for 2015/16 as set out in in Appendix 5 of the report.

#### **ITEM 9: Internal Audit Progress & Implementation Report**

54. The Committee considered the report from the Internal Audit Manager (Report GOV20/16) and commented:

- Work on the payroll audit had currently been ceased for operational reasons at the request of officers, and the purchasing cards audit was currently being finalised. Reports on these audits would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.
- There were currently two outstanding recommendations and revised deadlines for these had been agreed.

55. In response to questions the committee was advised:

- The internal audit manager would provide an interim update on the ICT health check recommendation R5 and R9, as the deadline for implementation was very close.
- The Business Services Manager advised that a new starters and leavers' process had recently been introduced in response to the recommendation in the OCT health check audit.
- Currently only officers see the full audit reports. The Chief Finance Officer advised that it was his responsibility to ensure a robust audit mechanism was in place and the reports from this were produced so management could take action on any issues raised. It was proposed and seconded that in future all audit reports should be shared with the two independent members of the committee and the executive summaries of all reports should be appended to future Audit progress reports for this committee.

56. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1) Noted progress against the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan (2016/17) and the implementation of recommendations previously made
- 2) Agreed that all final audit reports will be sent to the Independent members of the committee and the executive summaries of all reports would be appended to future reports for this committee.

#### **ITEM 10: Corporate Risk Register**

57. The Committee considered the report from the Head of Governance (Report GOV21/16).

58. The Committee was advised:

- Risks were currently being reviewed by OMT.
- Connections should be made between recommendations made in audit reports and the risk register, particularly in relation to the ICT health check recommendation in relation to data logging.
- The Brexit risk focussed more on transition than the implications of Brexit and could be renamed to better reflect this.

59. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Noted the Corporate Risk Register as at September 2016
  - 2) Considered that there were no risks for referral to the Policy & Programme Committee.

**ITEM 11: Audit Results Report 2015/16**

60. The Committee considered the report from the External Auditor (Report GOV22/16).
61. The Committee was advised that the audit was complete, subject to the approval of the accounts and letter of representation. The issue of non-accruals highlighted in the accounts was not considered to have a material impact on the outcome of the audit
62. The Committee commented that that the unqualified opinion was an achievement of which the Authority should be proud, and expressed their thanks to the Officers involved in achieving this.
63. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the proposed unqualified opinion and value for money conclusions of the External Auditor.

**ITEM 12: Quarter 1 Performance Report 2016/17**

64. The Chief Executive introduced the report (Report GOV23/16) and commented:
- As the corporate plan had only recently been agreed by the NPA there were some gaps in the information contained in the report.
65. The Planning Performance and Technical manager provided an update on performance within the Planning Department.
66. In discussion the committee was advised:
- There would be a focus on ensuring consistency across applications validated by Park Authority staff and others working on our behalf
  - Extensions of time for determining applications can be and are used.
  - In relation to appeals it was noted that the statistics do not provide the whole picture and it was important to ensure that Officers and Member stand by the decisions taken and defend decisions at appeal, regardless of whether Members had taken a decision against Officer advice.
67. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
1. Received and approved the Quarter 1 performance report
  2. Considered there were no recommendations to make to Policy and Programme Committee arising from the report

**ITEM 13: Annual Health and Safety Report for the year 2015/16**

68. The Committee considered the report from the Safety Officer (Report GOV24/16) Who highlighted:
- a. This was a key document through which the Authority receives assurance that Health and Safety is being effectively managed.
  - b. The report summaries key activities and ongoing activity
  - c. Lone working had been looked at in details this year and good progress had been made.
  - d. Amongst other changes, a new Health and Safety Committee structure and Chair had been introduced.
69. In response to questions the committee was advised:
- a. Volunteers were well trained and equipped however there was a need to review some of the risk assessments currently in place as elements of the volunteers work was changing and risk assessments need to reflect activity on the ground.
  - b. Whilst operating within a training budget requests for health and safety training had never been denied.

- c. The authority must never be complacent over health and safety and having a Safety Officer with a degree of independence gave greater assurance that this key risk was being well managed.
  - d. There was a need to ensure that incidents and sickness were reported.
70. **RESOLVED** the committee noted the report and the continuing improvements in the overall safety management of SDNPA, and endorsed the proposals for further priorities and actions

**Chair**

The meeting closed at 12:08pm.