

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 19 SEPTEMBER 2017**

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

Present: Ken Bodfish (Chair), Tim Burr, Jo Carr, Chris Dowling, Janet Duncton, Daniel Humphreys, Helen Jackson, Russell Oppenheimer, Sue Saville and Pete West

Independent Members of the Committee: Lewis Doyle and Carole Nicholson

Ex-officio Members: Margaret Paren and Norman Dingemans

Other SDNPA Members: Heather Baker and Neville Harrison

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

Also Attended by: Paul King (External Auditor), Vicki Colwell (Major Planning Projects Officer), Kelly Porter (Major Projects Lead), Allison Thorpe (Strategy Lead for Access and Recreation), Alister Linton-Crook (Cycle Projects Officer), Andy Beattie (Countryside and Policy Manager), Veronica Craddock (Infrastructure and Environment Strategy Lead, Kathleen Downes (Internal Auditor), Chris Fairbrother (Landscape and Biodiversity Lead: Chalk), Jeremy Burgess (Landscape and Biodiversity Lead (Water), Andy Player (Landscape and Biodiversity Lead: Woodlands), Vicki Patterson (HR Manager), Jon Wyatt (Safety Officer for SDNPA), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager)

#### **OPENING REMARKS**

55. The Chair opened the meeting
56. The Chair welcomed all those present and stated that:
  - The meeting was being webcast by the Authority and would be available for subsequent on-line viewing. Anyone entering the meeting was considered to have given consent to be filmed or recorded, and for the possible use of images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purpose
  - SDNPA Members have a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthers the National Park Purposes and Duty. Members regards themselves first and foremost as Members of the Authority, and will act in the best interests of the National Park as a whole, rather than as representatives of their appointing body or any interest groups.
57. The Chair informed the Committee the agenda had been reordered and Items 13a and 13b would be heard after Item 7

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

58. Apologies were received from Sebastian Anstruther, Mark Dunn and Philip Ede

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

59. Tim Burr declared an Interest in Item 12 as a woodland owner which contained Rights of Way.
60. Janet Duncton declared a Public Services Interest in Item 13b as a member of West Sussex County Council.

### **ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 JULY 2017**

61. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 20 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair

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

62. The Director of Countryside Policy & Management updated the Committee on the ongoing Future of Farming work. Three workshops had been held with farm cluster groups to design a new agri-environment scheme. The next stage was for the Pilot scheme to be submitted to DEFRA.

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

63. There were none

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

64. The Chair advised members of the public wishing to address the Committee on the Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan and A27 Arundel bypass scheme that they would be heard at the start of the relevant agenda items.

### **ITEM 7: NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

65. **RESOLVED:** It was resolved that the Committee would not move into Part II for Part B of appendix 2 of agenda Item 13a.
66. **RESOLVED:** It was resolved that the Committee would move into Part II for Agenda Item 17 and exclude any members of the public and Press from the meeting at this time.

## **POLICY**

### **ITEM 13a: NEWTON VALENCE WHOLE ESTATE PLAN**

67. The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that they were considering the Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan and not any potential planning applications that maybe submitted.
68. Councillor Bob Fewings of Newton Valence Parish Council addressed the Committee on the Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan with particular emphasis on the community engagement process, sought clarification for the weight given to Newton Valence Parish Plan within the Planning system and highlighted factual inaccuracy with the maps.
69. Hamish Jansen of Newton Valence Estate addressed the Committee on the Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan with particular emphasis on the strong working relationship developed with SDNPA, the need for succession planning to secure future for the estate.
70. The Major Planning Projects Officer presented report (PR16/17) and gave a [presentation](#).
71. The Committee commented that:
- The Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan was extremely comprehensive and of high quality
  - More information would be useful on holidays lets with regards how many and where they might be situated.
  - Further information on how permissive routes would be increased
  - Diversification is extremely important for estates
  - SDNPA is breaking new ground with Whole Estate Plans and the Committee are delighted that estates are willing to work with SDNPA
72. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Any errors that maybe within the maps did not change the recommendation for endorsement

- A Whole Estate Plan is a material consideration within the Planning process.
- Parish Plans will also be a material consideration.
- Discussions have taken place with the Access and Recreation Team and are continuing with how to increase access onto the estate.

73. **RESOLVED:** that the Committee endorsed the Newton Valance Whole Estate Plan.

### **ITEM 13b: RESPONSE TO HIGHWAY ENGLAND CONSULTATION FOR ROUTE OPTIONS FOR THE PROPOSED A27 ARUNDEL BY PASS**

74. Mike Tristram addressed the Committee as a Member of the South Downs partnership on the SDNPA Response to Highways England options for the proposed A27 Arundel Bypass. Comment was made that a comparative summary evaluation statement would be helpful and more detail should be added for each special quality of the National Park. Mike referred to a petition signed by over 2100 people that option 5a should be rejected.
75. Nigel Seale addressed the Committee on the SDNPA response to the Highways England options for the proposed A27 Arundel by Pass and commented that the new road is very much needed and the best solution would be a cut and cover tunnel through Tortington Common.
76. Sue Simpson locum Arundel Town Council Clerk read out a statement on behalf of Cllr James Stewart with regards to the SDNPA response to the Highways England options for the proposed A27 Arundel by Pass. Comment was made that that Arundel needs a bypass as the town is split into 2 with the current scheme. Local roads are used as a rat run and when the current road was built in 1973/74 it was built as a relief road not a bypass.
77. The Director of Countryside Policy & Management informed the Committee that report PR17/17 is based on proposals received from Highways England, which are incomplete. The comments within the report on the major development test represent the current view of the SDNPA, but QC advice is being sought on whether the proposals would or would not be considered major development and whether the information provided by HE is sufficient to allow an Inspector to apply this test. This advice will be available for the forthcoming NPA meeting.
78. The Countryside and Policy Manager presented report (PR17/17) and made reference to the updated summary of impacts [tabled](#) at the meeting
79. The Committee commented that:
- SDNPA responsibility is to look at the impacts on the National Park and it is for others to assess their impacts beyond the boundary.
  - The report was too long and repetitive.
  - SDNPA should object to all 3 options rather than saying that one is slightly less or more damaging than another option.
  - SDNPA should be concerned about the issue of rat running.
  - Highways England should take more account of alternative solutions such upgrading the rail network.
  - All 3 options are highly adverse due to the environmental impacts on the National Park.
  - Important information is currently missing from Highways England which was needed to make a fully informed decision on these impacts.
80. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- It is not appropriate for the SDNPA to design alternative routes but to focus on the impacts of the schemes currently on the table on the special qualities of the National Park.
  - SDNPA have to respond to the options currently presented and the scoring based on the evidence to date indicates that all 3 options will cause significant damage to the

National Park. The relative scoring of all 3 options could change if ambitious mitigation measures were designed in to the schemes.

- Highways England is required to consult with SDNPA at every stage of the process and to be clear about the impacts in the national park as part of its s62 duty.

81. Janet Duncton left the meeting

82. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1) Agreed that Members and appropriate officers continue to be engaged with the specific consultation and technical groups that Highways England (HE) have set up, to ensure NP purposes are fully represented
- 2) Noted the evidence provided to date on the impacts on the SDNP Special Qualities of the 3 route options which have been presented for consultation by Highways England which demonstrates that all 3 of the route options cause permanent and irreversible damage to the SDNP
- 3) Supported the proposed objection to all three schemes on the basis of the evidence so far provided
- 4) Agreed that, regardless of which route is selected for the preferred option, SDNPA should continue to work with Highways England and other stakeholders to achieve appropriate mitigation and compensatory measures
- 5) Endorsed officers continue working with HE to ensure HE's nationally designated funds are utilised for maximum benefit locally
- 6) Delegated to the Director of Countryside Policy and Management - in consultation with the Chair of the P&R Committee and the Authority Chair - to prepare a response to the Highways England Consultation for approval by the NPA

*(NB Authority Member Tim Burr abstained in the vote on recommendation 3)*

## AUDIT

### ITEM 8: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER I 2017/18

83. The Principal Accountant introduced report (PR10/17)

84. In response to questions officers clarified that

- The £10,000 overspend was the second of two staged payments to the National Park Partnership. All 15 National Parks are members of the partnership which aims to generate commercial sponsorship at UK level such as the Columbia Clothing deal.

85. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the 2017/18 revenue forecast underspend position of £115,000 as at Quarter 1.
- 2) Noted the 2017/18 capital forecast position of zero variance as at Quarter 1.
- 3) Noted the current Treasury Management overview and position

### ITEM 9: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

86. The Head of Governance introduced report (PR11/17) and updated the Committee on the following:

- A new risk in relation to the pension fund has been added to the risk register
- Arrows on appendix 2 are not correctly shown
- Risk 8 and Risk 15 will be merged into 1 general business continuity risk
- Risk 16 will be updated to reflect the staff survey being conducted in 2018.

87. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the Corporate Risk Register as at September 2017.

## **ITEM 10: ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2016/17**

88. The External Auditor introduced report (PR12/17) and updated the Committee on the following:
- Certificate of audit achievement 2016/17 was completed on 24 July resulting in the earlier close down of accounts from 2017/18 being ahead of schedule.
89. In response to questions officers clarified:
- Income errors were related to grant income being allocated to the wrong year
90. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the 2016/17 Annual Audit Letter

## **ITEM 11: INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS AND IMPLEMENTATION REPORT**

91. The Internal Auditor introduced report (PR13/17)
92. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Investment transactions and independent reconciliation occurs due to the separation of duties between SDNPA and Brighton and Hove City Council. This wouldn't be possible if all finance was managed in house.
93. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the progress against the Internal Audit strategy and Annual Plan (2017/18) and implementation of recommendations previously made.

## **POLICY**

### **ITEM 12: REVIEW OF PARTERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN**

94. The Director of Countryside and Partnership gave a [presentation](#).
- The agreed focus was on updating the delivery framework for the PMP rather than rewriting the whole plan. The work on the PMP delivery framework has been split into 8 strategies. Material from these will subsequently be merged to form the initial draft of a new delivery plan running from 2019-2024.
  - The 8 strategies are landscape & biodiversity and Cultural Heritage for Purpose 1, Walking & Cycling, Volunteering, Education and Health & Well Being for Purpose 2 and Economy and Tourism for SDNPA Duty.
  - Once completed the updated PMP will be a key driver for the next SDNPA corporate plan and budget, and inform the business plans of its Partners.
95. The Committee commented that:
- It be useful to Members to have the strategies with more read across as they appear to vary in format and content.
  - There needs to be a mechanism for Members to be fully informed and engaged in the process and it was suggested that maybe there should be a Member Working Group to look at the Management Plan Review, along the lines of the Local Plan Member Working Group.
96. In response to questions Officers clarified:
- Subject matters vary greatly resulting in different types of documents being produced even though they all follow the same principles. There is consistency across the action plans in all the strategies under development.
  - Work on the strategies has been phased to take account of workloads and resources available.

### **ITEM 12a: LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

97. The Landscape and Biodiversity Lead (Chalk) and the Landscape and Biodiversity Lead

- (Water) introduced report (PR14/17) and gave a [presentation](#).
98. The Committee commented that:
- The Strategic Outcome for Cultural Services was missing from the table in section 3 of the strategy
99. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- Some areas of work maybe picked up in other strategies which is why they are not contained with the Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy
  - Pest and diseases are a growing threat to all tree species and this will be identified with a SWOT analysis.
  - Member involvement is critical to the process
100. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Considered the draft Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy.
  - 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Countryside Policy & Management, in consultation with the Committee Chair, to finalise the wording of the draft strategy incorporating any changes agreed by the Committee and to make any additional minor changes considered necessary prior to submitting the strategy to the Authority for approval.

#### **ITEM 12b: CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY**

101. The Access and Recreation Lead introduced report (PR15/17) and gave a [presentation](#).
102. The Committee commented that:
- The period covered is not consistent with the overall process 2019-24.
  - It should be considered whether education with regards to cycling safety and etiquette should form part of the strategy.
  - Opportunities should be sought to add interpretation along cycle routes.
  - Major highways form a barrier to cycling in the SDNP as does inadequate signposting
  - The Cycling and Walking Strategy does not cover horse riders and it should be considered where these will be represented
103. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- All action plans should go to 2024
  - The action plan will closely link to those for other areas such as tourism and economy, and to the Communications and Engagement Strategy, so it was not appropriate to cover all aspects of behaviour change here.
  - Walks and Rides leaflets do currently incorporate education messages.
104. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Considered the revised draft Cycling and Walking Strategy.
  - 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Countryside Policy & Management, in consultation with the Committee Chair, to finalise the wording of the draft revised strategy incorporating any changes agreed by the Committee and to make any additional minor changes considered necessary prior to submitting the revised strategy to the Authority for approval

#### **PERFORMANCE & PROCEDURES**

##### **ITEM 14: ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2016/17**

105. The HR Manager and SDNPA H&S Advisor introduced report (PR18/17).

106. The Committee commented that:
- It is helpful that the Safety Officer is the Safety Officer for SDNPA and other National Parks because the business being examined is very similar.
107. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- Medical screening during recruitment enables SDNPA to proactively provide support to enable staff once recruited to do their job based on reasonable adjustment.
  - All recruitment situations are dealt with individually and sensitively when they arise, occupational health assessments are summarised for the SDNA but available in full to the applicant.
  - SDNPA does support people with disabilities but these issues are covered within the Equality and Diversity Policy which will be circulated to Members along with Health and Safety Policy.
  - The average number of sick days per FTE was comparable to other National Parks as they also do not take long term sickness into consideration.
  - RIDDOR is the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.
  - Volunteers are taken into account with the information in the report and an SDNPA Officer attends the Volunteer Ranger Service Meeting.
108. **RESOLVED:** That 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
109. Pete West left the meeting

#### **ITEM 15: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017-18**

110. The Performance and Projects Manager introduced report (PR19/17) and the Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager gave a [presentation](#) to explain the planning information within report PR19/17.
111. The Committee commented that:
- The new reporting format is much clearer and is welcomed.
  - Speed of validation of planning applications across the National Park (i.e. including all host authorities) needs to improve with three host authorities in particular well below average.
112. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- Issues with regards to Broadband aren't always in the hands of SDNPA and rely on other agencies
  - Secrets of the Highwoods Project was completed on time.
  - The 5 day validation target for planning applications has been set by the SDNPA Meetings are being arranged with the host authorities to try and improve speed of validation results. Members will be kept informed.
  - £2.6million is spent on host authorities representing 24% of the total budget.
113. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Received the Quarter 1 performance report
  - 2) Considered if it wishes to make any recommendations to Officers arising from the report
114. Daniel Humphreys left the meeting

## ITEM 16: PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

115. The Performance and Projects Manager introduced report (PR20/17) and reported that as a direct result of the evaluation a new project management post is being created which will provide additional logistical support for the projects as required. Learning outcomes from this evaluation have also been fed into the Heathlands Reunited project.
116. The Committee commented that:
- The volunteers who worked on the project were proud of the outcomes.
  - Extra in-house resource is a good thing.
  - The evaluation report doesn't put enough emphasis on the success for those who participated in it.
117. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- The project legacy is that local archaeological societies have enough information for around 25years of ongoing research.
  - Lessons have been learnt which are being applied to the Heathlands Reunited Project.
  - The recruitment of a project manager will enable project support to be given to the whole organisations, ensure links are made across the whole organisations and to help provide advice and training to members of other staff on project management.
  - Providing a more stimulating digital experience – i.e. an interactive 3d simulation – whilst desirable would be extremely resource intensive and not feasible at this stage of the SDNPA's development. SDNPA currently uses its own website hosting system and not the platform that other National Parks use.
118. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee
- 1) Received the project evaluation.
  - 2) Agreed if it wished to make recommendations to officers as a result of the learning from the evaluation
  - 3) Agreed that the learning from the evaluation be added to the improvement plan as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.
119. Jo Carr Left the meeting
120. Neville Harrison left the meeting
121. It was proposed to exclude any Press and Public during item 17 in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if a member of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Authority and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exempt information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Following a vote the proposal was carried.
122. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee move into Part 11 (private session) for consideration of the urgent business and exclude any members of the public and press from the meeting at that time.

## ITEM 17: INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

123. The Committee considered a report (PR21/17) by the Internal Auditor

**ITEM 18: TO NOTE THE DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

124. Tuesday 21 November 2017, starting at 10am at the South Downs Centre.

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 17:00

