

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 20 JULY 2017**

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

Present: Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish (Chair), Tim Burr, Jo Carr, Chris Dowling, Mark Dunn, Daniel Humphreys, Helen Jackson, Russell Oppenheimer and Pete West

Independent Members of the Committee: Lewis Doyle and Carole Nicholson

Ex-officio Members: Margaret Paren

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside and Policy Management), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Karen Everett (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Anne Rehill (Performance and Projects Manager), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Kris McGrath (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), Amanda Elms (Learning Outreach and Volunteering Lead), Robin Parr (Head of Governance) and Catherine Sydenham (Committee Officer).

#### **OPENING REMARKS**

1. The Director of Countryside Policy & Management opened and chaired the meeting for Items 1&2.
2. The Director of Countryside Policy & Management welcomed all those present and stated that:
  - The meeting was being webcast by the Authority and would be available for subsequent on-line viewing. Anyone entering the meeting was considered to have given consent to be filmed or recorded, and for the possible use of images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purpose
  - SDNPA Members have a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthers the National Park Purposes and Duty. Members regard 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.

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

3. Apologies were received from Norman Dingemans, Janet Duncton and Sue Saville

#### **ITEM 2: ELECTION OF CHAIR**

4. The Director of Countryside Policy & Management informed the Committee that nominations for the position of Chair closed 5 working days before the meeting and as Ken Bodfish was the only nomination, Ken Bodfish was duly elected as Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first meeting of the Committee after the AGM in 2018.
5. The Chair welcomed all Members to the first meeting of the new Policy and Resources Committee and clarified that Independent Members have full participation rights in the Audit and Governance items on the agenda, but they cannot vote. The Chair invited Independent Members to participate in the discussion on other items.

#### **ITEM 3: ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRS**

6. The Chair informed the Committee that nominations for the positions of the 2 Deputy Chairs closed 5 working days before the meeting and as Sebastian Anstruther and Helen Jackson were the only nominations, Sebastian Anstruther and Helen Jackson were duly elected as Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first meeting of the Committee after the Authority AGM in 2018.

#### **ITEM 4: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

7. Sebastian Anstruther declared a Personal Interest in Item 16 as the Member of the Public was a personal friend.
8. Lewis Doyle declared a personal interest in Item 16
9. Mark Dunn declared a personal interest in Item 15 as a landowner which has a bridle path on it.

#### **ITEM 5: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GOVERNANCE AND POLICY AND PROGRAMME COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 MAY 2017 & 25 MAY 2017**

10. The minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on 24 May 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair
11. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 25 May 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **ITEM 6: MATTERS ARISING**

12. There were none.

#### **ITEM 7: URGENT MATTERS**

13. There were none
14. The Chair informed the Committee that Item 16 would be heard after Item 13.

#### **ITEM 8: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

15. The Chair advised the member of the public wishing to address the Committee on the Wiston Whole Estate Plan that it would be heard at the start of the relevant agenda item.

#### **ITEM 9: NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

16. It was resolved that the Committee would not move into Part II for Agenda Item 19, and the Exempt Minutes of the Policy and Programme Committee held on the 25 May 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **AUDIT**

#### **ITEM 10: AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2016/17 & LETTER OF REPRESENTATION**

17. The Chief Finance Officer presented report (PR01/17) and clarified that the accounts were presented earlier this year due to the new statutory deadlines coming into effect next year.
18. In response to questions officers clarified that:
  - The Auditor was aware of a mistake in the report relating to an estimation error by the pension fund actuary but stated that this will not affect the clarity of the accounts or the audit opinion.
  - The increase in the creditors balance is due to invoices not having been received by SDNPA from partners in relation to delegated planning agreement arrangements.
  - Some of the earmarked reserves shown in the SDNPA accounts are not funds for SDNPA to defray, rather they are held on behalf of other organisations but are shown in the accounts to ensure transparency.
  - The Volunteer Ranger Service has now begun to spend some of its earmarked reserves.
  - Section 106 funds were carefully managed by officers and assurance was given to Members that these funds will be spent.
  - The risks associated with the Pension Deficit should be added to the Corporate Risk Register.

**19. RESOLVED: that the Committee:**

1. Noted the Commentary in the Accounts set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. Considered and approved the audited Statement of Accounts 2016/17 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, subject to not formal objections being lodged as part of the Public Inspection process.
3. Considered and approved the Letter of Representation as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, subject to no objections being received as part of the Public Inspection process.
4. Noted the findings of the external auditor in their Audit results Report elsewhere on the agenda.
5. Noted the period of Public Inspection ends on 21 July 2017.

**ITEM 11: INTERNAL AUDITOR ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

20. The Chief Finance Officer presented report (PR02/17).
21. The Committee commented that:
  - The Senior Management Team need to make the decision as to what assurance levels and definitions should be applicable to SDNPA.
22. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
  - The authority and Internal Auditors are always looking for continuous improvement and will generally find a control or process that can be improved making it difficult for full assurance to be achieved.
23. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the content of the report, specifically:
  1. The Internal Audit Opinion for 2016/17
  2. The Internal Audit coverage an issues emerging

**ITEM 12: AUDIT RESULTS REPORT 2016/17**

24. The External Auditor presented report (PR03/17) and updated the committee on the following:
  - The investment confirmation is now received.
  - Final financial statements have been received and checked.
  - The subsequent events review is complete.
  - Signed management representation letter is expected to be received on 20 July 2017.
  - The Whole Government Accounts Submission will be completed on 24 July 2017.
25. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee considered the findings as set out in the 2016/17 Audit Results Report, asked questions as necessary and raised any other matters considered relevant to the audit.

**ITEM 13: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND UPDATED LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

26. The Head of Governance presented report (PR04/17) and referred to paragraph 4.3 of the Annual Governance Statement and advised members that whilst this stated that there had been no limited assurances and five reasonable assurances, there was actually one limited assurance and two reasonable assurances. The Head of Governance confirmed that this will be updated in the version that will be signed and submitted.
27. In response to questions, officers clarified that:
  - GDPR stands for General Data Protection Regulation.
  - CRM stands for Customer Relationship Management.

- PDR stands for Performance Development Review.
- Data Protection is included on the Corporate Strategy Risk Register.
- Key Performance Indicators are not included as part of the Code of Corporate Governance Framework but are referenced within the Code.

28. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

1. Approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17 to accompany the Authority's Statement of Accounts; and
2. Noted the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance
3. Delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee to review and amend the Local Code of Corporate Governance as appropriate and report the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance to the Committee Annually.

## STRATEGY

### ITEM 16: WISTON WHOLE ESTATE PLAN

29. Richard Goring of the Wiston Estate addressed the Committee on the Wiston Whole Estate Plan with particular emphasis on achievements to date, the lessons learnt in developing the plan and what he hoped it would achieve going forwards.
30. The Major Planning Projects Officer presented report (PR07/17) and gave a [presentation](#).
31. The Committee commented that:
  - The Wiston Whole Estate Plan was an excellent example of partnership working.
  - They felt that Whole Estate Plan was excellent and of high quality.
  - Good to see the Local Plan in action before adoption.
  - The Whole Estate Plan has to be flexible to reflect the dynamic nature of a business
32. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
  - The Whole Estate Plan provides the context for an informed discussion on any future planning applications, although it does not guarantee that permission would be granted.
  - The plan would help identify opportunities for future partnership working between SDNPA and the Estate – for example on biodiversity, access or education.
33. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee endorse the Wiston Whole Estate Plan.

## PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES

### ITEM 14: YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT

34. The Performance and Projects Manager presented report (PR05/17) and gave a [presentation](#).
35. The Committee commented that:
  - The South Downs National Park Trust objectives shouldn't be included with the Corporate Plan Performance Measures.
  - the SDNPA and its partners may be trying to achieve too much
  - When driving for efficiencies it shouldn't just be about the cost it should be about the quality of service delivered.
  - The revised delivery framework for the Partnership Management Plan should include a streamlined set of realistic and achievable measures.
  - More emphasis should be given to disabled access.

- With Planning Applications, it is the quality of development achieved which is the ultimate measure

36. In response to questions Officers clarified that:

- Priorities will be set through the SDNPA Corporate Plan and budgeting process
- RAG ratings are both subjective and metric ratings.
- 80% Planning Appeal target may in retrospect have been ambitious and the current performance is about average compared to other National Parks. SDNPA is very successful at Major Appeals.

37. Carole Nicholson left the meeting

38. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received the approved the Quarter 4 and 2016/17 year-end performance report.

39. The meeting was adjourned and reconvened after a 5 minute break.

## STRATEGY

### ITEM 15: CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY

40. The Strategy Lead for Access and Recreation and the Cycle Projects Officers presented report (PR06/17) and gave a short [Presentation](#).

41. The Committee commented that:

- Additional information on the map with regards to the difficulty level would be helpful.
- The strategy is important for people who use, live and work within the National Park.
- The strategy could be an important contributor to public health.
- Access from the towns onto the South Downs should be improved.
- There was huge potential for hosting big cycle events.
- Some cyclists need education as to the location and their speed of travel.
- The surface used needed to be correct.
- Priorities within the strategy should be discussed at a future meeting.
- Is it better to open up additional routes or improve the access to current routes?
- The different types of cyclists have differing needs.

42. In Response to Questions Officers clarified:

- Need to be mindful of best practice and landscape impact when choosing the surface of a cycle path
- CIL monies could be used where Parishes have identified the need in their Neighbourhood Plans
- Use Whole Estate Plans as to which existing paths support the network but aren't current rights of way.
- The Cycling and walking Strategy is one of eight strategies within the Partnership Management Plan. The strategy is a framework for making decisions but firm priorities will be set by the resulting corporate plan and the budget.
- Linkage between each of the 8 strategies is extremely important.

43. Daniel Humphreys left the meeting

44. Ken Bodfish proposed an Amendment to the Officer Recommendation and this was seconded by Sebastian Anstruther. The amendment proposed was that the Committee noted the report and further consideration be given to the Cycling and Walking Strategy to identify the priorities

prior to the committee considering any recommendation for endorsement or approval of the Cycling and Walking strategy to the NPA.

45. Upon a vote the amendment was carried.

46. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report and further consideration be given to the Cycling and Walking Strategy to identify the priorities prior to the committee considering any recommendation for endorsement or approval of the Cycling and Walking strategy to the NPA.

## **ITEM 17: FUTURE OF FARMING WITHIN THE SOUTH DOWNS**

47. The Committee Considered the Report (PR0817) by the Director of Policy and Countryside Management.

48. The Committee was updated by the Authority Chair on the following:

- Central Government will be producing a 25 year plan which will bring together both farming and the environment.
- The Agriculture Bill mentioned in the Queens Speech is the new scheme post CAP and it is currently unknown whether this will be a substantive or enabling bill.
- Minister Gove agrees that the Future of Farming Paper is on the right lines and would like the officials at DEFRA to engage with Members of the Future of Farming Group.
- The NPE Future of Farming Task and Finish Group has been reconvened as and when it is needed.

49. The Committee commented:

- If the UK didn't leave Europe there is still a risk as the EU is reviewing the current CAP

50. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

1. Noted the progress being made by National Parks England with regard to the future of farming and the development of new agri-environment schemes within the England's National Parks post the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit)
2. Noted the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority in engaging farm clusters to build the case for a pitch to Defra for a pilot scheme to be tested here.

## **GRANTS & PROJECTS**

### **ITEM 18: PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT**

51. The Report PR09/17 was presented by Performance and Projects Manager and Learning, Outreach and Volunteering Lead.

52. The Committee commented that:

- Good to be able to listen to the project on a BBC podcast.
- The launch was excellent.

53. In response to questions Officers clarified that:

- The total project cost was £14,000.
- Project recommendations were scrutinized by OMT before being fed back into Committee and onto the improvement plan.
- The Committee are able to suggest further recommendations
- The books currently are available in lots of book shops

54. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee

1. Received the project evaluation
2. Endorsed the recommendation for learning at paragraph 3.1.

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 16:40

