

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee**

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 27 FEBRUARY 2018**

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

Present: Sebastian Anstruther (Chair), Tim Burr, Janet Duncton, Mark Dunn, Daniel Humphreys, Helen Jackson, and Russell Oppenheimer.

Ex-officio Members: Margaret Paren and Norman Dingemans

Other SDNPA Members: Barbara Holyome

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: Kathleen Downes (Internal Auditor), Tom Wilkins (External Auditor), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Projects and Performance Officer), Andy Beattie (Countryside and Policy Manager)

**OPENING REMARKS**

181. The Chair opened the meeting

182. 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 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**

183. Apologies were received from Ken Bodfish, Jo Carr, Chris Dowling, Lewis Doyle, Philip Ede, Carole Nicholson, Sue Saville and Pete West

**ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

184. There were no declarations of interest.

**ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2017**

185. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 21 November 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING**

186. A change of management at the Weald & Downland Museum has resulted in reduced pressure for SDNPA to relocate the Central Downs Area Office, however all options are still be considered.

187. The new temporary Eastern Area Office at the Sussex Innovation Centre had worked well. Brighton and Hove City Council has approved the works to the Waste Depot at Stanmer Park and this should be ready for the Eastern Area team to move into before the contract at the Sussex Innovation Centre expires in September 2018.

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee**

188. Work on developing the new Corporate Plan 2019-2024 has begun, it will be aligned with the new revised Partnership Management Plan. The emerging Corporate Plan will be reported to the next Policy and Resources Committee.

**ITEM 5: URGENT MATTERS**

189. There were none

**ITEM 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

190. There were no members of the public who had requested to speak.

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

191. **RESOLVED:** It was resolved that the Committee would move into Part II for Item 18 and exclude any members of the public and press at the meeting at that time.
192. Daniel Humphries joined the meeting.

**AUDIT**

**ITEM 8: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 2017/18XXX**

193. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR01/18.
194. The Committee commented that:
- It would be helpful to have a review of all grants given by the SDNPA once a year.
195. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- All grants given by the SDNPA are time limited.
  - SDNPA have full membership of the Rural West Sussex Partnership. Currently, there is an issue around funding, SDNPA have confirmed their funding of £10,000 for a further one year and have considered being the contracting partner.
  - National Parks Partnership business plan has identified that they will run out of money in June 2018 and have asked all National Parks for a further £10,000 contribution, this would be discussed at the next NPA meeting.
196. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee
1. Noted the 2017/18 revenue forecast position of £63,000 underspend variance as at Quarter 3 2017/18
  2. Noted the 2017/18 capital forecast position of zero variance as at Quarter 3 2017/18
  3. Noted the current Treasury Management overview and position.

**ITEM 9: TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENTS AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2018/19**

197. The Principal Account introduced report PR02/18.
198. The Committee commented:
- Further information should be provided to the NPA and if considered necessary a report should be made to a future Policy and Resources Committee describing why the risk factor is 0.05% and the implications of this, what other Local Authorities and National Parks do and the legal context around this risk factor.
  - The strategy does not reflect the risk that inflation will continue to go up. There could be the case that a higher percentage of capital should be put at risk to get a better return.
  - Whether the Authority's investments should be described as "in" BHCC or "with" BHCC?

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee**

- Whether, if BHCC in allowing The Authority to co-invest with them, BHCC were providing a collective investment scheme, and if so whether they had the necessary authorisation from the Financial Conduct Authority?
199. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The proposed budget for investment income in 2018/19 is £40,000, this may increase for future years.
  - The Enterprise and Investment Group could look at how to make best use of assets.
  - It was confirmed that SDNPA invest its funds in BHCC. SDNPA reserves are under £10 million and is therefore restricted in where it can invest. BHCC make investments in their own name
200. A previous report will be circulated on how SDNPA invests its funds by the Business Services Manager and further information will be provided to the NPA.
201. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee recommended that:
1. The Authority approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement 2018/19 and the Treasury Management Practices 2018/19 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to this report;
  2. The Authority approve the Annual Investment Strategy 2018/19, including the benchmark risk factor of 0.05%, as set out in Appendix 3 to this report

**ITEM 10: INTERNAL AUDIT – PROGRESS REPORT**

202. The Internal Auditor introduced report PR03/18
203. The Committee commented that:
- Further clarification of the acronym SIEM to be circulated.
204. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Individual risk rating is high, medium or low. Previously actions have been classified as high priority recommendations.
  - The outstanding balances from Local Planning Authorities is a historic problem with the councils being behind on reconciliation. This should improve with the new system of paying per application which will allow SDNPA to recover the monies.
  - The Business Continuity Plan is tested every year.
  - The new project manager is now in post and will support project managers on large projects and provide project management training as and when necessary. Currently existing staff have had project management training and courses are available through the online training programme 'ELMS'.
  - Action R9 on cyber security has been completed and no staff are now able to access webmail browsers from their desk tops.
  - The initiative to encourage and facilitate disabled access within the South Downs National Park is the 'Miles without Stiles' project.
205. **RESOLVED:** The Committee noted progress against the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan (2017/18) and the implementation of recommendations previously made.

**ITEM 11: EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2017/18**

206. The External Auditor introduced report PR04/18.
207. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The cost of receiving specialist advice is included within the proposed fee of £14,058.
208. **RESOLVED:** The Committee approved the 2017/18 Audit Plan

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee**

**ITEM 12: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

209. The Head of Governance introduced report PR05/18.
210. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The arrows indicate the perceived direction of travel.
  - SDNPA Officers have assurance about the Authority's funding until 2019/20, which is why the direction of travel is increasing for Risk 2 on Finance and Budgets.
  - Risk 6 will be re-scored with the new information known.
  - The risk register presented to committee is the top risks to the SDNPA and every team project has its own risk register which is used and updated regularly.
211. **RESOLVED** The Committee noted the Corporate Risk Register as at February 2018.

**PERFORMANCE & PROCEDURES**

**ITEM 13: Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017-18**

212. The Performance and Project Manager and The Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager introduced report PR06/18 and gave a short [presentation](#).
213. The Committee commented that:
- It would be helpful for members to know what the outputs of the Green Infrastructure work will be.
  - It is hoped that if the Big Chalk project is not going ahead any smaller projects that come out of it take a strategic and not a piecemeal approach.
  - The planning performance trend data presented to the Committee was extremely helpful and should continue to be reported quarterly to the Committee.
214. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Additional resources for Partnership Management Plan review were not currently needed. The Senior Management Team are satisfied that sufficient progress had been made and the switch in the way the work will be progressed means that there is capacity to stay on track and not affect the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan.
  - The Green Infrastructure framework has taken a different approach than when it first started. Work will focus on different elements including natural capital and, ecosystem services, with both ourselves and partners. The Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership have also indicated that this work will be a strategic priority for their next economic plan. Work will be restarted and may well need additional resource.
  - The Green Infrastructure work underpins the Partnership Management Plan and the work will be reported to the Partnership Management Plan Task and Finish Group.
  - In relation to performance on planning appeals Host Authority performance is monitored with their results being similar to those- of SDNPA.
215. **RESOLVED:** The Committee:
- I. Received the Quarter 3 performance report

**STRATEGY**

**ITEM 14: AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

216. Mark Dunn gave the Committee a verbal update on the work of the Task and Finish Group and reported the following to the Committee:
- Expert advice had been taken from Professor Peter Roberts OBE, a housing expert.
  - The importance of securing an increase in affordable housing across the National Park.

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee**

- That the Authority's available Section 106 money is not sufficient for the Authority to directly provide affordable housing itself
  - That the Group are considering whether major financial institutions would be interested in funding affordable housing provision.
217. The Committee commented that:
- An outside body report on Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing (HARAH) would be reported to the next NPA.
218. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The next Task and Finish Group would be held on 20 March 2018.
219. **RESOLVED:** The Committee noted the verbal update.

**ITEM 15: PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE**

220. Helen Jackson gave the Committee a verbal update on the work of the Partnership Management Plan Task and Finish Group and reported to the following:
- The first meeting covered the background work already completed due to the task and finish group being established part way through the Partnership Management Plan review.
  - Staff and partners had already agreed the bulk of Partnership Management Plan was sound and needed minimal revision. The task and finish group's critical role was to ensure that there was a clear, accessible and engaging document produced which contained an executive summary and a shared delivery plan that partners could easily engage with and be part of.
  - There is a proposal to revise the group's Terms of Reference, which will be reported the next NPA for agreement.
  - Meetings are planned regularly throughout 2018, and are open for all members to attend. The aim is to produce the draft Partnership Management Plan 2019-24 within this timeframe.
221. **RESOLVED:** The Committee noted the verbal report.

**ITEM 16: AGRI ENVIRONMENT PILOT SCHEME**

The Director of Countryside and Policy Management gave the Committee a verbal update and reported the following:

- DEFRA asked for expressions of interest on Agri Environment Pilot scheme to be submitted by the end of February. Expert advice had been sought from Paul Silcock of Cumulus Consultants.
- The draft expression of interest contains the following 3 main elements:
  - SDNP has a unique and distinctive lowland mixed farming landscape. The pilot scheme would allow DEFRA to learn something different to other National Parks such as Exmoor, Lake District also submitting expression of interests.
  - DEFRA would have the opportunity to test out whether putting money into incentivising the farm clusters working together would be beneficial.
  - An 'app' to improve the application process for any landowner / farmer to use to manage their applications to any government body.
- If the expression of interest is approved, DEFRA will visit the SDNP to talk through the expression of interest in detail.

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee**

222. The Committee commented that:
- A short paper would be brought to the next NPA for member information.
223. **RESOLVED:** The Committee noted the update.

**GRANTS AND PROJECTS**

**ITEM 17: RESPONSE TO HIGHWAYS ENGLAND RE M3 JUNCTION**

224. The Countryside and Policy Manager introduced report PR07/18 and gave a short [presentation](#). It was reported that the following paragraph was missing from the draft response: 'The National Park would like to see a fully costed and mitigated compensation package proposed from Highways England to accompany the preferred route. The package would deliver benefits on a landscape scale and reconnect Winchester to the National Park for both people and wildlife'
225. The Committee commented that:
- A covering letter should be sent to Highways England setting out that SDNPA objects to the road proposals that we have seen to date on the basis of the limited information available. The letter should emphasise that the SDNPA would like to see mitigation and compensation clearly identified and should these be demonstrated adequately the objection could be reconsidered.
  - The letter should also object in principle to the siting of the depot within the SDNP
  - Highways England have not confirmed what would happen to the depot once the scheme has been completed
  - The recommendations were reworded to those below
226. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The draft response will include information on lighting in relation to Dark Night Skies and clarification of what is meant by 'land parcels'.
  - When the scheme is commented on by SDNPA it will state that all temporary accommodation should be removed from the site and the land returned to an agreed state, the examiner will then consider this when making the decision on the infrastructure project. If any subsequent planning applications are submitted changing the use of the land SDNPA will consider these as part of the planning process.
227. It was proposed and seconded to amalgamate recommendation 3 and 4 and add the wording 'and amended to include a request that'
228. **RESOLVED:** The Committee:
1. Noted the proposed scheme for M3 Junction 9.
  2. Noted the impacts on the Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park.
  3. Approved the draft Response to Highways England to be considered by the NPA and amended to include a request that Highways England produce a fully costed scheme of mitigation and compensation before selecting the preferred route and going to formal consultation to allow for proper consideration.
  4. Endorsed officers continued working with HE to ensure HE's nationally designated funds are utilised for maximum benefit locally.
  5. 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.

**Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee**

**ITEM 18: ENTERPRISE AND INVESTMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE**

229. The Committee considered whether, in respect of Agenda Item 18 the public, including the press, should be excluded from the meeting on the basis that it is likely, 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 individuals, companies and other organisations, 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. This conclusion was reached on the basis that whilst there is a public interest in maintaining transparency of Authority proceedings in relation to commercial activities it is felt that on balance this is outweighed by the requirement of the National Park Authority to be able to discuss commercial activities and fully consider the implications of its actions or proposed actions without commercially sensitive information being released into the public domain.
230. The Head of Business Services gave a verbal update on the work to date of the Enterprise and Investment Task and Finish Group.
231. **RESOLVED:** The Committee noted the verbal update.
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**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 13:05

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