

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

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 24 MAY 2018

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 12:05pm.

Present: Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish (Chair), Tim Burr, Jo Carr, Chris Dowling, Janet Duncton, Mark Dunn, Philip Ede, Daniel Humphreys, Helen Jackson, Russell Oppenheimer 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, Neville Harrison and Barbara Holyome.

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

Also Attended by: Chris Paterson (Communities Lead), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager), Professor Peter Roberts (Independent Housing Expert), James Winkworth (Head of Income Generation and Marketing), Mark Rose (Funding Coordinator) and Amanda Elms (Learning Outreach and Volunteering Lead).

OPENING REMARKS

305. The Chair opened the meeting.

306. 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 had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthered the National Park Purposes and Duty. Members regarded themselves first and foremost as Members of the Authority, and would 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

307. There were no apologies for absence.

ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

308. Jo Carr declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 13 as a Member of South Downs National Park Trust.

309. Helen Jackson declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 13 as a Member of South Downs National Park Trust.

310. Sebastian Anstruther declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 as a landowner in the National Park with a potential housing site.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 MARCH 2018

311. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 29 March 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING

312. There were none.

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ITEM 5: URGENT MATTERS

313. There were none.

ITEM 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

314. Bob Fewings on behalf of Newton Valence Parish Council addressed the Committee with regards to the Newton Valence Parish Plan.

ITEM 7: NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

315. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved not to move into Part II for agenda Item 17 and it was agreed that the Part II minutes of the 29 March 2018 were a correct record and signed by the Chair.

316. Margaret Paren and Janet Duncton joined the meeting.

STRATEGY

ITEM 8: NEWTON VALENCE PARISH PLAN

317. The Communities Lead introduced report PR19/18 and gave a presentation.

318. The Committee commented that:

- The Newton Valence Parish Plan was an excellent plan.
- Some of the Parishes within the National Park were split and it may be useful to also invite Resident Associations to the Parish Workshops.
- A Parish Plan would not take precedent over a Whole Estate Plan.

319. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- 2 sections within the Parish Toolkit, Village Design Statements & Local Landscape Characteristics, had been updated. The toolkit was in a ring binder to make it easy and cost effective to update individual sections.
- Newton Valence was classified as open countryside within the Settlement Facilities Study.
- The Writers Way passed close to but not through Newton Valence.
- It was difficult for the SDNPA to have a presence in each of the 176 parishes within the National Park but uptake to the Parishes workshops was high. The newsletter was sent to each of the Parishes.
- The Parish Plan was already a material consideration in the determination of a Planning Application and no additional weight is added to this consideration if it is endorsed.

320. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to endorse the Newton Valence Parish Plan.

ITEM 9: AFFORDABLE HOUSING – RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

321. The Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager introduced Professor Peter Roberts OBE, an independent Housing expert who had worked with the Task and Finish Group. The Major Planning Project and Performance Manager introduced report PR20/18 and gave a presentation.

322. Professor Peter Roberts OBE explained to the committee how the Task and Finish Group reached the recommendations and made the following points:

- SDNPA had the opportunity to be a field leader in delivering genuine affordable housing that met the need of local people.
- Housing should be socially affordable in perpetuity with restrictive covenants. Affordable rent housing was normally 80% of the market rent. Social housing was normally 40-60% of market rent.
- 'Right to Buy' social housing should be avoided as it is not affordable in perpetuity.
- Supports officers that direct delivery would not be cost effective for the Authority.
- Range of activities that SDNPA could enable such as working with existing housing associations and building community self-build projects into Neighbourhood

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- Development Plans and Parish Plans.
- SDNPA had, potentially, the opportunity to be involved as a Pilot in a Rural Land Bank scheme currently being considered by Government.
323. The Committee commented that:
- The recommendations presented were a sensible way to proceed.
 - Currently it was not sensible for the Authority to engage in direct delivery but this should not be excluded if an opportunity arose in the future.
 - Housing should be available and affordable to young people as in many cases young people could not afford to live in the village in which they were raised.
 - SDNPA was not a housing authority and therefore SDNPA's role is to facilitate other organisations to supply affordable housing faster.
 - Affordable housing in rural communities should be provided in perpetuity and not be available for Right to Buy.
 - Landowners were not just private owners, other sources could be MOD, church or Local Authorities amongst others.
 - South Downs National Park Trust could be involved in the fund raising?
 - If private sector funding was available it should be made use of.
324. In response to questions Professor Peter Roberts clarified that:
- Criteria should be set up to ideally deliver social rent housing but if not affordable rent housing.
 - The protection of housing as permanently affordable could be ensured through the planning system and legal covenants (albeit the effectiveness of such covenants is still being tested).
 - Modern methods of construction to fit with character of local communities would reduce the cost per unit.
 - A range of initiatives and providers would be needed as there was no one size that would fit all 176 communities within the SDNP.
325. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The Chief Executive was joint Chair of the Rural Housing Network and had received an invitation to meet with Ministers to develop the Rural Land Bank proposal that was in the Government's 25 year Environment Plan.
 - SDNPA could have a role with government support to make land available for others to build the houses.
 - Housing was concerned with the sustainability of the communities that make up the SDNP.
 - There would be a range of tenures within each scheme.
 - SDNPA had a unique selling point that it was the Planning Authority and was able to be proactive in helping landowners consider suitable sites for affordable housing.
326. **RESOLVED:** The Committee considered the recommendations arising from the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group and agreed that the recommendations would be reported to NPA for approval and subsequent implementation.
327. The Committee broke for lunch at 1:25pm and returned at 1:45pm.
328. Philip Ede, Pete West and Heather Baker left the meeting.

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AUDIT

ITEM 10: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN AND BUDGET CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 201/18

329. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR21/18.

330. The Committee commented that:

- A high percentage of the budget had not been spent, would this make spending the entire budget for the current financial year difficult?
- Concern about the health and well-being of staff due to a large underspend in the staffing budget.
- Many of the cost savings had been due to efficiencies within the organisation and it would be helpful for these to be reported to Members.
- As an Authority should we be more risk adverse?
- The increase in the Estates Management Reserve was welcomed to support the health and wellbeing of staff.

331. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Carry forwards were only for existing projects that had been started and not completed. SMT assesses all carry forward requests and only approved approximately 1/3 of all requests submitted.
- The full quota of staff were budgeted for each year but as in every organisation there was turnover. The turnover rate for SDNPA was 11% which was below that of the 12.3% public sector average. The main reason staff chose to leave was for promotion. A staff survey would be conducted in September 2018.
- Efficiencies within the Corporate Services budget had saved approximately £58,000 on insurance and £45,000 on IT costs.
- The SCF was currently allocating more money into projects than SDNPA was putting into the budget.
- The gateway signage had been delayed due to the signs not being of standard specification and the passive safety of the signs needing to be approved. Installation would begin in autumn 2018.
- The carry forward on Neighbourhood Planning income would become ring fenced funds with a separate business unit created. The money would support Parishes within the National Park.
- The majority of the £438k underspend was made up of the efficiency savings, £128k saving within the planning delegated agreements and £82k due to 20% planning fee increase.
- The Farming Officer had been appointed.
- SDNPA reserves were small compared to other National Parks.

332. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to:

- 1) Note the provisional revenue outturn position of net £486,000 below budget variance for the 2017/18 financial year.
- 2) Approve the revenue budget carry forward requests from 2017/18 to 2018/19 of £839,000 as set out in Appendix 2.
- 3) Approve the capital budget variation of £139,000 to carry forward the unspent budget for the signage project.
- 4) Note the provisional capital outturn position of zero variance for the 2017/18 financial year.
- 5) Note the contributions to reserves as set out in the report and implications for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

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- 6) Note the current Treasury Management overview and position.

ITEM 11: INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT AND OPINION FOR 2017/18

333. The Internal Auditor introduced report PR22/18.
334. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- An audit of purchase cards would be part of the scheduled audit of creditors.
335. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to note the content of the report, specifically:
- 1) The Internal Audit Annual Report; and
 - 2) The Internal Audit Opinion for 2017/18.

ITEM 12: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND UPDATED LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

336. The Head of Governance introduced report PR23/18.
337. The Committee commented that:
- It would like to see more detailed information on the Authority's communication work reported.
338. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Additional information on the monthly newsletter with regards to the distribution and effectiveness could be added.
 - Wording regarding the PMP Task and Finish Group (T&FG) could be amended to reflect the group's Terms of Reference.
339. **RESOLVED** The Committee resolved to:
- 1) Approve the as amended Annual Governance Statement for 2017-18 to accompany the Authority's Statement of Accounts; and
 - 2) Note the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance.

PERFORMANCE & PROCEDURES

ITEM 13: FRAMEWORK FOR THE REVIEW OF THE PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN

340. The Performance and Projects Manager introduced report PR24/18.
341. Member Helen Jackson, Chair of the PMP T&FG, explained that the extended timeline of the PMP review allowed for better engagement and that all members of the Authority were welcome to attend the next meeting on 30 July 2018.
342. The Director of Countryside and Policy Management gave a presentation on the Communications Strategy for the PMP Review.
343. The Committee commented that:
- People like visuals and stories about achievements, a toolkit for members with this information might be useful for when members were giving talks.
 - Road signs would raise the profile.
 - The revised PMP should be short, clear and accessible. It should be easy to communicate with and identify what the key issues were.
344. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The Columbia advertising of a '24 hours in the South Downs with Columbia' had 200k views and was worth approximately £100k to the SDNPA.
 - The Communications and Engagement Strategy would be reviewed and report back to a future Committee.

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345. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to:
- 1) Agree the revised timescale and approach for the review of the Partnership Management Plan as set out in paragraph 3.5, Appendix 3, Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 and recommended these for endorsement by the National Park Authority at its next meeting.
 - 2) Recommend that the National Park Authority agree the proposed changes to the PMP Outcomes and Policies, as set out in Appendix 1.

346. Daniel Humphreys and Chris Dowling left the meeting.

ITEM 14: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

347. The Head of Governance introduced report PR25/18.

348. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The information with regards to the owner of Risk 12 would be updated for future reports.
- The arrows were an assumption at the direction of travel of the risk, a horizontal line meant that it was currently static.

349. **RESOLVED** The Committee resolved to note the Corporate Risk Register as at May 2018.

GRANTS & PROJECTS

ITEM 15: OPTIONS PAPER FOR THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND

350. The Head of Income Generation and Marketing introduced report PR26/18 and updated the Committee that there was an error within schedule 1 of the MOU, it should have read £120k over 6 years and not £100k over 5 years.

351. The Head of Income Generation and Marketing gave a presentation.

352. The Committee commented that:

- Member Doug Jones, Chair of the SCF Panel was consulted on the proposals and was supportive that a secure long term future should be found for the SCF fund, in response to his consultation he made 4 main points:
 - The SCF fund should continue to exist.
 - The fund should continue to support small projects.
 - SDNPA should continue to be recognised for the work of the SCF.
 - SDNPA members should be continue to be part of the decision making board.
- Option 3 of working with the Trust to build an endowment allowed for the SCF Panel Chair's points to be addressed as well as the opportunity for raising the SDNPA and Trust profiles and new ways of delivering the PMP to come forward.
- The Trust should remain independent from SDNPA and it should be clear what SDNPA were paying for.
- Rather than an MOU there could be a paragraph or sentence regarding dispute resolution.
- The future report to NPA should contain:
 - The table of figures presented in the presentation.
 - Explanation of the investment performance of the fund with minimum and maximum funds displayed.
 - Assumptions used that underpinned the numbers.
 - Further information regarding the opportunity costs of the fundraising co-ordinator position.
- Tax position of Option 3 should be explored as to whether there would be any benefits.
- The small, localised focus and projects should remain.

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353. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- There was confidence that the 5% endowment increase could be sought. The Treasurer of the Trust, a Regional Director at Rathbones and an Investment Banker, revised the original 7% figure to 5% to be confident it could be achieved.
 - The Trust had broken down the areas it wanted to work and one of those areas was with small community groups, option 3 would allow this to happen. The SCF fund would remain grassroots focused and would be separate from large projects which would raise their own individual funds.
 - Match funding wasn't included in the report because this income didn't currently and wouldn't come to the SCF.
 - The brand incorporated the shared identity and would not be a new brand.
 - If Option 3 was approved, the next steps would be to set up an Investment committee within the Trust and consider who to invest with.
 - Donations received to the SCF could not currently have gift aid reclaimed, with the Trust administering the SCF gift aid would be able to be reclaimed.
 - The fund was tax neutral and this would not change whether the Trust administered the fund.
 - The MOU had been considered with lawyers and a subsequent meeting would be arranged to discuss state aid and the Charity Commission.
 - The risk tolerance of 0.05% for the Authority was lower than that proposed by the Trust because charities tended to have a higher risk tolerance than a public body.
 - A new organisation was not being established, the SCF would be a ring fenced fund within the current Trust.
354. The Committee debated whether further proposals should be brought back to a future P&R Committee or be submitted directly to the Authority. It was felt that the sums of money under discussion were not a major risk to the Authority and work should begin on income generation.
355. A revised recommendation was proposed and agreed.
356. **RESOLVED** : The Committee resolved to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to further develop, in conjunction with the South Downs National Park Trust, the necessary agreements required to establish an endowment and bring these back to the Authority for final agreement in due course.

ITEM 16: MID PROJECTS UPDATE – TRULEIGH HILL YHA

357. The Performance and Projects Manager introduced report PR27/18 and explained that there were 2 projects relating to Truleigh Hill – the YHA about education and interpretation and the landscape project.
358. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Truleigh Hill was a gateway site in the East of the South Downs, north of Shoreham.
 - A volunteer group had been established which includes young people.
359. **RESOLVED** The Committee resolved to receive the mid project update and note the progress on the Truleigh Hill YHA Project.
360. Independent Member, Lewis Doyle was thanked for his valued contribution to the SDNPA for the past 8 years.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 3:50pm

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