

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	22 November 2018
By	Head of Business Services
Title of Report (Note)	Area Office and Estates Update

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to note the current and proposed activity in relation to Area Office accommodation

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The South Downs Centre represents a suitable headquarters for SDNPA, both in terms of the public face and working accommodation for Officers and Members of the Authority. The priority now in terms of developing our Estate is to have similarly suitable accommodation in place for each of the four Area Teams.
- 1.2 This in some ways has been a more complex exercise than the headquarters building as it encompasses a need for office accommodation, workshop facilities, suitable storage, facilities for volunteers, and parking for the vehicles.
- 1.3 The aim is to have the Area Teams housed in accommodation that is similar in standard to that provided by the South Downs Centre, but is also within a building that reflects the values of the Authority. It is accepted that meeting all the criteria may take some time and, therefore putting Area Team accommodation first, interim solutions have to be found.

2. Western Area

- 2.1 The Western Area Team occupied temporary office space at Empshott, after vacating the office at Queen Elizabeth Country Park. Operations there were complicated by the workshop, storage and volunteers all remaining at QECP.
- 2.2 In July 2018 the lease on the Empshott office came to an end and the team relocated to offices at Wallops Wood, near Droxford. The offices are serviced as part of a wider business hub and provide good quality accommodation for the Area Team. SDNPA has taken out a five year lease on those offices, to allow sufficient time to find a more permanent home that meets more of our aspirations.
- 2.3 In October 2018, the workshops and storage from QECP also moved to workshop accommodation within the Wallops Wood complex and the volunteers are now re-located there.

3. Wealden Area

- 3.1 This Wealden Area Team are currently housed in Midhurst Depot. The site is currently earmarked for development and SDNPA only have a short lease on the premises.
- 3.2 More suitable premises that will meet all of the Area Team's needs have been identified at Heath Barn Farm on the A272 Petersfield Road. The site is owned by the National Trust and is currently in poor interior condition. SDNPA are in the process of negotiating terms with the National Trust, on the basis that the SDNPA funds the refurbishment of the

interior to SDNPA standards and recovers the cost of this through a reduced rental over the term of the lease.

4. Central Area

- 4.1 The Central Area Team are currently based at the Weald and Downland museum. With the opening of the new visitor centre, an opportunity arose for a move to more suitable accommodation above the previous visitor centre. The Area Team will move to this new office in November. The workshops remain where they are.
- 4.2 This is still seen as a temporary solution, although one providing much more suitable office accommodation for the Area Team, and work will continue to find a permanent site within the Central Area

5. Eastern Area

- 5.1 For the past year the Eastern Area Team have been based on a temporary basis at the Sussex Innovation Centre at the University of Sussex, while the workshops, storage and volunteers remained at Stanmer Park.
- 5.2 During that time, SDNPA negotiated shared use with Brighton and Hove City Council of the workshop at Stanmer. This involved a complete refurbishment of the building to provide good quality office accommodation. SDNPA will pay a pro-rata share of the refurbishment works, in lieu of five years rental payments.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	There is no decision to be made by any other Committee but a decision will need to be made on the capital funds for the refurbishment of Heath Barn Farm.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	Up until now, Area Teams have been accommodated in premises obtained by SDNPA during the set-up period. In most cases this involved a below market or peppercorn rent, but also involved SDNPA Area Teams occupying premises that were sub-standard. Moving to suitable premises involves paying the market rate and this will have an overall impact on the 2019/2020 property budget of £33,000
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	This is an essential operational spend to provide appropriate accommodation for SDNPA staff.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No, not at this stage, although there may be some opportunities to derive social value from future refurbishment contracts.
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes, improving access to the Area Offices is an important consideration for SDNPA
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None arising directly from this report
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	Yes, the accommodation provided is far more suitable from a Health and Safety perspective.

Are there any Data Protection implications?	No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy: I.	No

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SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services,
External Consultees None

