

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 28 FEBRUARY 2018

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

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

Independent Members of the Committee: Tom Fourcade and Carole Nicholson.

Ex-officio Members: Margaret Paren and Norman Dingemans.

Other SDNPA Members: Neville Harrison and 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: Vicki Colwell (Major Planning Projects Officer), Sarah Nelson (Strategic Planning Lead), Nick Heasman (Countryside and Policy Manager), Kathleen Downes (Internal Auditor), Darren Wells (External Auditor), Liz Gent (Project Management Officer) and Alister Linton-Crook (Cycling Project Officer).

OPENING REMARKS

147. The Chair opened the meeting.

148. 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 fulfils 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

149. Apologies were received from Sebastian Anstruther, Jo Carr, Mark Dunn and Graham Morrison.

ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

150. Chris Dowling declared a Public Services interest in Agenda Item 15 as a member of East Sussex County Council.

151. Janet Duncton declared a Public Services interest in Agenda Item 14 as a member of West Sussex County Council.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2018

152. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 22 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

- Minute 110, 3rd bullet add the word 'establish' into the sentence so that it reads '*Further research was needed to establish the importance of scrub as an ecosystem*'.

ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING

153. In response to questions asked the Committee were informed that:
- The Eastern Area team offices were now within the Long Barn and had accommodation for the next 5 years. With regards to the Parks for People project at Stanmer Park, stage 1 was now well underway and stage 2 was not quite so far advanced. The Senior Management Team would be discussing the future of the Long Barn in the context of Stage 2 of the project with Brighton and Hove City Council.
 - There were still some delays around the Rampion Project due to the collapse of Carillion but it was expected that the delays would be caught up.

ITEM 5: URGENT MATTERS

154. There were none

ITEM 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

155. The Committee was advised that there was 1 public speaker, Alex Barron Chief Executive of West Dean College.

STRATEGY

ITEM 14: WEST DEAN WHOLE ESTATE PLAN

156. Pete West joined the meeting.
157. Alex Barron addressed the committee as the Chief Executive of West Dean College.
158. The Strategic Planning Lead introduced report PR08/19 on behalf of the Major Planning Projects Officer and reminded members of what a Whole Estate Plan is and the report content.
159. The Committee agreed to waive Public Speaking requirements set out in Standing Orders and allow Alex Barron Chief Executive of West Dean College to answer direct questions from the Committee.
160. The Committee commented that:
- The West Dean Whole Estate Plan was an exemplary document and excellent example of joining up cultural heritage. The plan set the bar very high for other estates to follow.
 - West Dean College is an important part of the South Downs National Park.
 - It would like to see the connection to the Centurion Way added to the Whole Estate Plan.
161. In Response to questions Alex Barron, Chief Executive of West Dean College clarified that:
- The Whole Estate Plan was part of the West Dean College Strategic Plan and progress against the plan is reported monthly to trustees.
 - West Dean College felt it was correct to include both actual actions and those that were aspirational.
 - The connection to the Centurion Way would be added to the Whole Estate Plan.
162. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- Officers would be monitoring the actions within all the endorsed Whole Estate Plans.
163. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee endorse the West Dean Whole Estate Plan.

AUDIT

ITEM 7: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2018/19: MONTH 9

164. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR01/19 and reminded members of the report content.
165. The Committee commented that:
- It would like a yearend report back to committee on efficiency measures.
 - Financial Regulations should be reviewed to ensure delegation levels were appropriate.
166. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The budget variances within the Countryside and Policy Management budget were within normal variances and the variances outlined within the Corporate Services budget would be included within future budgets and were not expected to increase.
 - The IT upgrades included £23,000 for a new HR IT system as the current system was not GDPR compliant. It also included £13,000 for a Committee Management system.
 - The efficiency savings on the new S101 contracts was due to the change in the system from paying Host Authorities a set fee to paying per application. A parachute payment was in place if the Host Authorities' income was to drop by over 10% in any year and this payment would then affect the surplus.
 - Phase 1 of the signage project would come to the end in March 2019 and a report would be brought back to Committee with the lessons learnt. Phase 2 of the project would be reported to the NPA.
 - The South Downs National Park Trust would be setting up a Volunteers Conservation Fund to hold the £29,000 balance within the Volunteer Ranger Service Reserve. The Trust would then be able to fundraise against the fund.
 - The creation of the Affordable Housing Reserve would contain the £80,000 un-spent budget. The budget was unspent due to work being completed in house and therefore little consultancy costs. The Affordable Housing Reserve would be grant funding for additional affordable homes.
 - The wording used against the descriptions of the Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy Reserves was reflecting the language used within Planning. Both allocations of funding should be used as close as possible to the development from which they had been generated.
167. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- Noted the 2018/19 revenue forecast position as at month 9.
 - Noted the decision to fund the contribution to the Parks for People project from service below budget variances.
 - Noted the 2018/19 capital forecast position as at month 9 and recommend that the National Park Authority ("the Authority") approve the new capital project request of a new vehicle.
 - Recommended that the Authority endorse the Committee's decisions made on 22 November 2018 to approve the new capital project requests of a Vehicle Replacement and a Scrub Management Machine.
 - Noted the reserves position as at month 9 and recommend that the Authority approves the creation of an Affordable Housing Reserve.
 - Noted the Treasury Management overview and position as at month 9.
168. Daniel Humphries left the meeting.

ITEM 8: TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENTS AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2019/20

169. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR02/19 and reminded members of its content.

170. The Committee commented that:
- In future this report should be jointly signed by the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Business Services.
 - Hampshire County Council gain a greater return on their investments without taking any increased risks.
 - The only asset that the Authority currently owns and could borrow against is the South Downs Centre.
 - In future it would be helpful if the ratings could be added to the table of schedule of counterparties and counterparty limits to make it clear.
 - It may be helpful to re-run the investment workshop.
171. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The Authority's annual investment strategy represents a standard public sector treasury policy.
 - SDNPA could not be compared to a County Council or other organisations as HMRC had greater restrictions on where SDNPA could invest its funds and therefore any benchmarking should be against other National Park Authorities.
172. A vote was taken and the resolution was passed.
173. Russell Oppenheimer asked for it to be minuted that he was not in support of the recommendation.
174. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- Recommended that the Authority approves the Treasury Management Policy Statement 2019/20 and the Treasury Management Practices 2019/20.
 - Recommended that the Authority approves the Annual Investment Strategy 2019/20, including the benchmark risk factor of 0.05%.

ITEM 9: INTERNAL AUDIT 2018/19 PROGRESS REPORT

175. The Internal Auditor introduced report PR03/19 and reminded members of the report content.
176. The Committee had a wide ranging discussion around the Governance Review and how the previous Governance and Policy and Programme Committees had amalgamated to become the Policy and Resources Committee. The Committee observed that a process had been established in that full audit reports would be circulated to the Committee Chairs, Deputies and Independent Members to allow adequate time and questions to be raised on the reports. The Committee were informed that by noting the report it would not stop the process of management action as a result of the audit.
177. The Committee commented that:
- It would be helpful to have an indication and reassurance within the report as to whether management had accepted the response or not.
 - There was a reputational risk to the Authority
178. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Management had agreed to implement all the actions
 - The Committee's Terms of Reference included conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit.
 - The Senior Management Team would work with the Internal Auditor to ensure that in future a higher percentage of management questionnaires were returned.
 - It had previously been agreed to move away from the terminology of 'recommendations' to 'agreed actions', as this better articulates the next stage.

- As a result of comments made by a Deputy Chair of the Committee, the Internal Auditor confirmed that the assurances given around payroll and creditors had been reviewed by the Internal Auditor's Manager concluded the same assurance level.
- The framework used to define the effectiveness of Public Sector Internal Audit would be circulated to the Committee with the Annual Report at a future committee.
- Expenses were paid through the payroll system and will not be paid unless they were authorised by a Manager. In some circumstances, such as when a car park ticket was not available, expenses were authorised without a receipt.

179. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted:

- Progress against the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan (2018/19); and
- The implementation of audit actions previously made.

ITEM 10: EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2018/19

180. The External Auditor introduced report PR04/19 and reminded Members of the report content.

181. The Committee commented that:

- SDNPA should not be in the same category as a District Council as Members were not elected to the Authority.

182. In response to questions Officers clarified that:

- The analysis of all leases and how they would be expressed in financial statements was being looked at by Brighton and Hove City Council.

183. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the 2018/19 Audit Plan, progress to date and audit scope.

PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES

ITEM 11: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

184. The Performance and Projects Manager introduced report PR05/19 and reminded Members of the content.

185. The Committee commented that:

- The new format was very clear and structured and easy to read across from the corporate plan however the key stats data column was not always completed and more information here on targets, milestones etc. would be welcomed.
- Some of the information assumes that Members had a certain understanding of the information, this isn't always the case and it would be helpful in future if significant work had been undertaken that a separate report was presented to Committee.

186. In response to questions Officers clarified that:

- More specific measures would be in place within the next Corporate Plan.
- The Heritage recording at North Street Quarter would begin once the demolition began which Officers hoped would be soon.
- 2 Members were part of the culture group and workshops were currently being held with the Volunteer Rangers to ensure that all parties were on-board with the culture of SDNPA.
- Full details of successes won't be all contained within the performance report.
- Full details would be reported back to the NPA but Officers were able to confirm that the Dark Night Skies festival had been extremely successful at engaging young people and families and had more than doubled its attendance figures from the previous year.
- Results of the Autumn Survey held with the Citizens Panel were currently being

analysed and there would be a feedback session for Members. The spring survey was currently being put together. The Panel was frequently refreshed and had provided some good feedback on the website and was currently testing the Local Plan interactive map. The work was ground breaking as the panel was selected from across the South East not just from within the National Park.

- Link Officers monitor what was happening with the Host Authorities and therefore if Host Authorities were not correctly applying Local Plan policies the Link Officer should be able identify this. Further information on planning performance monitoring would be presented to a future committee in the annual review of planning performance report.

187. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received the Quarter 3 performance report

188. Pete West and Neville Harrison left the meeting.

ITEM 12: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

189. The Head of Governance introduced report PR06/19 and reminded Members of the report content.

190. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the Corporate Risk Register as at February 2019.

ITEM 13: CORPORATE PLAN – SECOND BRIDGE YEAR 2019/20

191. The Performance and Project Manager introduced report PR07/19 and reminded Members of the report content.

192. The Committee commented that:

- They were pleased to see the addition of Dark Night Skies into the corporate plan.

193. Members agreed an amended recommendation to reflect that any further changes would be agreed by the Director of Countryside and Policy Management in consultation with the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee.

194. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

1. Noted the proposed priorities for the corporate plan for 2019-20 and recommended approval to the National Park Authority meeting in March 2019.
2. Agreed that any further changes required to the Corporate Plan prior to the NPA meeting, will be agreed by the Director of Countryside and Policy Management in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee.

STRATEGY

ITEM 15: ENTERPRISE AND INVESTMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE AND AMENDMENT TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

195. The Head of Business Services and Head of Governance introduced report PR09/19 and reminded Members of the report content.

196. The Committee commented that:

- The Task and Finish Group isn't achieving all its deliverables and appears to be reactive to situations. Lessons should be learnt when future Terms of Reference were written to ensure that the objectives and how all the work will be delivered were clear.

197. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Task and Finish Groups were established with a clear start and finish date. Once the work of Enterprise and Investment Task and Finish Group was finished by no later than the end of July 2019, if a future Task and Finish Group was needed to do further work

a new Task and Finish Group may be established with a new set of terms of reference.

198. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee agreed the updated Terms of Reference.

199. Carole Nicholson and Janet Duncton left the meeting.

GRANTS AND PROJECTS

ITEM 16: PROJECT MANAGEMENT UPDATE

200. The Project Management Officer introduced report PR10/19 and reminded Members of the report content and future training on the new project management system, Tableau, would be provided to members.

201. The Committee commented that:

- Clarification was needed on what constituted a project.

202. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- All projects should follow the same approach in order that they could be tracked consistently

203. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the progress to date.

ITEM 17: Q3 PROJECT UPDATE

204. The Project Management Officer introduced report PR11/19 and reminded Members of the report content.

205. The Committee commented that:

- The use of a map gives the perception that all projects were happening in one area of the South Downs National Park, and this isn't always the accurate perception.

206. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received and reviewed the Quarter 3 overview of SDNPA projects and the current budget position of the Strategic Fund.

ITEM 18: PROJECT EVALUATION – ACTIVE ACCESS

207. The Cycling Project Officer introduced report PR12/19, reminded Members of the report content and gave a presentation.

208. The Committee commented:

- Many people living in the local area were not aware that the project is happening. There could be opportunities for the voluntary sector to help with the marketing of the project to the target audiences.
- On the cost per participant and whether the partners SDNPA were working with were the correct partners.
- When measuring the successes of the projects it is important to consider not just the financial impacts but also the social impacts.

209. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Participants of the project were mainly from the local area.
- Walk and cycle leaders were being trained so that the work could continue once the project is finished.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the mid project update and noted progress on the Active Access Project.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 4pm

