

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 18 JULY 2019

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

Present: Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish (Chair), Helen Burton, Helen Jackson, Doug Jones, Michael Lunn, Henry Potter, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston and Richard Waring

Independent Members of the Committee: Carole Nicholson

Ex-officio Members: Margaret Paren and Ian Phillips

Other SDNPA Members: Barbara Holyome

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside Policy & Management), Janice Austin (Legal Advisor), 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: Liz Gent (Project Management Officer) and Andy Colon (External Auditor)

OPENING REMARKS

1. The Director of Countryside Policy & Management opened the meeting
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 had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthers 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

3. Apologies were received from Chris Dowling, Chris Henry, Russell Oppenheimer and Tom Fourcade

ITEM 2: ELECTION OF CHAIR

4. The Head of Governance reminded members at the Authority AGM on 2 July 2019 Members agreed that the Policy and Resources Committee at its July meeting could elect a Chair and Deputy Chair until the first meeting following the AGM in 2020 or choose a chair until the meeting of the committee on 26 September 2019. The Committee were also reminded that the Authority agreed that the relevant Standing Orders would be suspended for the July meeting to enable Policy and Resources Committee members to nominate themselves for the position of Chair and/or Deputy Chair at the meeting.
5. **RESOLVED:** It was proposed, seconded and agreed that the Committee elect a Chair and Deputy Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first meeting following the Authority AGM in 2020.
6. The Director of Policy and Countryside Management presided over the election process and members were invited to nominate themselves for the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first meeting following the Authority AGM in 2020 or their end of term

of Office, whichever was soonest.

7. Ken Bodfish was the only nomination.
8. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved that Ken Bodfish was appointed as Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first meeting after the AGM in 2020 or until his end of his appointment as a Secretary of State appointed Member, whichever ever maybe sooner.
9. Ken Bodfish took the Chair and gave a short acceptance speech.
10. Michael Lunn joined the meeting.

ITEM 3: ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

11. The Chair reminded Members that in May 2019 the Authority took a decision in accordance with Standing Order 8.3 of the Policy and Resources Committee that the Committee may appoint up to 2 Deputy Chairs of the Committee.
12. It was proposed and seconded that the Committee moved to appoint 2 Deputy Chairs of the Committee.
13. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee appoint 2 Deputy Chairs until the first meeting following the Authority AGM in 2020.
14. The election process was presided over by the Chair and members were invited to nominate themselves for the position of Deputy Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first meeting following the Authority AGM in 2020 or their end of term of Office, whichever maybe sooner.
15. Nominations were received from Sebastian Anstruther and Doug Jones who both gave a short speech to the committee.
16. **RESOLVED:** That Sebastian Anstruther and Doug Jones be appointed as Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee until the first Policy and Resources Committee meeting after the Authority AGM in 2020 or in the case of Sebastian Anstruther until the end of his appointment as a Secretary of State appointed member, whichever maybe sooner.
17. The Chair thanked previous Deputy Chair, Helen Jackson, for her time and the work she had put into the running of the Committee.

ITEM 4: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

18. Doug Jones declared a non-pecuniary personal interest in Agenda Item 15 as a trustee and director of Petersfield Museum.

ITEM 5: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 APRIL 2019 & 6 JUNE 2019

19. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 25 April 2019 were ratified as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
20. The minutes of the inquorate Policy and Resources Committee held on the 6 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. Officers confirmed that in relation to minute 248 a HR report would be brought back to a future Committee.

ITEM 6: MATTERS ARISING

21. The Chief Executive explained the background and updated Members on the interim findings response that been received in relation to the review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England, known as the Glover Review. The Chief Executive informed members that the full response would be the subject of future workshop or committee item for discussion.

22. In discussion Members made the following points:
- That many of the points made within the interim findings were broadly in line with the direction of travel in our PMP.
 - There is some concern that the status of National Parks could be confused and diluted, however the Chair pointed out that the SDNP was designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and there are no indications that this would be revisited

ITEM 7: URGENT MATTERS

23. There were none

ITEM 8: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

24. There were no public speakers

PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES

ITEM 9: YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

25. The Performance and Projects Manager introduced report PR19/20-01 and gave a presentation with an overview of how performance reporting was undertaken, explained the golden thread throughout and also reminded members of the report content.
26. The Committee commented that:
- The decrease in the average visitor stay from 4.3 to 4.1 nights could be related to Airbnb bookings which were not included in the data.
 - They would like to see actions and mitigations come out more strongly within the report.
 - It would be helpful if Members could work with their local parishes to get the shared identity placed on signage.
 - The planning figures contained within the report don't show extensions to the 8 week determination deadline and this could have a direct correlation to the number of compliments and complaints received within the Planning department.
 - New members should be approached to join the Culture Group.
 - Progress with the Green Infrastructure Framework seemed very slow and it was not clear what was being achieved on the ground
27. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- Members were right to be concerned that the percentage of Public Rights of Way (Prow) that were in easy to use or good condition had declined. Officers clarified that an element of the decline might be attributable to changes in data collection but there may be a genuine decline in standard. Officers were in talks with Hampshire County Council about piloting a joint approach to managing some of the key rights of way within the National Park.
 - It was important to be able to identify long term trends but the datasets available do not always allow this.
 - All National Parks were struggling with the data in relation to percentage of farmland that was managed under agri-environment or other schemes and were too seeing a decline due to the hiatus over the move from ELS and HLS to Countryside Stewardship.
 - The last visitor survey undertaken included questions on how people had booked their accommodation.
 - SDNPA was very proactive in its allocation of CIL funds. Parishes automatically receive 15% of the funds collected and if they have a Neighbourhood Development Plan this is increased to 25%. The remaining figure is split 60% to County Council projects and 40% to other projects. It has sometimes been difficult to get partners to come forward with eligible projects.

- On Green Infrastructure, progress was summarised. It was agreed that there had been several delays on publishing the document itself, largely due to the precedence of the Local Plan and the need to get Local Authorities more aligned with the framework. However, the first quarter of 2019/2020 had seen significant progress. The principles and framework have been adopted by the South East Protected Landscapes (AONBs), and work is underway on the ground via the Winchester Landscape Project, in the Arun Valley, at Truleigh Hill and on the Heritage Coast. Members asked that the website was updated and committee were kept informed about progress.
- SDNPA was the Planning Authority for the whole of the National Park. Some of the Local Authorities within the park deliver the Development Management service on SDNPA's behalf under a Section 101 Service Level Agreement. A full planning progress report would be reported to the October P&R Committee and as in previous years this will split out performance by the SDNPA itself and each of the Host Authorities. Members asked that this report includes enforcement performance, including how long applications take to be resolved, and if there were any targets.
- The figures don't show extensions to the 8 week determination deadline and this could relate to the number of compliments and complaints received within the Planning department.

28. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Received the year end performance report for consideration
 - 2) Received the Annual Review 2018-19 for consideration

AUDIT

ITEM 10: AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION

29. The Chair reported his dissatisfaction and explained to members that as the audit was not completed in time for the final statement of accounts to be sent to members in advance of the committee the committee will need to consider how it wished to approve the statement of accounts. The Chair informed the Committee that the deadline for approval was the 31 July, in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which also stated that approval by a committee cannot be done electronically cannot be delegated to an officer. Officers had suggested that an additional meeting be held on the 31 July, the day of the last PMP Task & Finish Group, with early indications identifying that such a meeting would be quorate.
30. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR19-20-02 and reminded members of the report content. The External Auditor explained that the outstanding issue was around net pension liability as recent case law relevant to public authority pensions meant that the figures for this had to be recalculated at a late stage. This may not have had a material consequence on the statement of accounts but still needed to be reflected in the figures. It was because this information was not available that the External Auditors were unable to sign their Audit Opinion and a final set of accounts be available.
31. The Committee commented that:
- As this was an issue over which the Authority had no control, could the accounts be approved subject to updating of the net pension liability?
 - Should the Letter of Representation be approved at this meeting as the Statement of Accounts was not yet complete?
32. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- It was not a satisfactory position that the audit was not completed on time and this had never happened previously. The accounts would however have to be signed off in entirety and not subject to updating of the net pension liability and needed to be signed

- off by the committee in order for the Authority to fulfil its legal obligations.
- The meeting on the 31 July was reliant on the accounts being finalised so that the statement of accounts could be sent to members in advance of the meeting.
- Approval of the Letter of Representation could be deferred to a meeting on 31 July.

33. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1) Noted the Commentary on the Statement of Accounts set out in Appendix 1;
- 2) Noted the current position with regard to the Statement of Accounts 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 2, and note these will be subject to changes following the completion of the external audit work
- 3) Noted the findings of the external auditor in their Audit Results Report elsewhere on this agenda.

ITEM 11: AUDIT RESULTS REPORT 18/19

34. The External Auditor introduced report PR19/20-03 reminded members of the report content and drew Member's attention to the key highlights within the report including the recommendation to management for a review of S106 and CIL agreements.

35. The Committee commented that:

- It would like a report to be brought to a future committee following up on the issues identified within the Audit findings in relation to S106 and CIL agreements including details of how monies were collected and how they were allocated.

36. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- New procedures had been implemented in relation to S106 and CIL agreements in response to the External Auditors findings.
- Expenditure of S106 funds is subject to a time limit after which developers can claw back, this does not apply to CIL funds.

37. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee considered the findings as set out in the 2018/19 Audit Results Report.

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

38. The Head of Governance introduced report PR19-20-04 and explained it had been reported at the last (inquorate) committee and that the Committee's comments had been taken into consideration.

39. The Committee commented that:

- The core principals could include a reference to having clear reports with outcomes and outputs clearly emphasised in the corporate plan and PMP.

40. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2018-19 to accompany the Authority's Statement of Accounts; and
- 2) Noted the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance

41. The Committee adjourned for a 5 minute break.

42. Isobel Thurston left the meeting.

PERFORMANCE & PROCEDURES

ITEM 13: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

43. The Head of Governance introduced report PR19/20-05 and reminded members of the report content.
44. The Committee commented that:
- There was ongoing uncertainty within farming industry which could have a detrimental effect on the landscape and asked Officers to review Risk 17 (Brexit transition) which it was felt was understated.
 - Does Risk 19 (Pensions Fund) need to be reviewed due to the impact of the Audit work?
 - The Seven Sisters income generation should have its own risk and not be contained within Risk 22 (income generation).
 - The Authority had a Climate Change Adaptation Plan, which is a statutory requirement from Defra and has now been integrated into the new PMP as advised by the department. Members asked that it now be reviewed taking into account growing national debate and fresh evidence, and that this review should include dialogue with neighbouring Local Authorities. It was felt that Climate Change should receive a stronger focus with SDNPA being exemplars and at the forefront.
 - The newly adopted Local Plan had a number of policies within it to help mitigate the effects of climate change.
45. In response to these and other questions officers clarified that:
- Risk 17 (Brexit Transition) had not been amended to date because the future is so unclear at this stage. When previously reviewing the risk both OMT and SMT had taken a pessimistic view which was why it was highly scored. Officers confirmed that Risk 17 would be reviewed in the light of national developments.
 - The Planning team had been at full capacity until recently. Recruitment and retention within the Planning Directorate was no longer a concern as it had been historically.
 - Hampshire County Council were now administering the West Sussex Pension scheme and there were others who would be possibly joining it in the near future.
 - A future workshop item could be on business continuity planning and organisational resilience. The Authority had strong plans in place which had been audited twice and received substantial assurance and would be happy to share the work with members.
 - A separate risk for the Glover Review would be developed once the final recommendations were reported.
 - Officers were working on an update of the climate change position statement, which sets out the areas of concern for the National Park and areas of influence for the SDNPA. This could be reported at a future workshop. The actions that the Authority was undertaking should be discussed by members but not reported on the risk register.
 - Climate Change actions were threaded throughout the original PMP and this approach, rather than separating it out as a single issue, had been taken in the new draft PMP.
46. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the Corporate Risk Register as at July 2019:

ITEM 14: QUARTER 4 PROJECT UPDATE

47. The Project Management Officer introduced report PR19/20-06 and reminded members of the report content using the project management system Tableau.
48. The Committee commented that:
- The Tableau system was very helpful and clearly shows the widespread distribution of projects across the whole National Park.
 - It would be helpful to show which PMP Outcomes projects were contributing to.

- It would be helpful to know whether delays (where evident) were caused by SDNPA or a partners delay.
- It would be helpful to also have a dashboard showing all the S106 and CIL projects.
- It would be helpful to have a future report on how the project system works, how projects were approved and how and when they were brought to the P&R Committee or NPA.

49. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Information on whether we are the lead or supporting partner can be included.
- The S106 and CIL dashboard could be produced in the future but this information is currently being put into a new reporting system.
- Tableau was not a mapping system, it was a data analytical system with the projects identified through the input of longitude and latitude data, but officers are actively looking at how we can develop a publicly accessible spatial view of our work.

50. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received and reviewed the Quarter 4 overview of SDNPA projects.

ITEM 15: ANNUAL REVIEW OF STRATEGIC FUND, PROJECTS, THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND AND RANGER PROJECT SUPPORT

51. The Project Management Officer introduced report PR19/20-07 and reminded members of the report content using the project management system Tableau.

52. Member questions and comments were discussed as part of agenda item 14 (PR19/20-06)

53. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Received the overview of project delivery and the year-end budget position of the Strategic Fund
- 2) Received the year-end position of the Sustainable Communities Fund and Ranger Project Support

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 1.15pm

