

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 28 NOVEMBER 2019**

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

Present: Ken Bodfish (Chair), Chris Dowling, Doug Jones, Russell Oppenheimer, Henry Potter, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston and Richard Waring

Independent Members of the Committee: Carole Nicholson

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside Policy & Management), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Steven Bedford (Principal Accountant), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Robin Parr (Head of Governance) and Catherine Sydenham (Committee Officer).

Also Attended by: Mark Dallen (Internal Auditor), Allison Thorpe (Access and Recreation Strategy Lead), Phillip Paulo (Truleigh Hill – Community Project Officer), Veronica Craddock (Infrastructure and Environment Strategy Lead), Ruth James (Communications and Engagement Manager), Tanya Hibberd (Performance and Research Lead), Liz Gent (Project Management Lead), Vicky Patterson (Head of HR) and Debbie Hartman (Head of HR)

**OPENING REMARKS**

111. The Chair opened the meeting
112. 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 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.
113. Reference was made to the recent South East Region Royal Town Planning Institute Award for the Local Plan that was presented to SDNPA for Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment, Officers and Members were congratulated for the collaborative working on the Local Plan.
114. **ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
115. Apologies were received from Sebastian Anstruther, Helen Burton, Helen Jackson, Tom Fourcade (Independent Member of the Committee), Margaret Paren (Ex-officio Member) and Ian Phillips (Ex-officio Member).

**ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

116. Chris Dowling declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Items 10 & 18 as his wife was a Cabinet Member of East Sussex County Council. Chris Dowling left the meeting for both items 10 & 18.

**ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2019**

117. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 26 September 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING**

118. There were none

**ITEM 5: URGENT MATTERS**

119. There were none

**ITEM 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

120. There were no Public Speakers.

**ITEM 7: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20: MONTH 6**

121. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR19/20-18 and reminded members of the report content.

122. The Committee commented that:

- They were pleased to see the creation of the Transport Analyst role.
- A report on how S106 and CIL monies were spent should be brought to a future committee.

123. In response to questions Officers clarified that:

- In response to the small amount of negative publicity received regarding Phase 2 of the Entry Signage Project, a comparison to other National Parks Entry Signage project costs would be circulated to Members. The project costs were more than just the manufacture of the signs and included other costs such as passive safety tests and road closure orders.
- 1 new vehicle was being purchased during the financial year to replace the Land Rover that had been written off. All the pool cars were either hybrid or electric but off road vehicles were not currently available as either hybrid or electric, therefore the new vehicle would be diesel. As part of the Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Neutral work that would be brought to a future NPA for consideration timescales for off road electric/hybrid vehicles would be examined.
- S106 Receipts Reserves has been reduced and no S106 monies had ever been returned due to not being spent within the time frame. The biggest challenge to the Authority was spending the S106 monies as close to where they had been collected as possible.

124. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the 2019/20 revenue forecast position as at month 6 of a net (£122,000) below budget variance.
- 2) Noted the 2019/20 capital forecast position as at month 6 of a zero budget variance.
- 3) Noted the reserves position as at month 6.
- 4) Noted the Treasury Management overview and position as at month 6.

**ITEM 8: INTERNAL AUDIT – PROGRESS REPORT**

125. The Internal Auditor introduced report PR19/20-19 and reminded member of the report content.

126. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Noted progress against the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan (2019/20).
- 2) Noted the implementation of audit actions previously agreed by management.

**ITEM 9: EXTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2018/19**

127. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR19/20-20 and reminded members of the report content on behalf of the External Auditor.
128. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Pensions were a high risk liability area to all Local Authorities. The risk was not a threat to the SDNPA revenue budget and had been taken off the Corporate Risk Register.
129. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Considered the Annual Audit Letter 2018/19.

**ITEM 10: FALMER – WOODINGDEAN PATH RESURFACING**

130. The Access and Recreation Strategy Lead introduced report PR19/20-21, reminded members of the report content and gave a presentation.
131. Chris Dowling declared a Personal Interest as his wife was a Cabinet Member of East Sussex County Council and left the meeting.
132. The Committee commented that:
- It would like to see the path resurfacing completed as one project not 2 separate smaller projects. The correct surface for the topography of the land should be used in order that a long term solution was created.
  - It can be very difficult to find the path from the Falmer end and therefore better signage was needed.
  - Officers should also consider the opportunity to provide interpretation and promotion of the SDNP along the path.
  - There was no footpath on the very busy road and therefore on safety grounds works needed to happen to repair the path.
133. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Both the Universities and the Amex Stadium had been approached to contribute to the funding of the resurfacing but had to date not agreed to contribute any funding.
  - A Joint Creation Order was being created but would not be signed until after the works to the path had been finished.
  - There were efficiencies for the scheme to be completed as a whole and the release of the funds from the Strategic Fund should be subject to the adoption of the footpath by the Rights of Way Authority as a Public Bridleway.
134. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Approved the allocation of £100,000 from the Strategic Fund to the Falmer – Woodingdean Path resurfacing project.
  - 2) Delegated authority to Director of Countryside Policy and Management in consultation with the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee to determine the appropriate release of funds in the event that the project proceeds on the basis of a phased implementation.
135. Chris Dowling re-joined the meeting.
136. Russell Oppenheimer left the meeting.

**ITEM 11: TRULEIGH HILL MID PROJECT REVIEW**

137. The Truleigh Hill Community Project Officer introduced report PRI 9/20-22 and reminded members of the report content.
138. The Committee commented that:
- This was a significant project in a prominent part of the SDNP and it was important that there was a legacy at the end of the 2 year project.
  - Antisocial behaviour was not unique to Truleigh Hill.
139. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- There are 2 stages to the project with the first stage being the consultation phase and the second stage seeing the change on the ground with a clear action plan. The project was currently midway through and would be moving to stage 2. In order to achieve the 2 stages there were 3 key areas to the project: Sustainability with building the capacity of the local community; work with partner organisations; linking to work across the whole of the SDNPA such as the work of the Ranger Team, Health and Wellbeing, Access etc.
  - The local community were highly engaged with the project through a range of different methods such as the John Muir award, social prescribing etc.
  - Tackling the antisocial behaviour was a key priority due to the significant impact it had on the landscape as well as visitor enjoyment.
140. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Received and considered the mid- point project evaluation report for the Truleigh Hill landscape project

**ITEM 12: UPDATE ON PEOPLE & NATURE NETWORK – GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AND WIDER SOUTH EAST**

141. The Infrastructure and Environment Strategy Lead and the Communications and Engagement Manager introduced report PRI 9/20-23, reminded members of the report content and gave a short presentation.
142. The Committee commented that:
- It was extremely important that the SDNP did not become the default Green Infrastructure space for any new developments beyond the SDNP boundary. Communications work for the project should spread beyond the boundary of the National Park.
  - Communication should show the involvement of the SDNPA in any joint Green Infrastructure projects.
143. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The project was branded as National Park not National Park Authority.
  - Work was already happening with Chichester District Council and Chichester Harbour Conservancy to ensure that there were green corridors with new developments along the SDNP boundary. Talks had also begun with Waverley Borough Council and Surrey Hill AONB to extend the Heathlands Reunited project beyond the boundary of the SDNP.
  - The ‘People and Nature Network’ document was just one method of communicating and communication would also be achieved through the redesign of the SDNPA website with better interactive landscape mapping.
144. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Noted the further work carried out to date on the People & Nature Network – Green

infrastructure in the South Downs National Park wider South East.

### **ITEM 13: WEALDEN HEATH AREA OFFICE PROPOSAL – HEATH BARN FARM**

145. The Head of Business Services introduced report PR19/20-24 and reminded members of the report content. The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the current accommodation within the Midhurst Depot was on a rolling 3 month notice period and did not provide satisfactory accommodation for the Ranger Team. The solution presented was the result of more than a year of extensive searching to find suitable accommodation and although in other locations the area offices were also a 'shop window' this was not needed for the Wealden Heath Team due to the proximity to Midhurst.
146. The Committee commented that:
- It was essential that a break clause was included in the lease, so that nothing was left to chance. Members also asked for it to be agreed that if the lease was terminated early how any of the SDNPA capital investment for the refurbishment works to the building would be returned from the National Trust. Members asked that this be included in the report to the NPA.
  - Members were unsure that the officer's suggestion of including a lease assignment within the lease would be sufficient protection and asked for further consideration to be given to this in the report to the NPA.
  - Alternative methods of heating should be investigated with costs supplied in the NPA report to allow members to make an informed decision.
147. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- If the National Trust paid for the refurbishment works themselves and then charged SDNPA the commercial rent it would be in the region of £24,000 per annum, which was in line with the rent of the other area offices.
  - Having refitted the building to the standard that SDNPA require Officers would not anticipate that the Authority would wish to terminate the lease early, however the option of a break clause would be explored.
  - Officers had considered the option of buying a property, however it was likely that this would use the budget in the purchase of the building and leave nothing to refurbish to the standards needed and therefore was not an option.
  - The committee could be certain that the points raised would be addressed in the paper that would be going to a future NPA for agreement.
148. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Noted the position regarding the refurbishment costs of Heath Barn and the proposed lease arrangements with the National Trust.
  - 2) Recommended to the Authority that it approved the proposal relating to Heath Barn Farm at the NPA meeting on 19 December 2019.

### **ITEM 14 & 15: QUARTER 2 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT AND QUARTER 2 PROJECT UPDATE**

149. The Performance and Research Lead and Project Management Lead introduced report PR19/20-25 & PR19/20-26 and reminded members of the report content.
150. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The significant improvements to the website should be completed by the end of the current financial year.
  - Ancient Monument classification would be checked with Historic England.
  - The Estimated time of completion of the Centurion Way project was 1 year from when the funds were available to do the works.

151. **RESOLVED** That the Committee:  
 1) Received and noted the Quarter 2 Corporate Performance report

152. **RESOLVED** That the Committee:  
 1) Received and noted the Quarter 2 overview of SDNPA projects

**ITEM 16: ANNUAL HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2018/19**

153. The Head of Human Resources introduced report PR19/20-27 and reminded members of the report content.

154. The Committee commented that:

- It would be advantageous if Officers were aware of Members' backgrounds, knowledge and experience as this could be a solution to assist staff understanding the role of Members within the Authority.
- In future reports it would be helpful to highlight the mental health support available to staff and the benefits received through the Cash Plan, Simply Health.
- Members congratulated the Authority on the low levels of work related stress reported.

155. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Member Services were arranging for 2 members to be on the culture group.
- A module on ELMS, eLearning, was being created on the role of members which would become part of the staff induction process.
- The Authority has invested heavily in supporting staff mental health with 15 staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders and all managers attended training sessions on mental health awareness. Staff are also able to receive counselling sessions through the cash plan, Simply Health.
- Staff and Members are reimbursed for flu jabs through the Cash Plan, Simply Health.
- Information on Simply Health would be circulated to all Members of the Authority.

156. **RESOLVED** : That the Committee:  
 1) Noted the Report.

**ITEM 17: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

157. The Head of Governance introduced report PR19/20-28 and reminded members of the report content.

158. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The arrow on Risk 17: 'Brexit Transition' had changed direction to indicate the likely direction of travel but the score had not changed due to no new information being available.

159. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:  
 1) Noted the Corporate Risk Register as at November 2019

160. Chris Dowling declared a Personal Interest in Item 18 as his wife was a member of the Cabinet at East Sussex County Council and left the meeting.

**ITEM 18: SEVEN SISTERS COUNTY PARK – PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATE**

161. The Chief Executive introduced report PR19/20-29 and explained that the Committee would receive regular reports in a standard format.

162. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Due to the term of office ending for 2 members on the project board, Officers expected that the new Chair and Deputy chair of Policy and Resources Committee

would hold these roles.

- The majority of the capital proposed related to refitting and refurbishing the buildings already there but with more interpretation provided to highlight assets that were not obvious.

163. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Received and noted the progress with regard to the Seven Sisters Country Park project.

### **CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 3.35pm

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 27 FEBRUARY 2020**

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

Present: Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish (Chair), Chris Dowling, Doug Jones, Michael Lunn, Russell Oppenheimer, Henry Potter, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston and Richard Waring.

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

Ex-officio Members: Margaret Paren and Ian Phillips.

Other SDNPA Members: Barbara Holyome and Vanessa Rowlands.

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside Policy & Management), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Steven Bedford (Principal Accountant), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Robin Parr (Head of Governance) and Catherine Sydenham (Committee Officer).

Also Attended by: Tanya Hibberd (Performance and Research Lead), Andy Conlan (External Auditor), Tom Pattison (External Auditor), Liz Gent (Project Management Officer), Bruce Fowkes (Farming Officer), Nigel James (Countryside and Policy Manager and Jeremy Burgess (Landscape and Biodiversity Lead - Water).

**OPENING REMARKS**

164. The Chair opened the meeting

165. 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 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**

166. Apologies were received from Helen Burton, Chris Henry and Helen Jackson.

**ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

167. Doug Jones declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 13, as he was a Trustee of Petersfield Museum.

168. Sebastian Anstruther declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 15, as a member of the Rother Valley Farm Cluster and as a Trustee of Arun and Rother Rivers Trust.

**ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2019**

169. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 28 November 2019 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the amendments below, and signed by the Chair

- Minute 147, 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet, replace 'however, the option of a break clause would be explored' with '*however, Officers would investigate the inclusion of a break clause*'.
- Minute 148, add to the end of the resolution 'subject to the issues raised at the meeting



being addressed', so it read *'Recommended to the Authority that it approves the proposal relating to Heath Barn Farm at the NPA meeting on the 19 December 2019, subject to the issues raised at the meeting being addressed'*.

#### **ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING**

170. There were none

#### **ITEM 5: URGENT MATTERS**

171. There were none

#### **ITEM 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

172. None

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

173. Officers advised that there was no requirement to consider any item in private session.

#### **ITEM 8: CORPORATE PLAN 2020-25 DRAFT**

174. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management introduced report PR19/20-30 and reminded members of the report content. The Performance and Research Lead also responded to members questions.

175. The Committee commented that:

- They would like a future committee report to review whether the decision for the SDNPA not to pursue development of a National Park specific App is still correct.

176. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The Seven Sisters project had its own heading within the draft Corporate Plan because the project had its own project board, which consisted of both Officers and Members, and was working within the business plan whose parameters were set by the NPA. Officers confirmed that the project would make a significant contribution to many different Corporate Plan objectives.
- The Authority had the opportunity to access Government funding for sustainable tourism projects and Officers were currently working with Defra to assist getting the additional resource.
- If it becomes clear that the Heathrow judgement will have significant implications for infrastructure proposals affecting the National Park this issue would be brought back to a future P&R Committee.
- SDNPA would be developing a local enterprise network to support rural businesses across the SDNP.
- The draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan would be considered at the next NPA meeting.
- In light of recent government announcements about bus services, the information on rural transport within the corporate plan would be updated in the final version presented to NPA.
- The diversification of volunteers target had been updated to a profile closer to that of the South East and would be presented in the final version of the Corporate Plan presented to the NPA. As the volunteer strategy develops it would be brought back to a future committee.
- The process of allocated CIL monies through the Infrastructure Business Plan had proven to be robust and would be repeated in future years. All monies were allocated in the year that they were collected and the list of eligible projects is currently well in excess of the level of funds available.
- Currently the Authority had a 69% success rate with appeals – which compares to a 65% national average. The measure of success for appeals in year 1 of the Corporate

Plan could be to measure the percentage of appeals against the SDNPA which are dismissed, rather than the time and number of appeals.

177. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Received the draft Corporate Plan 2020-25.
- 2) Recommended approval of the Corporate Plan to the National Park Authority (NPA) in March 2020.

#### **ITEM 9: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20: MONTH 9**

178. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR19/20-31 and reminded members of the report content.

179. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- There had been a significant reduction in the number of planning applications received which was the key reason for the budget variance reported. Officers confirmed that the reduction was in line with national trends.
- The move to payment per planning application for host Authorities had been successful in reducing expenditure in line with the reduction in applications determined.
- Health and Wellbeing work programme was being developed with other Southern National Parks, and neighbouring AONBs. Initially it was anticipated that there would be £100,000 of Cabinet Office funding for projects in the South Downs area. It had subsequently become clear that this funding would be focused on improving the working relationships between health bodies, not projects on the ground. However, Public Health England had agreed to fund 3 of the 4 planned projects.
- To date in the current financial year there had been 12 staff resignations, giving a turnover rate of 8%. 5 of these resignations were in the Corporate Strategy Directorate, 5 in the Planning Directorate and 2 in the Countryside Policy Directorate, therefore there is no evidence of disproportionately high staff turnover in Planning. All staff were automatically offered exit interviews and the results were always analysed, but some decline to participate. The majority of leavers gave the reason for leaving as either commute to work or family commitments. The Authority was jointly recruiting with Lewes District Council with the aim of basing planners there.
- The 2 new transport and infrastructure posts had different but complementary remits. One is transport focused with support for the Protected Landscape role on Transport for the South East the top priority. The other strengthens our capacity to work on National Significant Infrastructure Projects of all types.

180. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the 2019/20 revenue forecast position as at month 9 of a net (£141,000) below budget variance.
- 2) Noted the 2019/20 capital forecast position as at month 9 of a zero budget variance and recommends that the National Park Authority (the "NPA") approve the capital variation
- 3) Noted the reserves position as at month 9.
- 4) Noted the Treasury Management overview and position as at month 9.

#### **ITEM 10: TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2020/21**

181. The Principal Accountant and Head of Business Services jointly presented report PR19/20-32 and reminded members of the report content.

182. The Committee commented that:

- At the point of any borrowing being needed, Members should be made aware of both the cost and the risk of the borrowing needed in order that they could make an informed decision for the best approach for the Authority.

- Variable interest rates should be considered rather than fixed rates.
- They were pleased to see the changes of short dated bonds and internal borrowing made to the Treasury Management Strategy which should enable to authority to get an investment return close to that of the level of inflation.
- It would like included in the report to the NPA the evidence behind the selection of the Short Dated Bond funds.

183. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Short dated bond funds were not rated in the traditional way, and the Authority would only invest in these after a tendering process. Each bond would be assessed against the bench mark risk factor of 0.05%.
- Link Asset Service were Brighton and Hove City Council's (BHCC) treasury advisors and provide treasury advice to the SDNPA as part of the contract with BHCC.
- The Treasury Management Strategy provides assumptions for several projects going ahead at the same time. The Authority had reserves and at the time of any borrowing being needed it would be a balance between the reserves and external borrowing. Historically the Public Works Loan Board was the most advantageous place for Local Authorities to borrow from but this was no longer the case and the Authority would also consider other lenders. The final decision on any borrowing would be taken by the NPA.

184. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

1) Recommend that the National Park Authority ("NPA") approves the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 comprising of:

- Treasury Management Policy Statement 2020/21;
- Treasury Management Practices 2020/21;
- Borrowing Strategy 2020/21;
- Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2020/21 to 2024/25;
- Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement; and
- Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21, including the benchmark risk factor of 0.05%.

#### **ITEM 11: EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019/20**

185. The External Auditors introduced report PR19/20-33 and reminded members of the report content.

186. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The auditors had initially identified as a significant risk management of CIL and Section 106 monies, and conducted detailed audit work around the systems in place. This highlighted issues - such as BHCC recognition of income - and resulted in one material and several immaterial adjustments to the accounts. This area would continue to have a high level of testing and monitoring to ensure that the recommendations suggested had been implemented.
- There were new regulations in place regarding the reporting of CIL to Central Government, which had to be followed by all bodies that receive CIL. Officers were confident that robust procedures were in place to do this.
- They would engage in the audit work earlier to ensure that the timetable was achievable for the July deadline.
- The triviality difference for reporting to Authority was £13,300.

187. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

1. Noted the External Audit Plan 2019/20

**ITEM 12: REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATION AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES**

188. The Head of Business Services introduced report PR19/20-34 and reminded members of the report content.
189. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Agreed to recommend the revised Financial Procedures and Financial Regulations to the Authority for adoption.
  - 2) Noted the proposed changes to the Committee terms of reference arising from these changes, which were subject to the approval of the Authority.

**ITEM 13: Q3 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND PROJECT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

190. The Performance and Research Lead and Project Management Lead introduced report PR19/20-35 and reminded members of the report content.
191. The Committee commented that:
- Truleigh Hill Youth Hostel was an iconic site within the SDNP and the YHA should be encouraged to implement its plans to upgrade
  - Even though the Youth Hostel project was on hold it should be kept on the register and included in reports.
  - It was pleased to see the Health and Wellbeing projects underway.
  - When the SDNPA was involved in a project it was important that its contribution was recognised by others to demonstrate what public money was being spent on.
192. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The Chief Executive was in regular contact with the YHA Chief Executive and they remained committed to refurbishing the Truleigh Hill Hostel.
  - The Beggars Bush project would be treated as a new project due to major changes to its scope and programme. It would be funded from Rampion who had confirmed that they would rather see good outcomes than a rushed project.
  - The project completion and spend graph would be updated so that projects finished at 100% rather than 110% as was currently shown. Some of projects were shown as completed or largely completed with no spend because external funding has been deployed first to the benefit of the SDNPA budget.
  - The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan would be reported to NPA in March 2020 and then projects would appear as part of the annual programmes in the Corporate Plan and budget or as major project proposals at future Committees.
193. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Received and noted the Quarter 3 Corporate Performance and Project Performance report.

**ITEM 14: SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK – PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATE**

194. The Project Management Lead introduced the report and gave a presentation.
195. The Committee commented that:
- A risk should be added that the planning application might be turned down or deferred.
  - The Project Board was a good example of joint Officer and Member working.
196. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The Secretary of State approval was a technical consent from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) because East Sussex County Council (ESCC) were disposing of an asset at less than best financial value. The approval was not in the hands of the SDNPA but the Authority was doing everything it could to be ready as soon as the transfer was approved.
- The only funds that were spent currently were those already accounted for within a capped budget allocation set out in the Business Plan agreed by the NPA. No contracts would be awarded until assurance was given from the Secretary of State that the transfer would go ahead.
- The Officers putting together the planning application were not the same officers that would be determining the application and appropriate governance arrangements were in place. The application submitted would be an exemplary landscape led planning application as the SDNPA would expect from any private developer.
- If successful, the CIL bid for up to £500,000 would be spent on specific elements such as a changing places toilet.
- Forecast of potential income from other sources were in addition to the £1.4 million business plan investment and are for additional elements not fundamental to the delivery of the business plan.
- ESCC was the Highway Authority responsible for the bridge at Exceat and Officers would be meeting to discuss plans for the new bridge.

197. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Receive and note the progress made in the Seven Sisters Country Park project

198. The Committee adjourned at 3.35pm and recommenced at 3.44pm.

#### **ITEM 15: FARM CLUSTER IMPLEMENTATION MID-TERM REVIEW**

199. The Farming Officer and Countryside and Policy Manager introduced report PR19/20-37 and gave a presentation.

200. The Committee commented that:

- They were highly supportive of the work with farm clusters and the work undertaken by the Farming Officer in bringing farmers together and providing opportunities for the SDNPA to engage directly with farming and other experts.
- They had received positive feedback from landowners on the role of the Authority in supporting the farm clusters.
- The farm clusters were vitally important to the SDNP and help to deliver Purpose 1.

201. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- There was aspiration that every landowner had the opportunity to join a farm cluster and that these clusters cover the entire SDNP. However, it was extremely important that the clusters were landowner led and the right size. Each of the clusters works differently and had different strengths, but the important thing was that each cluster worked towards clear outcomes.
- They were assisting and encouraging landowners to take up the new ELMS schemes.
- Farm Clusters were not unique to the SDNP and occur throughout England, however the cluster coverage within the SDNP is unusual.
- During the recently held Farmers' Breakfasts Officers spoke about the carbon cutting tool kit which was available to farmers. Officers hoped some farmers would undertake the work in order that a case study could be produced and shared.

202. Tom Fourcade, Carole Nicholson, Vanessa Rowlands and Richard Waring left the meeting.

203. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the Farm Cluster Implementation & Development mid-term review.
- 2) Noted the importance of the farm clusters programme and the role farm clusters play in delivering the purposes and duty of the National Park authority.
- 3) Endorsed the principle of continued Authority support for the ongoing operation and expansion of the farm clusters programme at least until the detail of the new ELMS schemes published
- 4) Endorsed the continuation of staff resource and capacity to support the emerging landscape agenda at least until roll-out of the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) system (in late 2024).

**ITEM 16: END OF PROJECT EVALUATION – BRIGHTON CHALK INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP (ChaMP) Project**

204. The Landscape and Biodiversity Lead (Water) introduced report PR19/20-38 and gave a presentation
205. In response to questions officers clarified that:
  - The issues highlighted in the end of the project evaluation with regards governance had been taken account of in developing the ChaMP 2 project, approved in December 2019.
  - It was challenging getting multiple stakeholders and partners to effectively work together, and this issue will; feature as part of a new leadership programme for Strategy Leads and Lead Rangers.
  - Ongoing maintenance of water gardens on new build estates should be part of section 106 agreements.
206. **RESOLVED** That the Committee:
  - I. Received and considered the end of project review for the for the ChaMP project Phase I as included in Appendix I.

**ITEM 17: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

207. The Head of Governance introduced report PR19/20-39, reminded members of the content and highlighted that Risk 2, Finance and Budgets, would be re-examined in light of the recent communications received from Defra.
208. In response to questions officers clarified that:
  - Communication had been sent to all staff and members in light of the Covid-19 outbreak and would be updated with any Government change to the advice. Handwashing advice had been placed in all lavatories and sink areas. Through the business continuity plans Officers were confident that day to day management of the Authority could continue.
  - Risk 24, Major Infrastructure Projects, highlights the Authority’s response to major infrastructure projects.
209. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
  - I. Noted the Corporate Risk Register as at February 2020.

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 4.25pm