

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 26 SEPTEMBER 2019**

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

Present: Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish (Chair), , Chris Dowling, Helen Jackson, Doug Jones, , Russell Oppenheimer, Henry Potter, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston and Richard Waring

Independent Members of the Committee: Tom Fourcade

Ex-officio Members: Ian Phillips

Other SDNPA Members: Heather Baker

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: Kathleen Downes (internal Auditor), Amanda Elmes (Learning, Outreach and Volunteer Lead), Daniel Greenwood (Volunteer Development Officer), Kirsty Ferris (Youth Ambassador), Tanya Hibberd (Performance and Research Lead), Liz Gent (Project Management Officer), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Project & Performance Manager), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Colin Carre (Heathlands Reunited Manager), Vicky Patterson (Head of Human Resources), Jon Wyatt (Safety Advisor for SDNPA) and Bruno Aveiro (Apprentice Co-ordinator)

#### **OPENING REMARKS**

63. The Chair opened the meeting
64. The Chair welcomed all those present including Kirsty Ferris, Youth Ambassador, 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**

65. Apologies were received from Helen Burton, Chris Henry, Michael Lunn, Carole Nicholson and Margaret Paren

#### **ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

66. There were no declarations of interest declared

#### **ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 & 31 JULY 2019**

67. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 18 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair
68. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 31 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair

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

69. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management referred to minute 21 and gave the Committee an update that the Glover report was now published. Officers had prepared an analysis document that set out whether new legislation would be required for the proposals and whether the Authority was currently doing any of the work which would be presented to the workshop and discussed at the Full Authority meeting on the 1 October 2019.
70. Members asked that this analysis be circulated to the Independent Members of the Committee.

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

71. There were none

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

72. There were no public speakers.

#### **AUDIT**

#### **ITEM 7: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20: MONTH 4**

73. The Principal Accountant introduced report PR19/20-08 and reminded members of the report content.
74. The Committee commented that:
- It would be useful for planning trend data to be included with the figures to allow members to understand the strength of the forecast presented.
75. In response to questions Officers clarified that:
- The forthcoming budget round would be proposing that an appropriate turnover rate would be applied when budgeting for future salaries. This would reduce the routine underspend and allow members to decide how to use the budget. Officers confirmed that the flexibility of allocating the salary budget would not be lost.
  - The number of planning applications was lower this year compared to previous years and a potential reason being a downturn in the construction industry and the political instability.
76. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
1. Noted the 2019/20 revenue forecast position as at month 4 of a net £5,000 above budget variance.
  2. Noted the 2019/20 capital forecast position as at month 4 of a zero budget variance.
  3. Noted the reserves position as at month 4.
  4. Noted the Treasury Management overview and position as at month 4.

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

77. The Internal Auditor introduced report PR19/20-09 and reminded members of the report content.
78. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- HMRC have amended the SDNPA postal address and were now BACS transferring monies reducing the risk of monies going astray and delays of payments being banked.
79. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted:
- 1) Progress against the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan (2019/20) and
  - 2) The implementation of audit actions previously agreed by management

## STRATEGY

### ITEM 9: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING UPDATE

80. The Learning Outreach and Volunteer Lead introduced report (PR19/20-10) and gave a presentation along with the Volunteer Development Officer and Kirsty Ferris the Youth Ambassador.
81. The Committee commented that:
- It was very important to give consideration to how best to include young people on SDNPA Committees and panels such as such as the SCF Panel and South Downs Local Access Forum and the South Downs Partnership as well as youth representation on the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service as this the area where SDNPA was the least well developed.
  - A working group of Members, including the Youth Ambassadors, could be established with the aim of finding ways to engage young people in both the formal and informal setting and consider how the youth voice could be included in a positive way to make a difference. It would be helpful if the Youth Ambassadors could consider how they think that they could have more involvement in SDNPA.
  - Members that attended the UK National Park Conference, heard Georgina Umney from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, speak about youth involvement and heard good suggestions about getting young people involved at the grass roots level. Members suggested this may be a useful starting place to examine youth involvement.
  - It might be useful to create a recognised citizen involvement scheme with schools, college, universities and employers whereby young people were given approved time off for their involvement.
82. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- Plans to grow youth volunteering within the age bracket of 16-25 have been by created through a variety of different ways of engagement and opportunities such as micro volunteering events, youth action days etc.
  - Figures were available to support the success of the Youth Engagement Programme and would be circulated to members.
  - Officers were aware of the transport issue faced by young people and either held events close to bus stops or train stations or ran pickups from the bus stop/train station.
  - Extensive activity happens with pre 16 year olds either through the work with schools or uniformed groups. The John Muir award was also used to engage families and more than 80 individuals had been trained to deliver the John Muir award across the SDNP.
  - The Youth Ambassadors attended the Countryside and Policy Directorate day to include a youth perspective into an early planning stage of the team's work. This type of involvement would continue.
  - The Youth Ambassadors should be invited to the upcoming member workshops on climate change and biodiversity.
83. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the paper

## PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES

### ITEM 10: QUARTER 1 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/20

- The Performance and Research Lead introduced report PR19/20-11 and reminded them of the report content as well as that a new 5 year Corporate Plan was currently being produced which would align with the Partnership Management Plan.

84. The Committee commented that:
- The discovery map and website should also be tested with members.
  - The SDNPA should remind themselves of the success of the Local Plan and not be pessimistic that it was showing amber because the Planning Inspectorate invoice came in £20,000 above projected budget.
85. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- The proposed new name of 'Southern People and Nature Network' from 'Green Infrastructure' was not set in stone and was suggested to allow people to connect to the project but within policy settings the recognised 'Green Infrastructure' term would be used. The branding of this work was subject to further Member and Officer discussion.
  - The approximate total cost of the Local Plan production was £1.2million. This figure was in line with average Local Plan production cost and SDNPA should not forget that this was the first Local Plan of its kind and needed a strong evidence base.
  - The new project management process had provided staff with training on how to use the process but some staff need more help and assistance. At approval stage staff produce an 'Expression of Interest' and a 'Business Case', once the project had gained approval a more detailed 'Delivery Plan' was then produced. It was the detailed 'Delivery Plan' production that was causing the Amber RAG rating.
86. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received and noted the Quarter I Corporate Performance report

## GRANTS AND PROJECTS

### ITEM II: QUARTER I PROJECT UPDATE

87. The Project Management Officer introduced report PR19/20-12 and reminded members of the report content.
88. The Committee commented that:
- Truleigh Hill Habitat and Access Project should remain being reported to members, even if the position was unchanged as it was important for Members to be able to track the project.
  - It would be helpful if the Tableau Dashboards could be updated to show who the lead project partner was.
89. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- There were a number of projects that were currently being developed and would be within the project pipeline for the next 5 years. Officers were comfortable that the Strategic Fund would be drawn down on over the next five years. In 2018/19 all of the Strategic Fund budget was allocated.
  - Staff training on the new project management system had been provided and a module on the e-learning system, ELMS, was currently being developed.
  - The Centurion Way project reported was the part of the project that takes it to Planning Application stage and not the completion of the project.
  - The funds showing within the Local Sustainable Transport Fund were what was left from a bigger project and would hopefully be spent before the end of the financial year.
  - The fact that the amber projects were mainly clustered in the east of the National Park was project specific.
90. **RESOLVED** That the Committee received and Noted the Quarter I Corporate Performance report

## PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES

### ITEM 12: ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLANNING PERFORMANCE: FINANCIAL YEAR 2018/19

91. The Director of Planning and Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager introduced report PR19/20-13 and reminded members of the report content.
92. The Committee commented that:
- It would be helpful to split out the enforcement cases that SDNPA were directly working on against those of the Host Authorities. It would also be helpful to have more data presented on how long enforcement cases have been open.
  - All members were accountable for planning decisions made, not just those that sit on Planning Committee. It would be helpful for non-planning members to have training on the Local Plan.
  - The headline figures of speed of decision making presented look positive however, they include when an extension of time had been asked for and agreed.
  - Members would like a workshop on planning data to be included into the member training programme. Members suggested it would be helpful for them to examine what data was available so they could consider what data they would like reported in order to fully scrutinise planning performance.
93. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- There were no government targets set for enforcement cases as each case varies dramatically. Most enforcement cases do not go to the Planning Inspectorate but if a case does it currently could take up to about a year to be determined.
  - If extensions of time were used well they could be a powerful tool. Officers reported that all Host Authorities use extensions of time about the same.
  - A member session was held at the beginning of 2019 to look at the successful and the less successful elements of schemes granted planning permission. A similar session would be run in 2020 and would again be available for all members to attend.
  - Planning appeals were reported quarterly to Planning Committee.
  - The approach to landscape was embedded in everything and was also the subject of a recent Member Day.
  - There was a planning e-newsletter produced 3 times a year which was circulated to all members, all members were always invited to attend all planning workshops and these dates were circulated within diary invites and on the monthly member bulletin circulated by the Governance team.
94. Helen Jackson left the meeting
95. **RESOLVED** That the Committee received and noted the Annual Review of Planning Performance.

## GRANTS AND PROJECTS

### ITEM 13: PROJECT EVALUATION – HEATHLANDS REUNITED YEAR 3

96. The Heathlands Reunited Project Manager introduced report PR19/20-14, reminded members of the report content and gave a presentation.
97. The Committee commented that:
- It was pleased to hear that an additional post, Communities Outreach Officer, had been created and asked that lessons learned from targeting hard to reach groups be shared to other projects.
  - Climate Change should be contained within the report and evaluation.
  - Heathlands were very important and the committee was supportive of the

communications and engagement work happening but also stressed that it was important that work happened on the ground.

- The project had come a long way from the first evaluation when immense problems were highlighted.
- It would be helpful if the trend information could be shown from year 1 to 2 to 3 so that members could also draw and form their own judgement of the project to date.

98. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Climate Change couldn't be added into the evaluation report as SDNPA was not the author, but was embedded within the Heathlands Reunited project. The project will make heathlands more resilient to climate change.
- The evaluation report was lengthy but it was a condition of the Heritage Lottery Fund funding. The Engagement work of the project was implemented in a fun and engaging way to the target audience.

99. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee received and considered the project overview and external evaluation report for Heathlands Reunited year 3.

100. Russell Oppenheimer and Heather Baker left the meeting.

## **PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES-**

### **ITEM 14: ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2018/19**

101. The Head of Human Resources, Jon Wyatt Safety Advisor to SDNPA and Apprenticeship Co-ordinator introduced report PR19/20-15 and reminded members of the report content.

102. Jon Wyatt explained to members that although he still completes work for SDNPA and a number of other National Park Authorities, SDNPA also now had its own part time resource. This method of working still allows efficiencies to be created through work with other National Park Authorities as well as providing a local resource to deal with local issues.

103. **RESOLVED** That the Committee

- 1) Noted the report
- 2) Commended the continuing improvements in the overall management of Occupational Safety and Health at South Downs National Park Authority.
- 3) Endorsed the proposals for further priorities and actions

104. Tom Fourcade left the meeting.

### **ITEM 15: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER AND RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY**

105. The Head of Governance introduced report PR19/20-16 and reminded members of the report content.

106. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Brexit financial scenario planning would be discussed as part of the budget workshop. The Chief Executive was part of the Government Brexit Planning Group for the South East.
- Supply chain implications as a result of Brexit had been considered and no big vulnerabilities discovered.
- SDNPA had robust business continuity plans in place, which were tested yearly. These plans will allow business to continue in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

107. **RESOLVED** That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the Corporate Risk Register as at September 2019

- 2) Agreed the “Risk Management Policy and Guidance” document.

#### **ITEM 16: ICT CONTRACTS RENEWAL 2020**

108. The Head of Business Services introduced report PR19/20-17 and reminded members of the report content.
109. In response to questions officers clarified that:
  - The ICT contract was about providing desk based ICT support, ensuring the security of the data and that all computers were kept up to date and did not cover GIS, website, Idox etc as these were all managed as separate individual contracts.
110. **RESOLVED** That the Committee:
  - 1) Approved the commencement of procurement processes leading to the appointment of contractors to provide ICT Infrastructure as a Service and Deskside Support services to SDNPA for a period of three years from July 2020, with a further possible two extensions of one year each.
  - 2) Approved delegation of Authority to the Chief Executive to award contracts for the above, following a competitive process carried out under the terms of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015

#### **CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 4.05pm

