

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **AUTHORITY MEETING**

Held at 2.00pm on 07 July 2020 using Zoom Video Conferencing.

Present:

Alun Alesbury, Heather Baker, Helen Burton, Chris Dowling, Janet Duncton, Thérèse Evans, Chris Henry, Barbara Holyome, Doug Jones, Michael Lunn, Gary Marsh, William Meyer, Robert Mocatta, Russell Oppenheimer, Ian Phillips, Henry Potter, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston, Diana van der Klugt and Richard Waring.

South Downs National Park Authority Officers:

Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside and Policy Management), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Robin Parr (Head of Governance), Richard Sandiford (Senior Governance Officer) and Cath Sydenham (Governance Officer).

Also attended by: Martin Johnson (Public-i), Sara Osman (Governance Officer) and Andy Beattie (Countryside and Policy Manager)

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OPENING REMARKS**

1. The Chief Executive welcomed all present and stated that:
  - Due to the current Coronavirus pandemic the South Downs Centre and Memorial Hall remained closed until further notice, hence the meeting of the South Downs National Park Authority was held using the Zoom Cloud Meetings software.
  - 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
2. The Senior Governance Officer reminded Members of the protocol that would be followed during the meeting.

### **ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

3. There were no apologies for absence.

### **ITEM 2. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

4. The election process was presided over by the Chief Executive and the Authority was informed that nominations closed at 4pm on 23 June 2020 and as Ian Phillips was the only nomination, Ian Phillips was duly elected as Chair of the Authority until the Authority AGM in 2021 or the end of his appointment as a Secretary of State Member, whichever may be sooner.
5. The Chair gave a short acceptance speech.

### **ITEM 3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

6. The election process was presided over by the Chair and the Authority was informed that nominations closed at 4pm on 23 June 2020 and as Vanessa Rowlands was the only nomination, Vanessa Rowlands was duly elected as Deputy Chair of the Authority until the Authority AGM in 2021 or the end of her appointment as a Secretary of State Member, whichever may be sooner.”
7. Vanessa Rowlands gave a short acceptance speech.

### **CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

8. The Chair expressed his thanks to Margaret Paren, Sebastian Anstruther and Ken Bodfish whose appointments as Members of the Authority ended on the 30 June 2020. The Chair informed members that although the Authority could not publically announce the names of the new Secretary of State appointed Members the Authority looked forward to welcoming the new Members after Defra had made the official announcements.
9. The Chair reminded Members that SDNPA Members had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthered 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 4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

10. The following declarations of interest were made:
  - Chris Dowling declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Items 16 and 17 as his wife was a Cabinet Member of East Sussex County Council. Chris Dowling withdrew from the meeting for both agenda items 16 & 17.

### **ITEM 5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 21 MAY 2020**

11. The minutes of the Authority meetings held on 21 May 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **ITEM 6. MATTERS ARISING**

12. There were none.

### **ITEM 7. URGENT ITEMS**

13. There were none.

### **ITEM 8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

111. The Chair advised the Authority that there was 1 public speaker, Vic lent of the South Downs Society, who wished to speak on Item 13 and that he would be heard immediately prior to agenda item 13.

### **ITEM 9. NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

14. Members were asked to consider the exclusion of the public, including the press, from the meeting for Agenda Item 16 and the appendices to be considered under agenda item 17.
15. The Head of Governance outlined the reasons for the consideration of this exclusion under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial and business affairs of a particular person including the Authority, and paragraph 5 information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exempt information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information. This conclusion was reached on the basis that whilst there was a public interest in maintaining transparency of Authority proceedings in relation to the business of the Authority it was felt that on balance this was outweighed by the requirement of the National Park Authority to be able to undertake considerations in relation to its business and fully consider the implications of its actions or proposed actions without the disclosure of information that could undermine its position.
16. The Chair asked if any Member wished to raise any point of accuracy in the part II minutes of the previous meeting at agenda item 16.

17. As a Member did indicate they wished to raise a point of accuracy on the part II minutes of the previous meeting at agenda item 16 it was proposed and seconded that the meeting move into private session to consider Agenda Items 16 and the appendices to be considered under agenda item 17.
18. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to move into private session to consider Agenda Items 16 and the appendices under agenda item 17 and that the public, including the press, would be excluded from the meeting at the appropriate time.
19. The Chair informed Members that agenda item 16 would be moved to the end of the agenda and would be taken after consideration of agenda item 17.

#### **ITEM 10. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT**

20. The Chief Executive introduced report (NPA20/21-01) and reminded Members of the report content. The Chief Executive gave a brief update on the successful all staff and Member event held on the 30 June 2020, highlighted the wild chalk event and referred to recent Government announcements.
21. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:
  - The report contained a typo and the date for the Micro Forum in December was the 5 December and not the 3 December as stated in the report.
  - That approximately 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) collected was distributed to Parishes. The Autumn Planning Committee would allocate the remaining resource to projects from the approximately 400 applications received in accordance with the SDNPA Infrastructure Business Plan. All the applications were scored using the same criteria.
  - The revised scaled back A27 route East of Lewes would contain a walking and cycling route alongside the A27 from Lewes to Eastbourne and the road improvements had been curtailed to key junction improvements
  - That with regards to the Whole Estate Plan (WEP) review 'we' referred to the Authority, the review would be conducted with independent consultants and the review Terms of Reference would be circulated to all members. The findings of the review would be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee.
22. The Members commented that:
  - The all staff event was a great success with some excellent presentations put together.
  - They were delighted to see that the Connecting People and Communities Theme Programme Board had approved 2 climate change projects and asked that the learning process be shared with other parishes.
23. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to note the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) since the last report.

#### **ITEM 11. APPOINTMENTS OF COMMITTEE AND OUTSIDE BODIES**

24. The Head of Governance introduced report (NPA20/21-02) and reminded Members of the report content and that the names of the 5 new Secretary of State appointed Members remained confidential until Defra had made the official announcement.
25. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:
  - Standing Orders allowed that the Deputy Chair could be a voting member of the Planning Committee.
  - Committee Membership and appointment to Outside Bodies would be re-examined over the summer period and may be brought back to the Autumn NPA.

- Membership of the Seven Sisters project group did not need to be approved by the NPA and if any members wished to put themselves forward they should make the Governance Team aware.
26. The Head of Governance advised Members that as not all the Membership had accessed the confidential document containing the 5 new Secretary of State Members names the Authority was required to move into Private Session for the information to be shared due to the information being furnished to the Authority by a Government department upon terms which forbade the disclosure of the information to the public.
27. The meeting was closed to the public, including the press, and moved into private session at 3.07pm.
28. The Authority returned to public session at 3.12pm.
29. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Appoint the Planning Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and Appointments, Management & Standards Committee with the Terms of reference set out at Appendix 1 of the report, as the committees necessary to discharge the functions of the Authority.
  2. Appoint the Membership of Committees as set out in Appendix 3 of the report provided that, in respect of those Members (other than parish members) appointed to the Authority by the Secretary of State, the committee appointment shall take effect from the date of the Member's appointment to the Authority if later than the date of this decision.
  3. Appoint the Members to outside bodies and panels until the Authority AGM in 2021 as set out in Appendix 5 of the report.
  4. Agree the appointments to the Task and Finish Groups and as set out at appendix 6 of the report.
  5. Agree, for the purposes of Standing order 8.1(e), that, in line with the Authority's established practice, the Committees appointed by the Authority may not arrange for the discharge of the Authority's functions by a sub-committee. All Committees retain powers under Standing Order 27 to establish Member Task and Finish Groups.

**ITEM 12. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN POSITION**

30. The Chief Financial Officer introduced report (NPA20/21-03) and reminded members of the report content. The Head of Business Services informed Members that report NPA20/21-03 would have normally been presented to P&R Committee but as a result of the COVID-19 implications was brought straight to the NPA on this occasion.
31. In response to questions, Offices advised Members of the following:
- The reason that there were 2 separate deposit accounts was to spread the liability.
  - Section 106 monies were time limited and followed a different allocation process than that of CIL. Section 106 was managed through a comprehensive spreadsheet with the aim of spending the monies as close to the area where the development had taken place. To date no Section 106 funds had been lost.
  - The Planning department was starting to see a positive upturn in Pre-Applications.
32. Members made the following comments:
- Work between Officers and Members had seen Section 106 funds allocated from one project to another in Petersfield giving a positive result for the community.
33. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:

1. Note the provisional 2019/20 revenue outturn position of a net £305,000 below budget variance for the 2019/20 financial year.
  2. Approve the revenue budget carry forward requests from 2019/20 to 2020/21 of £1,011,000 as set out in Appendix 2.
  3. Approve the following Capital variations as detailed in paragraph 3.5;
    - (£93,000) reprofile to the 2020/21 financial year to fund completion of Phase 2 and future phases of the National Park Signage Project;
    - £26,000 for a new land cruiser to replace written off vehicles, funded from the Vehicle Repairs and Renewals Reserve.
  4. Note the use of the revenue below budget variance as a contribution to the Climate Change Fund Reserve and the Recovery Fund set out in section 3.6 and as approved by the Authority on 21 May 2020.
  5. Note the Treasury Management overview and position as at financial year-end 2019/20.
34. The Committee adjourned for a 5-minute recess.

**ITEM 13. TRANSPORT FOR SOUTH EAST TRANSPORT STRATEGY**

35. The Chair invited Vic lent, speaking as a representative of the South Downs Society, to address the meeting.
36. Vic lent made the following points:
  - TfSE should be asked to modify their strategy to include:
    - i. a section focussed on the countryside and rural areas
    - ii. more ambitious measures to achieve zero carbon well before 2050
    - iii. a roadmap with interventions to achieve sustainable transport
    - iv. a review of the effects of COVID-19
    - v. a more open approach to engaging the public in future studies
37. The Countryside and Policy Manager for Wealden Heaths introduced the report (NPA20/21-04) and reminded Members of the report content.
38. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:
  - The high level objectives in the strategy were considered to be sound. The TfSE Officer group had commissioned a study to consider the implications as a result of Covid-19. This was looking at 4 scenarios based on different public health outcomes, and their implications for the transport network.
  - The orbital and coastal studies were particularly important for the future, the outer orbital study included the whole A27 corridor and Coastway rail route.
  - TfSE's recently released key performance indicators did provide further detail on some of the proposals set out in the strategy.
39. Members made the following comments:
  - Sustainable Transport was high on the Government Priority list but more information was needed about funding for rural transport and where the funding would come from.
  - Although there was a lot in the strategy to be supported TfSE could strengthen monitoring and rural transport.
  - Transport for the South East was currently operating in shadow form and it should be supported to allow TfSE to become a formally constituted body.

- The Strategy needed to be adaptable because post Covid-19 the future was uncertain and could increase the number of journeys made by car.

40. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to consider and support the Transport for the South East Transport Strategy as set out at appendix 2 of the report.

#### **ITEM 14. REVIEW OF MEMBER ALLOWANCES**

41. The Head of Governance introduced the report (NPA20/21-05).

42. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

43. Dr Declan Hall was commissioned to do a review of member allowances and he put forward a number of options. The recommendation presented to members referred to option 2.

44. The recommendation was proposed and seconded.

45. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:

- Consider the outcomes of the independent review of the Scheme of Allowances set out at appendix 4 of the report; and
- Adopt the Scheme of Members' Allowances set out at Appendix 2 of the report to be backdated to take effect from 1 April 2020 noting that subsequent increases will take place, without reference back to the NPA, each year until 2024 in line with the indexation provisions set out in the scheme.

46. Chris Dowling left the meeting.

#### **ITEM 15. CONTRACT FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKS AT SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK**

47. The Head of Business Services introduced the report (NPA20/21-05) and reminded members of the report content.

48. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

- There was no date set for when the Secretary of State would approve the transfer of ownership of the Seven Sisters Country Park from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to the SDNPA. Legal advice was currently being sought as to whether the approval of two Government Departments was needed for the transfer. Officers were working to make this as fast and seamless as possible.
- The Head of Business Services had a Professional Qualification in procurement. The Pre-Qualification Questionnaire would be worked on with the architects and criteria would be tight.
- The contract would include incentives and penalties to ensure the works were kept to a tight schedule.
- When evaluating tenders it was crucial that consideration was given to ensuring the project could be delivered on time for a Summer 2021 opening.

49. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:

- Approve the commencement of a procurement process leading to the appointment of a contractor to undertake construction works at sites at Exceat and Foxholes, within Seven Sisters Country Park
- Approve delegation of authority to the Chief Executive to award contracts for the above, following the competitive process laid out in this report.

**ITEM 17. PHASE I SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK BY SDNPA**

50. The Head of Business Services introduced the report (NPA20/21-07) and reminded members of the report content. The Head of Business Services advised Members that the report contained an error and the correct figure was that an application had been made for £120,000 to the SDNPA CIL fund.
51. In response to questions, officers advised Members of the following:
- The business case did not take into account any of the funding applications being successful and any successful bids would reduce the amount of borrowing needed.
  - If there was any increase of funding needed over the agreed commitment of £600,000 the Chief Executive would bring it back to the NPA for decision.
52. The meeting was closed to the public, including the press, and moved into private session at 4.46pm.
53. The meeting returned to public session at 5.08pm.
54. The recommendation was proposed and seconded.
55. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Note the increase in estimated costs following the completion of Quantity Surveyor work undertaken as part of the ongoing project work at Seven Sisters Country Park.
  2. Approve the revised phase I business case set out in appendix I and increase in financial commitment of £600,000 to deliver revised Phase I of the project, to be funded from prudential borrowing and/or use of reserves, as appropriate.
  3. Note the longer term masterplan and potential further investment in the future for the Foxhole area of the Seven Sisters Country park pending approval of a detailed business case to the NPA in October 2020.

**ITEM 16. PART II minutes of the previous meeting on 21 May 2020**

56. The meeting was closed to the public, including the press and moved into private session at 5.10pm.
57. The meeting returned to public session at 5.12pm.
58. The Chair closed the meeting at 5.12pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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