

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING

Held at 2.00pm on 15 October 2020 using Zoom Video Conferencing.

Present:

Alun Alesbury, Heather Baker, Annie Brown, Chris Dowling, Janet Duncton, Angus Dunn, Thérèse Evans, Barbara Holyome, Melanie Hunt, Doug Jones, Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, Robert Mocatta, Russell Oppenheimer, Ian Phillips (Chair), Henry Potter, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston, Diana van der Klugt, Richard Waring and Stephen Whale.

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: Lucy Howard (Planning Policy Manager), Ruth James (Communications and Engagement Manager),

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

71. The Chair 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

72. The Senior Governance Officer reminded Members of the protocol that would be followed during the meeting.

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

73. Apologies were received from Gary Marsh, Martin Osborne and William Meyer.

ITEM 2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

74. The following declarations of interest were made:

- Stephen Whale declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 8 as in a professional capacity he had previously advised and represented Highways England.
- Janet Duncton declared a Public Service Interest in Agenda Item 11 as a Member of West Sussex County Council and Chichester District Council who had both submitted a response to the White Paper: Planning for the Future.

ITEM 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 7 JULY 2020

75. The minutes of the Authority meetings held on 7 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING

76. There were none.

ITEM 5. URGENT ITEMS

77. The Chair informed the Authority that he had been notified of one urgent update to an item of business. The urgent item related to Appendix I to Agenda Item 11 (White Paper: Planning for the Future) which had been replaced with an updated version of Appendix I following discussion at the Planning Committee.
78. The Chair explained that having considered this matter, he agreed that there were special circumstances that required an urgent update to an already published item of business. These circumstances were that due to the changes suggested by the Planning Committee, accepted by the Director of Planning, and the deadline of the 29 October 2020 for submission of the Authority's response, it was not possible to defer consideration of this item to a future meeting.
79. The replacement Appendix I to Agenda Item 11 was published on the Authority's website and sent to all members on Tuesday 13 October 2020 and the Chair confirmed that the Urgent Item would be taken as part of Agenda Item 11.

ITEM 6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

80. There was none.

ITEM 7. NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

81. The Chair asked the Authority if any Member wished to raise any point of accuracy in the part II minutes of the previous meeting at Agenda Item 17. As no Member wished to raise any point of accuracy the Chair informed the Authority that the meeting would not move into private session to consider the Part II minutes of the 7 July 2020 meeting.
82. The part II minutes of the Authority meetings held on 7 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

ITEM 8. AUTHORITY CHAIR UPDATE

83. The Authority Chair introduced report (NPA20/21-08) and reminded Members of the report content. The Chair gave an update on:
- The recent meeting with Members of Chichester District Council, which had been productive with a number of areas of collaboration and mutual support agreed.
 - The Highways England announcement made on 15 October 2020 regarding the preferred route for the A27 around Arundel. The Chair updated that the 'grey' route that ran entirely outside of the SDNP had been selected and, although the most expensive of all the options, Highways England (HE) had confirmed the required resources were available as well as a substantial mitigation budget. The HE timetable would be an 8-week consultation on the preliminary design in late 2021 with the Planning Application submitted in summer 2022.
84. In response to questions, The Chair advised Members of the following:
- Due to current working methods it was difficult to replicate the benefits of face to face meetings with Local Authorities but other ways of ensuring good dialogs with them were being explored.
 - The onus would be on HE to address the impacts of the A27 around Arundel, such as the loss of wildlife and division of communities.
85. Members commented that:
- They had found the previous Member to Member meetings with Local Authorities very useful and hoped that they could be involved in the meetings again in the future.

- The establishment of the SDNP had caused much scepticism amongst some Local Authorities within West Sussex but the feeling now was that the SDNPA was having a positive impact on West Sussex.

86. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to note the update from the Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority.

ITEM 9. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT

87. The Chief Executive introduced report (NPA20/21-09) and reminded Members of the report content. The Chief Executive referred to the following updates since the report had been published:

- The Authority had appointed Peter Cousin as the Commercial Manager with responsibility for Seven Sisters Country Park.
- The Esso Pipeline order had received Development Consent from the Secretary of State. The Major Development test had been met, but it would still have a negative impact on the National Park. The Chief Executive reported that through the hard work of Officers the amended scheme would retain 4.8km of hedgerow which would have been lost, would retain 97 trees, and the aftercare programme would be for 5 years rather than the original 3 years.
- The intranet was being updated regularly with any new Covid-19 guidance for Officers and Members, and took into account the latest Government guidance.
- The Egrets Way had secured £600,000 of HE funding which had been set aside for cycling schemes.
- Congratulations to the Towner museum in Eastbourne which had been named Museum of the Year.

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

- An Officer group had been established to lead the organisational work on diversity. The Officer group were drawing up proposals and consultants would be employed to provide training to Officers and Members, advice on the appointment of Co-optees and to look at SDNPA recruitment and advertising.

89. Members commented that:

- There was a lack of clarity for Farmers from Central Government with regards the new ELMS scheme.
- The Green Recovery Challenge Fund provided good opportunity for partnership work.

90. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to note the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) since the last report.

ITEM 10. UPDATE ON THE WILD CHALK AND SECRETS OF THE HEATH EVENTS

91. The Communications and Engagement Manager introduced report (NPA20/21-10) and reminded members of the report content. The Communications and Engagement Manager informed the Authority that the 'Meet the Farmer' Plaque project with the farm clusters had won a gold award in the CPRE awards ceremony for Connecting People and the Countryside.

92. Covid-19 had stopped the face to face events programme from happening which led to the creation of virtual events. The Communications and Engagement Manager played 2 short videos to Members highlighting the successful Wild Chalk virtual event held in July and the Secrets of the Heath virtual Event held in September 2020.

93. Robert Mocatta left the meeting.
94. In response to questions, Offices advised Members of the following:
- 83,000 people virtually attended the Wild Chalk event (compared to 1700 in person in 2019) with people attending from London and Bristol as well as surrounding local areas. A similar number of virtual attendees also attended the Secrets of the Heath virtual event, 83,500.
 - The updated Communication and Engagement Strategy would be reported to the December NPA and would contain virtual events as they reach audiences that might not attend in person.
 - It was possible to see the age profile and location of the attendees but not their ethnic background.
 - The Authority's social Media channels had seen a 40% increase in new audiences during 2020.
 - Facebook had been the best platform for the virtual events as it allowed longer videos to be played and more interaction. Most of videos were filmed using gimbals and mobile phones.
 - Within the budget some of the funds that had originally been allocated to physical events had been diverted to virtual events.
95. Members made the following comments:
- It was excellent to see how quickly the Authority switched to a new format and how it had embraced new technology to connect with new and younger audiences.
 - The films were inspiring, uplifting and a resource to help support people's mental health.
 - The Ranger teams were to be commended as their walking festivals had also been very successful.
 - The communications team had been excellent in responding to landowner concerns with visitor management and highlighting key issues to the public.
96. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to note the feedback on the Authority's Wild Chalk and Secrets of the Heath events.
97. The Authority took a 5-minute recess.

ITEM 11. SDNPA RESPONSE TO THE WHITE PAPER: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

98. The Planning Policy Manager introduced the report (NPA20/21-11) and reminded Members of the report content and drew Members attention to the updated Appendix 1, which the Chair had agreed could be considered as an urgent update. The Planning Policy Manager reminded Members that this response was purely to the White Paper: Planning for the Future and not the 'Changes to the Current Planning System' consultation.
99. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:
- Under delegated powers Officers had submitted a response to the Consultation on 'Changes to the Current Planning System'. The response highlighted the issue of the higher housing numbers increasing the rate of housing development in close proximity to the National Park. The full response was available on the SDNPA website.
 - Officers saw the advantages of having standard national policies rather than local plan policies duplicated across the country,. However, officers would also like to see some policies specifically related to National Parks and/or AONBs.

- Under the current White Paper Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) would be lost from the Planning System. **Members requested** that a new paragraph be added to the response under the Local Plan and Zoning section to stress the importance and that SPDs should be retained.

100. Members made the following comments:

- The response was positive and well balanced and Members were pleased to see that the omissions on biodiversity and climate change had been picked up. There was agreement that the definition of Sustainability needed to be the proper version. There was also no reference to transport infrastructure within the response.
- The paragraph referring to Village Design Statements (VDS) would be better under the heading '*Design and Beauty*', rather than under the heading '*Neighbourhood Development Plans*'. **Members requested** this paragraph be moved.
- Language should be consistent in legal terms that where the word '*conserve*' was used '*and enhance*' should be added afterwards. **Members requested** this change.
- Under the Development Management section, a question was posed '*will the LPA receive a financial bonus if the appeal is dismissed?*' The language used should be clear, not posed as a question and not open to misinterpretation. **Members requested** the question be reworded to say what was meant.
- The language should be neutral and robust. **Members requested** that the language and tone in the response be stronger and clearer.

101. An amendment to recommendation I was proposed, seconded and agreed to add the words '*subject to the amendments requested by the Authority*' so that it would read.

- '*Approve the SDNPA response to the White Paper: Planning for the Future set out in Appendix I of the report, subject to the amendments requested by the Authority*'.

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

1. Approve the SDNPA response to the White Paper: Planning for the Future set out in Appendix I of this report, subject to the amendments requested by the Authority.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Authority to make any changes to the response arising from the Authority's discussions and / or any minor textual changes considered appropriate prior to submission of the response.

103. Richard Waring left the meeting.

ITEM 12. MEMBER REPRESENTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

104. The Authority Chair, Deputy Chair and Head of Governance introduced report NPA20/21-05

105. Members made the following Comments:

- It would be a new way of working to not have all Members allocated to Committees and may assist Committees in better achieving their aims and objectives. Committees have a maximum size to allow them to be effective and the P&R Committee was currently very large. There was also discussion about whether the size of the Committees could be adjusted to reflect a more even balance.
- The establishment of an 'Alumni' group of former Authority Members may not necessarily be a good idea as it could be perceived that they may have too much influence back on the Authority. It could also be seen as an exclusive club and although there was sympathy that past Members may still like to be involved there was a feeling that things do move on and change.

- That there was support and agreement to the principle of co-opting up to 3 additional members to the P&R Committee to increase the level of challenge and improve the diversity of voices within the Authority's formal decision making processes.
- That there was support for the commission of a review of Member Allowances to allow the co-optees to receive an allowance for their input, but Members did not necessarily agree that this should be the same as the Members basic allowance and felt that potentially by saying this the Authority was leading the review to the outcome. Members also highlighted that the 3 co-opted Members would need to work as hard as Authority Members and should be rewarded for their valued contributions to the Authority's work particularly. The 3 co-opted Members would be reaching out to new demographics not currently represented on the Authority and the monetary allowance could be seen as an attractive reason to become a Co-opted Member of the P&R Committee. The 3 Co-opted Members would not be able to vote and there was discussion that maybe they should be paid at a higher rate to the basic allowance that Authority Members receive.
- The appointment of the 3 co-opted Members should be guided by the outcomes of the Member skills audit and through conducting an equality audit in order that the gaps in the diversity of the Authority Membership could be highlighted and not allow the Authority to be accused of a tokenism co-opted membership.
- The role of P&R Committee was to monitor the budget. The regulation and control of the budget was undertaken by the Full Authority. Officers confirmed that this was correct and it was this distinction of powers that allowed for the Co-opted Members to be appointed to P&R Committee.

106. In response to questions the Chair advised Members of the following:

- The proposal to change the Committee membership so that not all Authority Members have to be allocated to a Committee was to allow Committees to run effectively and efficiently, as currently the P&R Committee was very large. With mutual consent it may be that some Members' time, expertise and experience may be more suited to other work such as Task and Finish Groups. No member would be forced to leave a Committee and it would be possible that a Member could sit on both a Committee and a Task and Finish Group.
- The 'Alumni' group would have no more influence than members of the public but would allow the Authority to retain the knowledge, passion and expertise of past members. The Alumni group could become advocates for the SDNP.

107. In response to questions the Deputy Chair advised Members of the following:

- That the appointment of Members to SDNPA was not in the direct control of the Authority itself as appointments were made either by a Local Authority, the Secretary of State or by an election process run through the County Parish Associations. The Authority had employed consultants to seek applications from underrepresented groups for the recent 5 Secretary of State vacancies but the final decision was down to the Secretary of State and SDNPA were unable to have any influence over this other than seeking applications. SDNPA could have control over the appointment of the 3 co-opted Members for the P&R Committee.

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

- The final decision of Committee Membership was by decision of the Full Authority.
- Any proposed amendments to the Member's Allowances scheme would be considered by the NPA.

- The Co-opted Members would be appointed for an initial term of 4 years, similar to that of the 2 Independent Members, who were also co-opted, that sat on P&R Committee.
109. Chris Dowling left the meeting.
110. A proposal to amend the wording of recommendation 6 was proposed, seconded and agreed to omit the words '*at the same rate as the current Member basic allowance*' so that it read:
- '*Agree to commission a single-issue review of the Members' Allowances Scheme to consider the payment of an allowance to Co-opted Members of the Policy and Resources Committee, with the outcome of this review reported back to the NPA for a final decision on the adoption of a Co-optees' allowance*'.
111. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Endorse the principle of a small number of Members not being appointed to committees in order to undertake, within the parameters of the member role description, other roles to support the work of the Authority as set out at paragraph 3.3.
 2. Agree to appoint Authority Members Angus Dunn and Martin Osborne to the Policy and Resources Committee.
 3. Note the appointment of Authority member Richard Waring as an SDNPA Trustee on the South Downs National Park Trust.
 4. Approve the creation of an "Alumni" group of former Authority Members based on the principles set out at Appendix I.
 5. Agree the principle of appointing up to 3 additional Co-opted Members to the Policy and Resources Committee and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, to develop and undertake a process for selecting individuals to be recommended to the Authority for appointment as Co-opted Members to the Policy & Resources Committee.
 - a. Agree to commission a single-issue review of the Members' Allowances Scheme to consider the payment of an allowance to Co-opted Members of the Policy and Resources Committee, with the outcome of this review reported back to the NPA for a final decision on the adoption of a Co-optees' allowance.
112. Annie Brown left the meeting

ITEM 13. REVISED MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT AND RELATED MATTERS

113. The Monitoring Officer introduced the report (NPA20/21-13) and reminded Members of the report content.
114. Members made the following comments:
- The document was clearly set out and the presentation was easy to follow.
115. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Agree the revised Members' Code of Conduct set out in Appendix I and delegate authority to the Chief Executive to publicise the revised Code in such manner as he considers was likely to bring it to the attention of people who live in the South Downs National Park.
 2. Agree the Authority's position and proposed actions in response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life report "Local Government Ethical Standards" as set out at paragraph 3.5.

3. Agree the revised Indemnity for Members and Officers, set out in Appendix 3, which had been amended to make express reference to Independent Persons and Co-opted Members.
4. Agree to extend the appointments of the Authority's two Independent Persons, set out in section 4, on the current terms until 18th December 2021 pursuant to the decision taken by the Authority at its meeting on 19th December 2017.
5. Agree the revised Local Protocol for Member and Officer Relations set out in Appendix 4.
6. Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to update and republish the Local Protocol for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters to reflect relevant changes agreed to the Members' Code of Conduct and the Local Protocol for Member and Officer Relations.
7. Agree the role descriptions for Members, Authority Chair and Deputy Chair set out in Appendix 5.

ITEM 14. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

116. The Head of Governance introduced the report (NPA20/21-14) and reminded Members of the report content.
117. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to adopt the revised Financial Procedures (Appendix 1) and Financial Regulations (Appendix 2).

ITEM 15. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

118. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 11 June, 9 July, 13 August and 10 September 2020.

ITEM 16 POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

119. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 16 July 2020.
120. The Chair closed the meeting at 5.06pm

Signed _____

Dated _____