

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**  
Date **24 March 2022**  
By **Head of Governance and Support Services**  
Title of Report **Process for selection and recommendation of Co-opted Members to the Policy and Resources Committee**

**Decision**

---

**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to:**

- 1. Appoint Morris Findley and Lawrence Leather to serve as non-voting Co-opted Members on the Policy and Resources Committee, until the Authority AGM in 2023**
- 2. Note that the Director of Countryside Policy and Management, in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee is currently undertaking a process to identify an additional co-opted member and make a recommendation for their appointment in due course.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee, to undertake a recruitment exercise for the positions of 2 Independent (CIPFA) co-opted Member of the Authority's Policy and Resources Committee, including the approval of any documentation considered necessary and the taking of all other appropriate steps in carrying out the recruitment exercise and, if required, subsequent recruitment exercises; and**
- 4. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee, to undertake such selection exercise(s) as the Chief Executive considers appropriate for the positions of Independent (CIPFA) Co-opted Member of the Authority's Policy and Resources Committee, and to make a recommendation to the Authority for the appointment of up to two Independent Members.**

---

**I. Introduction**

- I.1** At its meeting in December 2020 The NPA agreed to co-opt up to three additional individuals (in addition the existing 2 co-opted members) to the Policy and Resources Committee, and agreed a role description (Appendix I) to outline the roles co-opted members would be expected to undertake. Co-option is the phrase used for the inclusion of individuals who are not members of the Authority to be included in the membership of a committee. Subject to some limitations, the Authority has a general power to co-opt individuals to its committees.

- 1.2 Co-optees may not be appointed to a Committee whose function is to regulate or control the finances of the Authority. Clarification has been sought from the s151 officer, who has confirmed that, in his opinion, the Policy and Resources Committee is not a committee for the regulation and control of the Authority's finances, as its powers to affect the budget of the Authority are limited to a de Minimis level.
- 1.3 Individuals considered for appointment as an Independent (CIPFA) co-opted member or as a co-opted member must not be disqualified from membership, Any co-opted member would be expected to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct and be subject to the requirements thereof. In general, a Co-opted Member has no right to vote (other than in certain circumstances which are not applicable to the NPA, but do apply in some Local Authorities).
- 1.4 Co-optees also play an important role in advocating and championing the National Park, helping us to reach audiences that we currently find it difficult to address. Such an approach runs alongside existing consultative and engagement methods.
- 1.5 At its meeting in December 2020 the Authority agreed an amendment to the members allowances scheme to include a payment of an allowance to Co-opted members.
- 1.6 For clarity, the Policy and Resources Committee currently has 4 co-opted members - two undertaking the formal "independent (CIPFA) co-opted member" role and 2 "co-opted members".
- 1.7 The appointment of Morris Findley and Lawrence Leather are due to expire in March 2022, as they were only appointed for up to one year. The case for continuing their appointment is set out below.
- 1.8 Both of the Independent (CIPFA) co-opted members (Carole Nicholson and Tom Fourcade) were appointed in 2018, meaning their four-year terms of office come to end at the Authority AGM in 2022. In order to have sufficient time to undertake a robust recruitment and selection process delegation is sought now, with a view to recommendation for appointments being brought to the Authority In May 2022 for appointments to begin at the AGM in 2022.

## **2. Policy Context.**

- 2.1 The terms of reference for the P&R committee include overseeing many aspects of the Authority's governance. The Independent (CIPFA) Co-opted members of the committee provide valuable insight and rigour in the process and help to ensure the best possible outcomes for the Authority.
- 2.2 Further the appointment of additional co-optees is intended to enhance the Authority's decision making, extend the range of available expertise and contribute to the effective delivery of the Authority's agreed outcomes and objectives.

## **3. Co-opted members (non-CIPFA)**

- 3.1 Two co-opted members were recruited to the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2021, as a pilot year to test whether decision making could be improved through widening the range of voices heard in discussions and debates.
- 3.2 Feedback on the contribution made by the two co-optees has been positive and has included the following benefits to the work of the committee:
  - Voices of a younger generation ensuring a wider range of voices are heard in the committee deliberations
  - Provided added realism- they have reminded us of different income levels across society and how easily groups on low / no income can be excluded
  - Differing input and viewpoints on ecosystems and biodiversity from undergraduate perspective
  - Experience of working with marginalised groups
  - Direct first-hand experience of volunteering

- Willingness to become involved beyond meetings and to engage in the wider work of the NPA and develop their wider knowledge of the National Park and National Park Authority – providing all of the benefits listed above across the work of the Authority.

3.3 Following on from the NPAs Decision In October 2020 A process is currently underway , led by the Director of Countryside Policy and Management and the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee to identify a third co-optee. A selection panel comprising the Director of Countryside Policy and Management, Chair of the Policy &Resources committee, Authority Chair and Deputy Chair will make a recommendation to the NPA for appointment should a suitable individual be identified.

#### 4. Independent (CIPFA) Co-opted members

4.1 The role of Independent (CIPFA) Co-opted member was originally established to serve on the Authority’s Committee charged with overseeing audit in order to provide an additional layer of rigour and independence to the consideration of governance matters. For clarity, the independent (CIPFA) co-opted member is not appointed by CIPFA, but rather appointed to meet the CIPFA guidance related to independent members on Audit committees. The term Independent (CIPFA) Co-opted Member is used to distinguish this role from the other co-optees to the committee.

4.2 This paper seeks delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee to undertake a recruitment and Selection process to ensure the continued participation of Independent (CIPFA) Co-opted members in the work of the P&R committee.

4.3 The NPA resolved at its meeting in December 2020 that Independent (CIPFA) Co-optees would not normally serve more than two terms, due to the need to preserve their independence. One of the two Independent (CIPFA) Co-opted members will have, in June 2022 served on the committee for 8 years.

#### 5. Options & cost implications

5.1 This paper seeks delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee to undertake the recruitment process for the positions of Independent (CIPFA) of the Authority’s Policy and Resources Committee. It is further proposed that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Policy and Resources Committee to select up to two preferred candidates and make a recommendation to the Authority for appointment. This process will be undertaken within existing resources.

5.2 Alternatively, the Authority may wish to establish a separate recruitment panel to undertake the recruitment process and make recommendations back to the authority as to suitable candidates for appointment. This process would take longer and be more resource intensive as additional meetings would need to be established for the members of the panel.

#### 6. Next steps

6.1 The Chief Executive will liaise with the P&R Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs to commence the recruitment process for the independent (CIPFA) co-opted member

6.2 Recommendations for all appointments will be bought back to the NPA in due course.

#### 7. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	The Authority will be required to take a decision to appoint new Independent Members and co-opted members
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	None. The process can be managed from within existing budgets.

How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Contributing to effective governance of the Authority.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes The process undertaken to recruit co-opted members and independent members will be in line with the necessary equalities requirements
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	Through following the Authority's established practices the personal information of any applicants will be kept secure and in line with individuals rights under the DPA/GDPR.
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	Promoting good governance.

## 8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 8.1 The proposal is designed to mitigate the risks of not complying with the CIPFA guidance regarding committees with an Audit function
- 8.2 If, following an initial recruitment exercise, there is insufficient interest in the role(s), the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the P&R committee will consider alternative routes to seek candidates.

### ROBIN PARR

#### Head of Governance and Support Services South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer: Robin Parr  
Tel: 01730 819207  
Email: robin.parr@southdowns.gov.uk  
Appendices: I. Co-optee role description  
SDNPA Consultees: Chief Executive, Director of Countryside Policy and Management, Monitoring Officer.  
External Consultees: None  
Background Documents: Authority Papers October and December 2020

## **Role Description for Co-opted Members of the SDNPA Policy and Resources Committee**

The South Downs National Park Authority appoints co-opted members to its Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee, in order to strengthen the breadth of experience and skills available to the Committee and the wider work of the Authority. The role of co-opted members is wide ranging and whilst co-opted members will only be appointed to the P&R committee, it is expected that they will participate in the full range of meetings and activities attended by Members of the Authority.

### **Purpose of the Role**

The co-optee role is to complement, inform and challenge, rather than replace, the role of appointed Members who remain accountable to the Authority and are ultimately responsible for decision making.

Whilst all co-optees are non-voting, the Authority recognises the valuable contribution that co-opted members make to the work of the Authority in supporting good governance and broadening the range of voices involved in the debate about key issues. thereby helping better, more inclusive decisions to be made

Co-optees may play specific roles, such as those appointed to contribute to effective arrangements for audit, financial control and risk management they may be appointed because they have particular expertise or experience that is not well represented on the NPA by other means. Co-optees would also play an important role in advocating and championing the National Park, helping us to reach new, wider and diverse audiences. Such an approach would run alongside existing consultative and engagement methods.

Co-opted members will have access to all of the services, support and information available to voting members.

Co-opted members will be appointed for a four-year term, at the end of which they may be considered for reappointment. It is expected that any independent (CIPFA) co-optee will not normally serve for more than 2 terms, in order to preserve the independence of the role. Any reappointment is subject to a decision of the NPA.

Co-opted members are not eligible to vote on matters at meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee or other meetings that they may be invited to attend but will be able to fully participate in any debate or discussions held at such meetings or events.

### **Key Expectations of co-opted members**

It is expected that all co-opted members will:

- participate in meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee and other member events/meetings
- Give presentations or specific inputs as requested to meetings or workshops
- provide input and expertise to assist the Committee in its work.
- adhere to and promote the Members' Code of Conduct to encourage the highest standards of behaviour in public office.
- represent and act in the best interests of the Authority and in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders and other protocols.
- Attend an annual meeting with the Chair of the Committee and relevant Director to discuss their experience and performance

Co-opted members **who have not been** appointed to comply with the CIPFA guidance will also be expected to:

- Make presentations to the P&R Committee on an area in which they have particular expertise, as agreed with the Chair of that Committee;
- Make similar presentations at an all staff meeting, where appropriate in association with the other non CIPFA co-optees;
- Connect and champion the Authority and National Park in the wider community inside and beyond the Parks Boundaries
- Provide occasional updates on their experiences in the newsletter that is sent to all staff and members;
- Support the communications team in the delivery of the social media objectives of the Communications Strategy.

For individuals **co-opted to comply with CIPFA** guidance, it is also expected that they will have:

- A knowledge of corporate governance and risk management
- Financial management experience
- An understanding of accountability and probity in public life
- A wish to serve the local community and uphold local democracy
- Effective questioning skills
- Some knowledge of public finance

### **Remuneration and time commitment**

Co-opted members may claim travel and subsistence and receive the payment of an allowance as defined in the SDNPA members allowance Scheme.