

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**
Date **20 October 2022**
By **Head of Governance**
Title of Report **Appointment of Co-opted Member to the Policy and Resources Committee**

Decision

Recommendation:

The Authority is recommended to appoint the named individual set out in the exempt Appendix 2 to serve as a non-voting Co-opted Member on the Policy and Resources Committee until the Authority AGM in 2026.

I. Summary and Background

- I.1 At its meeting in December 2020, the NPA agreed to appoint up to three additional Co-opted Members to the Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee, and agreed a role description (**Appendix 1**) to outline the roles that co-opted members would be expected to undertake. These three Co-opted Members would be in addition to the existing two Co-opted Members of P&R Committee who are appointed to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance related to independent members on Audit committees. In March 2021, the NPA appointed two of the three additional Co-opted Members to the P&R Committee, and in March 2022 the NPA agreed that their appointment should continue until the Authority AGM in 2023.
- I.2 Co-option is the phrase used for the inclusion of individuals who are not Members of the Authority in the membership of a committee. Subject to some limitations, the Authority has a general power to co-opt individuals to its committees.
- I.3 Co-optees may not be appointed to a committee whose function is to regulate or control the finances of the Authority. Clarification was sought from the s151 officer, who confirmed that, in his opinion, the P&R 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.
- I.4 Individuals considered for co-option must not be disqualified from membership, any co-opted member would be expected to abide by the Member 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).
- I.5 In addition to participating in meetings of the P&R Committee, Co-optees are expected to be involved in the more informal structures of the Authority. For example, they are invited to attend Authority Strategic Direction Days and Member Workshops where the development of policy is undertaken. Co-opted Members may make presentations at P&R Committee and other events and are invited to attend NPA meetings as observers and

invited to speak in relation to topics where they have a particular interest or expertise.

- 1.6 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, for example, working with the Communications Team in the delivery of the social media objectives of the Communications and Engagement Strategy. Such an approach will run alongside existing consultative and engagement methods.
- 1.7 At its meeting in December 2020, the Authority agreed an amendment to the Member’s Allowances Scheme to include a payment of an allowance to Co-opted Members.
- 1.8 It should be noted that P&R Committee also has two other Co-opted Members of P&R Committee for governance purposes (in line with CIPFA guidance). If the recommended appointment is agreed, there will be five Co-opted Members in total appointed to P&R Committee.

2. Policy Context.

- 2.1 The appointment of Co-opted Members 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. Issues for consideration

- 3.1 The Authority was advised in March 2022 that a recruitment process was underway led by the Director of Countryside Policy and Management and the Chair of the P&R Committee to identify an additional Co-opted Member.
- 3.2 The Director of Countryside and Policy Management, in consultation with the Chair of the P&R Committee, has undertaken the recruitment process which focussed on identifying an additional Co-opted Member who would complement the current Co-opted Members. The previous recruitment process targeted student populations around the National Park, whereas the most recent recruitment process used the existing networks of officers and partners to seek out an individual who could further broaden the range of voices involved in the debates on key issues. The recommendation set out in the report asks Members to appoint an additional Co-opted Member until the Authority AGM in 2026.
- 3.3 The appointment is recommended until the Authority AGM in 2026, which, whilst being 3 months short of a four-year term, is considered appropriate to bring the appointment in line with that of other Co-opted Members. This would mean that any potential reappointment or recruitment processes needing to be undertaken at that point could be streamlined, thereby reducing the resource burden on the Authority.
- 3.4 The power to appoint individuals to a committee is a matter reserved for the NPA. Details of the individual recommended for appointment is set out in the exempt **Appendix 2** to this report.

4. Options & cost implications

- 4.1 The Authority has previously agreed to amend the Members’ Allowance Scheme to include a payment to Co-opted Members, and this additional cost has been factored into the Authority’s budget.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 The individual, if appointed, will undertake an induction into the work of the NPA and join the P&R Committee with immediate effect.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No

Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	The resource implications have been previously considered by the NPA and factored into the Authority's budget.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Effective decision-making contributes to the efficient running of the Authority.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	The operation of committees meets the obligations of the Equality Act 2010 and reasonable adjustments will be made to support Members. The process undertaken to recruit Co-opted Members was in line with the necessary equality requirements. The SDNPA is committed to including a more diverse range of voices in the debates and decisions on key issues and the appointment of an individual able to bring personal and professional expertise and experiences and be a representative for under-represented groups supports this.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Data Protection implications?	Personal data relating to this decision will be managed in accordance with the Authority information security policy and in compliance with Data Protection legislation.
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	The report adheres to the principle of Promoting Good Governance as set out in the Authority's Sustainability Strategy.

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 7.1 Members, including Co-opted Members who have been newly appointed to Committees may be required to undertake training in the role and responsibilities of such Committees.
- 7.2 The recommendation is intended to help reduce risks associated with the governance of the organisation and to improve its decision-making functions.

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Appendices 1. Co-optee role description

2. Nominated individual

This appendix is not for publication as it contains exempt information within Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to an individual, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exempt information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons set out in the appendix (as applicable).

SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Monitoring Officer.

External Consultees None

Background Documents None

**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

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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