

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 21 NOVEMBER 2024

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 1.00pm

Present: Tim Burr, Chris Dowling, Theresa Fowler, Joan Grech, Melanie Hunt, Jerry Pett, Mark Potter, Steven Ridgeon, Vicki Wells and Stephen Whale.

Co-opted Members of the Committee: Arthur Sloman.

Independent Members of the Committee: Tom Fourcade and Catriona Aves.

Other SDNPA Members: Stephen McAuliffe and Vanessa Rowlands (Chair of the Authority).

SDNPA Officers: Laura Sercombe (Director of Landscape and Strategy), Tim Slaney Chief Executive Officer (Interim)), Annie Barnes (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Beth Bowers (External Auditor), Amanda Craig (Internal Auditor), Richard Fryer (Senior Governance Officer), Nigel James (Countryside and Policy Manager(Western Area)), Claire Kerr (Countryside and Policy Manager (Eastern Area)), Nigel Manvel (Chief Finance Officer), Claire Onslow (Commercial and Strategic Manager), Anne Rehill (Performance and Project Manager), Richard Sandiford (Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer), Victoria Turner (Head of Finance and Corporate Services), Elaina Whittaker-Slark (Lead Ranger) and Mark Winton (Chief Internal Auditor)

OPENING REMARKS

369. The Chair opened the meeting.

370. The Chair welcomed all those present 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.

371. The Chair welcomed Stephen McAuliffe and Vanessa Rowlands. She also welcomed the new external auditor Beth Bowers and the new internal auditor Amanda Craig.

ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

372. Apologies were received from Peter Diplock, Mark Fairweather and Morris Findley.

373. The Chair relayed the best wishes of the committee to Morris Findley for a swift recovery.

ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

374. There were declarations of interest from:

- Mark Potter declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 9 as he was a trustee of the Wessex Rivers Trust.
- Vicki Wells declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 11 as the Cabinet Member for the Environment for Worthing Borough Council.
- Chris Dowling declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 12 as a former director of South Downs Commercial Operations Limited.
- Stephen Whale declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 12 as a former director of South Downs Commercial Operations Limited.

- Annie Barnes declared she had a conflict of interest in relation to Agenda Item 9 and would move to the public gallery for that item.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 JUNE 2024

375. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 27 June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

376. The Chief Executive Officer (Interim) confirmed that the interest earned on Section 106 funds held by the Authority were not ringfenced.

ITEM 5: URGENT MATTERS

377. There were none.

ITEM 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

378. There were two members of the public who had requested to speak and they would be invited to address the meeting at agenda Item 9.

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

379. It was noted that there were two confidential appendices for this meeting, and Members would be asked at those items whether they wished to consider the exclusion of the public, including the press, from the meeting to discuss those appendices.

ITEM 8: CHAIR UPDATE

380. The Chair provided the following verbal updates:

- The composition of the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) steering group was being finalised and would be chaired by the new Chief Executive Officer Siôn McGeever.
- A number of Members attended the National Parks UK conference in September which had a focus on equality, diversion and inclusion.
- Noted the government's new budget and the £1.9 billion reduction in Defra's grant, £1.8 billion targeted investment on environmental land management schemes, £400 million new capital for tree planting and peatland restoration and £14 million for nature-based solutions.
- A paper would come to the February meeting on the Authority's approach to diversifying recruitment.
- Online webinars had been produced by the Sussex Local Nature Recovery Schemes (LNRS) and links to them would be circulated to Members.

ITEM 9: THE SPLASH ROUTE, MILL LANE, DROXFORD

381. Annie Barnes moved to the public gallery.

382. The Countryside and Policy Manager (Western Area) introduced report PR24/25-11 and reminded members of the report content.

383. The following members of the public addressed the committee:

- Adam Faulkner, a local resident.
- Debbie Luff, representing East Hampshire Association of Town and Parish Councils BOATS subgroup.

384. The Committee commented:

- Some concern that two years on from the Authority's consideration of the management of Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs), no significant progress appeared to have been made.
- Extinguishment of highway rights was a very high bar and that they were not persuaded that the test had been met for this issue.
- That intentionally damaging a highway could not be considered legal use of it and was a criminal offence.
- There had been no delegation of the SDNPA's powers to Hampshire County Council (HCC) in respect of this route or BOATs. The SDNPA retained its powers in relation to TROs and the Authority, at its meeting in October 2022, had chosen to work in partnership with HCC on the management of BOATs and to not to exercise those powers itself.
- As HCC had decided against issuing a TRO, could any further explanation be provided as to why they had made this decision?
- To whom would the proposed code of conduct apply and what sanctions would there be if it was breached?
- Had the accord between the SDNPA and HCC been updated since its agreement? Would like to see the accord updated, adopted and reported back to the Authority.
- Had HCC's policy on Traffic Regulation Orders been updated since 2022?
- Was there a proper program of works for the further surveys HCC were proposing? If damage was currently being caused then there was concern that it was not being dealt with during an open-ended data gathering exercise.
- Could the new duty of seeking to further the purposes of the National Parks be helpful here?
- Was the data HCC were gathering going to be analysed against different sections of the Meon, or just the same section over time?
- Who chairs the Meon Valley Partnership (MVP)? Was it capable of functioning as a delivery unit?
- When the issue of BOATs was considered by the Authority in October 2022, the HCC Member at the time was going to report back to the Authority, but that report had not been provided.
- When the MVP came up with their list of projects, how were they grading them?
- Was there a mechanism to pause use of the Splash Route to assess any damage that had already been caused rather than risking further damage whilst ecological monitoring was undertaken?
- Could the Authority request specific data from HCC's highways monitoring survey to understand the frequency, volume and types of vehicles using the route, and also determine whether that number was increasing? It was important to remember that access for all extended to both 4x4s and pedestrians.
- Should the Authority be prioritising the quality of the river Meon above access to the highway? How was the Meon being preserved and enhanced by driving vehicles through it? How did that match the Authority's PMP outcomes on improving soil and water?
- Practically, what would re-routing entail in terms of time and cost? Did anyone have the ability to deliver that outcome? Was it viable? How long would it take to achieve if this course of action was approved?

- Was there a risk of damage to the Authority's reputation due to the lack of progress on this issue? Whilst understanding the limited resources available, two years had gone by without significant progress, and the recommendations point to further years of work.
- Given the uniqueness of the area, could there be a private sector sponsor willing to fund the work to improve this chalk stream?
- Should the road be taking precedence over water quality given the national importance of the issue.
- What were the greatest threats currently impacting the Meon? Context was needed to understand how to achieve the maximum impact for the river as a whole.
- Diverting resources to address this issue would reduce the Authority's ability to work elsewhere. Another authority already had the power and resources to address this issue, why was the SDNPA attempting to take on their workload?
- Could we put a timeframe in place on the work of the MVP?
- The Authority wanted an improved river and evidence to know how best to achieve that with partners.

385. Members were advised:

- HCC had undertaken two surveys of the site so far and require further surveys to allow them to decide what action to take as the Highway Authority.
- The code of conduct had been proposed through the MVP and was considered a good initial step to begin resolving the issues at this location. The Authority sought to achieve results through partnership working. If the code was continually breached there would be a body of evidence that could then be used to take the matter further.
- The Authority had held regular meetings with HCC as part of the accord. There would soon be a new rights of way and access officer in place at the SDNPA and one of their pieces of work would be leading on a review of the accord.
- The principal officer responsible for this matter within HCC had only recently been identified and therefore discussions with them were at an early stage. Officers had requested to be involved in future work by HCC.
- The ecological monitoring would enable the Authority to have an evidence base that they could use to ask partners how they were going to further the purposes of the national park.
- The data gathered was going to be analysed against the same section of the Meon. The MVP and the area team did undertake wider monitoring on the whole of the River Meon for various species, river fly and water vole in particular.
- The SDNPA previously chaired the MVP but it now had a revolving chair and the current chair was Portsmouth Water. The MVP had a delivery program, both an annual works program and longer term projects.
- The MVP list of projects was discussed and prioritised by the members of the partnership. They had five projects for the current year: reducing pollution; control of non-native species; community engagement; the potential development of a project officer role if funding were to be made available and some habitat restoration projects at Warnford and Droxford.
- The accord was for all four Highway Authorities within the Park. The SDNPA had held meetings with them and was looking at how best it could support them to deliver. With the new rights of way and access officer due to come into post this work would be reviewed.

- It was not within the gift of the SDNPA to close the splash route as that power remained with HCC, and they were not proposing to temporarily close the Splash Route. HCC would require evidence to make such a decision without serious risk of challenge. MVP were investigating alternative options, such as rerouting of the Meon, which could be done without impacting vehicular rights whilst that evidence was gathered. MVP was looking to improve the habitat without necessarily removing access, as removing access was a heavy tool with a high bar. Such actions required community engagement and co-operation.
- The Authority did not have expertise in highway matters.
- There were a number of channels to the Meon at the Splash Route, so there would be no need to create a new channel for potential rerouting. There was a piece of work to be done to determine if it was viable to redirect the primary flow to one of these alternate channels. The action to redirect the primary flow would require consent from the MVP, wider community and landowner. This course of action was likely to be a quicker route than attempting to impose a TRO.
- The accord had not developed as quickly as officers would have liked. Officers were working with HCC on byway operating procedures, and worked with all highway authorities on widening access with the resources available. The area team had offered to work with HCC on practical delivery of seasonal and current TROs. The Authority had also provided CIL funding for the East Meon Fiveways.
- It was important to note that there were other issues impacting the Meon, often with greater impacts on water quality, such as septic and oil tank leakage and agricultural run-off, and the Authority had to deploy its limited resources where they would achieve the best result for the Meon. This was a 200 metre stretch of a 21 mile river.
- The three main issues facing the Meon currently were water quality (equine and agricultural run-off); low flows due to water abstraction and geomorphology issues such as nitrate leaching.
- The current evidence available indicated that usage of the Splash Route was low and the harm being done was minimal to non-existent.
- Putting in place a timeframe when we work in partnership was often not helpful. It was not conducive to partnership working and it was difficult to enforce.
- The Committee could choose to endorse the current work, but if it wanted to agree to undertake work, it would need to put that to the full authority for consideration.

386. The following alternative recommendation was proposed and debated.

The Committee is recommended to:

I. Note

- i. that the Authority's website describes the unique status of the Meon as "a rare and precious habitat. It is a chalk stream, fed almost entirely by springs rather than by rain, and supports a unique ecology. Less famous and smaller than the Rivers Test and Itchen, it is a more 'natural' river, with fewer modification[s] made by man and has more energy due to its steeper gradient. Chalk streams are identified as priority habitats under the European Habitat Directive and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan";
- ii. Concerns have been raised that continuing highway use of the Splash Route is degrading the habitat, causing damage that may not be able to be fully mitigated;
- iii. that matters of Highway rights in Hampshire are the sole preserve of Hampshire County Council (HCC) as the Highways authority;

- iv. that whilst highway use may be considered a means of achieving Purpose 2 of the Park, this should not be to the detriment of the conservation of the habitat;
 - v. the continuing good work of the Meon Valley Partnership that acts as an information exchange for ongoing project work by its members on the river and could coordinate further ecological monitoring of the route.
2. Recommend that the National Park Authority:
- i. Note that strong concern has been raised that whilst the Droxford Water Splash remains a dedicated highway the Authority's ability to deliver its first purpose, in the context of the River Meon at Mill Lane Droxford, is constrained;
 - ii. Agree that the SDNPA should work closely with HCC Highways to collate and assess all available evidence of the effect of highway use on the chalk stream habitat, including recent unpublished ecological surveys, and develop practicable means to minimise future damage;
387. Amendments to recommendation 1 to remove point iii and amend point v to only note the continuing good work of the Meon Valley Partnership were proposed and agreed.
388. It was proposed and agreed that the original recommendation 2 be retained with an additional point i "For officers to work directly with Hampshire County Council and to report back to the Policy and Resources Committee within 4 months".
389. **RESOLVED:** The Committee:
- I. Noted:
 - i. that the Authority's website describes the unique status of the Meon as "a rare and precious habitat. It is a chalk stream, fed almost entirely by springs rather than by rain, and supports a unique ecology. Less famous and smaller than the Rivers Test and Itchen, it is a more 'natural' river, with fewer modification[s] made by man and has more energy due to its steeper gradient. Chalk streams are identified as priority habitats under the European Habitat Directive and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan";
 - ii. Concerns have been raised that continuing highway use of the Splash Route is degrading the habitat, causing damage that may not be able to be fully mitigated;
 - iii. that whilst highway use may be considered a means of achieving Purpose 2 of the Park, this should not be to the detriment of the conservation of the habitat;
 - iv. the continuing good work of the Meon Valley Partnership.
 - 2. Endorsed the Authority's continued work as a member of the Meon Valley Partnership:
 - i. For officers to work directly with Hampshire County Council and to report back to the Policy and Resources Committee within 4 months;
 - ii. To work with Hampshire County Council, the Trail Riders Fellowship and Green Lane Association to develop a code of conduct for use of the Splash Route;
 - iii. To undertake ecological monitoring of the Splash Route;
 - iv. To undertake an assessment of flow priorities to consider potential ecological improvements and flood risk mitigation at this location; and,
 - v. To, should it be recommended following assessment, with partners, investigate potential works to divert the primary flow away from the definitive line of the Splash Route.
390. The meeting adjourned for a short comfort break.
391. Annie Barnes returned to the table.

**ITEM 10: SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN
2021-2026: MID TERM PLAN UPDATE**

392. The Countryside and Policy Manager (Eastern Area) and the Commercial and Strategic Manager introduced report PR24/25-12 and reminded members of the report content.
393. The Committee commented:
- Should line 2 in paragraph 3.2 state funding of £168,000 per annum for five years rather than £168.
 - Congratulations on the accessibility and visitor engagement work.
 - How effective was the signage, and was it in the right place, especially for people with no experience of the Country Park? The earlier the better with coastal safety signs.
 - Was there an interpretation plan that mapped the signs?
 - The Government's 30x30 biodiversity commitment would be important for meeting international targets and Seven Sisters would be in the spotlight for that.
 - Who was overseeing the work being done? Was there a steering group or similar?
 - Was there a baseline measure on how effectively the estuary mouth was working with regard to the Shoreline SSCP objective?
 - Were there any updates about the road crossing?
394. Members were advised:
- Line two in paragraph 3.2 should state funding of £168,000 per annum for five years.
 - Regarding visitor engagement, there was a different audience during peak season, many of whom were coming to see the cliffs, rather than the countryside.
 - The Exceat site was 1.2 miles from the cliffs so coastal safety signs were in the Country Park. Seven Sisters was part of a wider heritage group (Sussex Heritage Group) to ensure language and signage was consistent across the locale, and there were signs on each gate. Website and social media were also used for these purposes.
 - An interpretation plan was scheduled to be developed in the coming year.
 - SSCP was the only piece of land over which the Authority had direct influence over, and so was key to the delivery of High-Level Target 2 which covered core nature areas. The plans for the Super National Nature Reserve (SNNR) were also evolving, and working with the key partners was likely to include monitoring and surveying work.
 - Previously the work at SSCP had been overseen by the Board of Directors of South Downs Commercial Operations Limited (SDCOL). That had changed with the running of SSCP coming within the Authority. There was an advisory board in place, in addition to the officers employed by the Eastern team who assisted delivery on the ground. External experts were brought in as required.
 - One of the added values of the SNNR was the sharing of knowledge and best practice to supplement the internal expertise to support land management. Best practice was not static but a continually evolving field.
 - The responsibility for the rivermouth was not with the Authority as riparian landowners. Appendix three of the management plan sets out the various responsibilities for water management in the Cuckmere Valley. The monitoring was a work in progress, and the Authority was working in collaboration with partners to achieve the stated objective.
 - The Authority was in discussions with East Sussex County Council about the road crossing, which were positive, and was also engaging with local community groups.

Resources were being made available to ensure progress could be made as soon as possible. Community Infrastructure Levy money had been made available to do design work, and once that had been completed work could begin on lining up funding to support implementation.

395. **RESOLVED:** The Committee:

1. Received and considered the progress made to date in delivering the Seven Sisters Country Park Landscape Management Plan 2021-26
2. Noted the updates made to the Seven Sisters Country Park Landscape Management Plan 2021-26 to deliver the requirements of the Countryside Stewardship Agreement, as set out in paragraph 4.1.

396. The Chair brought Item 16 forward on the agenda.

ITEM 16: EXTERNAL AUDIT – AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND SECTOR UPDATE

397. The External Auditor introduced report PR24/25-18 and reminded members of the report content.

398. The Committee commented:

- It was reassuring that no significant issues had been identified.
- Thanks to the finance team for their efforts to achieve a positive audit report.
- Could officers investigate International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) 16 ahead of its upcoming implementation.
- Could the query on section 106 classifications and return obligations be clarified?

399. Members were advised:

- Traditionally section 106 funds have always had a return period. The Authority sought not to include those clauses in agreements, but some of the agreements did include such clauses.

400. **RESOLVED:** The Committee noted the update report.

ITEM 11: Q2 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

401. The Performance and Project Manager introduced report PR24/25-13 and reminded members of the report content.

402. The Committee commented:

- How was it best to present the progress on High Level Target (HLT) 1 given issues in defining nature recovery had made clarity on reporting progress more difficult?
- Would like to see the Authority more engaged in celebrating the progress that had been achieved, which may help lay to rest some public concerns and also help facilitate fundraising, perhaps in conjunction with the other National Parks. There was a need to swim against the tide of doom and gloom on nature.
- An update had been received from the Director of Sustainability at Adur and Worthing councils on the Adur Wetland Creation feasibility Project at Pad Farm. Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust (OART) had recently presented a first stage modelling output to the Adur River Recovery Project landowner's group and as an output from the meeting, Adur Council had offered Pad Farm as the first scheme for more detailed modelling by OART so there was the potential for this project to now progress.
- Celebrated the return of apprenticeships.

- Thanked officers for the work underpinning the progress reported and it was great that the Authority was creating new habitat.
- Appreciated the presentation used in the report that streamlined the information and made it easy to read.

403. Members were advised:

- Officers appreciated that that the 25% baseline for HLT I was open to debate and a briefing note could be circulated to all Members to help inform the situation. The governments Outcomes Framework should help clarify the position once published and would also make clear that it was not just Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that should be counted as land managed for nature. The Authority had increased the use of hectareage recovered for nature when referring to progress to avoid unnecessary confusion.
- In terms of commentary and promotion, there was a slot at the BBC South-East program a few months months ago which had a big spread on all of the Authority's nature recovery programs with interviews of various colleagues and partners. It was a good news story and got away from technical definitions to present a more positive narrative.

404. **RESOLVED:** The Committee received and considered the Q2 Corporate Performance and Projects Report 2024/25.

ITEM 12: Q2 SOUTH DOWNS COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS LIMITED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

405. The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced report PR24/25-14 and reminded members of the report content

406. The Committee commented:

- Encouraged by the income brought in from external bodies to fund various projects and hoped that that would continue now that operations had been brought in house.
- Pleased with the favourable financial position at the end of the quarter.
- Were there any plans to address the language barrier identified that prevented a large demographic of visitors from participating in the visitor survey.
- There were a number of language schools near to SSCP and they could perhaps be involved in any translation or interpretation work required.
- Noted the excellent sales in the visitor centre that were exceeding expectations. What sort of percentage was that?
- Thanked the board of SDCOL for their efforts.

407. Members were advised:

- The visitor survey was commissioned with Visit England and would be reviewed to determine whether alternative options needed to be explored.
- Sales were between 10 and 15%. It had been identified that more visitors were buying smaller things.

408. **RESOLVED:** The Committee:

- I. Received and considered the Q2 South Downs Commercial Operations Limited (SDCOL) performance report 2024/25; and,

2. Noted that this was the final report on the performance of South Downs Commercial Operations Limited following the termination of the Seven Sisters Country Park operating agreement on 9 October 2024.

409. The meeting adjourned for a short comfort break.

410. Peter Diplock left the meeting.

ITEM 13: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

411. The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced report PR24/25-15 and reminded members of the report content.

412. The Committee commented:

- Good to see the impact of discussions in committee reflected in the risk register as at Risk 1.1: Staffing, which now included staffing diversity.
- How was the SDNPA and the wider Protected Landscapes Partnership engaging with the government's devolution agenda, in terms of both the upcoming white paper on devolution and the likely redistribution of resources in pursuit of its key missions. This could be a means to understanding where the Authority might promote its role and attract potentially more support, but also to understand the implications for the funding that will flow into devolved administrations.
- Protected Landscapes could offer government something unique in regards to messaging to communities with the relationships they have with landowners, parishes, and people especially in terms of the importance of climate change and nature recovery work.

413. Members were advised:

- The Chair of the Authority and Jane Butler, the Executive Director of National Parks England, had a meeting scheduled with Mary Creagh, Minister for Nature in December.
- On the agenda for the next meeting of National Park CEOs was an item on devolution. National Park England chairs recently met and looked at the governments five missions and seeing where National Parks could have a role to play in delivery. The Authority would be trying to ensure that the good work it does aligns, where appropriate, to the governments missions and then communicates that.

414. Mark Potter left the meeting.

415. As the Committee wished to discuss matters contained in Appendix 3, the Monitoring Officer asked Members to consider whether, in respect of Appendix 3 of Agenda Item 13, the public, including the press, should be excluded from the meeting on the basis that the appendix contained information which was proposed to be considered exempt since it was related to financial and business affairs, and in this case, the Authority, in particular, the corporate risk, and it was proposed on balance that whilst there was a public interest in obviously having transparent and open discussions in public, this was outweighed by the need of the Authority to be able to consider its business and its actions without the disclosure of this information to the public.

416. **RESOLVED:** The meeting would be moved into private session to consider Appendix 3 of Agenda Item 13 and that the public, including the press, would be excluded from the meeting at that point.

417. The meeting was closed to the public, including the press and moved into private session at 3:47pm.

418. The meeting returned to public session at 3.55pm

419. Theresa Fowler and Catriona Aves left the meeting.

420. **RESOLVED:** The Committee received and considered the Corporate Risk Register as at November 2024.

ITEM 14: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2024/25: MONTH 6

421. The Chief Finance Officer introduced report PR24/25-16 and reminded members of the report content.

422. The Committee commented:

- What was the proposed use of the £428,000 interest on Section 106 monies?

423. Members were advised:

- The usage of the interest on Section 106 monies would be discussed at the upcoming budget workshop.

424. **RESOLVED:** The Committee:

1. Noted the 2024/25 Revenue Forecast position as at month 6 of a net £7,000 above budget variance.
2. Noted the 2024/25 Capital spend and commitments as at month 6 indicating £311,000 was budgeted to be spent by year-end.
3. Recommended that the National Park Authority (the “NPA”) approve the capital variations as set out in Appendix 2.
4. Noted the Reserves position as at month 6, as set out at Appendix 3.
5. Noted the Treasury Management overview and position as at month 6, as set out at Appendices 4 & 5.

ITEM 15: UPDATE ON INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS

425. The Chief Internal Auditor introduced report PR24/25-17 and reminded members of the report content.

426. The Committee commented:

- Could more detailed be provided in respect of the partial assurance on project budgets?
- The Authority had many projects on the go, and there was some concern on the visibility around them and Members were keen that the details did not escape the Committee.
- Thanked Officers for their work to identify improvements to reporting.
- Was good to review that money was being spent appropriately.

427. Members were advised:

- The internal auditors were happy with how project budgets were going to be managed going forward and the arrangements that were being made in terms of improving the reporting. As this was a partial assurance, a follow up piece would be provided in due course.

428. **RESOLVED:** The Committee noted the progress against the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan (2024/25).

429. The Chair closed the meeting at 4.09pm.

CHAIR

