

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 6 DECEMBER 2007 AT 09.30 HOURS IN THE AVON SUITE, ASHBURN HOTEL, FORDINGBRIDGE

#### **Present:**

##### *Members*

Clive Chatters (Chairman)

Lee Dunsdon  
Peter Frost  
Tony Gentle  
Roger Heape  
Kathy Heron  
Maureen Holding  
Julian Johnson  
Ted Johnson  
Mel Kendal

Clive Maton  
Bob Morris  
Vicky Myers  
Leo Randall  
John Sanger  
Alan Rice  
Stan Wade  
Alan Weeks

##### *Officers*

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Pat Higgins, John Ward, John Clements, Barry Holland, Chris Gregory, Sarah Applegate, David Illsley, John Sorrell, George Trevelyan, David Stone, Rosalind Alderman and Carolyn Hoole.

##### *Other attendees*

Cllr Chris Treleaven (New Forest District Councillor, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation), Mr Graham Ashworth (Planning Policy Manager, New Forest District Council) and Mr Chris Elliott (Head of Development Control, New Forest District Council).

## **PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

### **56. Apologies for absence**

56.1 Susan Achmatowicz, Diana Halford, Barry Rickman and Pat Wyeth.

### **57. Declarations of interest**

57.1 On advice from the Monitoring Officer, Local Authority members accepted and declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in agenda items which related to their role as County, District or Parish members. In particular, the Monitoring Officer explained that members of Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute items 63 (Chief Executive's report) and 67 (New Forest Tour: 2007 Review). In addition, members of New Forest District Council would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 68 (Response to the New Forest District Council Core Strategy preferred options consultation). Members declared their interests in accordance with this guidance.

- 57.2 The Monitoring Officer also explained that members of Hampshire County Council would need to consider the nature of their interest in the item under urgent business (minute item 71) to appoint a new Chief Finance Officer for the Authority, as the recommendation was for an employee of Hampshire County Council to be appointed to this role. Although this gave rise to a personal interest in the matter (which should be declared), and affected financial interests, it was considered unlikely that it would be reasonably regarded as so significant as to prejudice members' judgment of the public interest, having regard to the sum of money in question in relation to the County Council's overall budget. However, it was for members to decide whether they wished to declare a prejudicial interest.
- 57.3 In addition, Kathy Heron and Alan Rice each declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 62 (Appointment of Authority representative on the Commoners' Dwelling Scheme Panel) as a registered commoner.

## **58. Chairman's announcements**

- 58.1 The Chairman announced that there would be an item for consideration under minute item 71 (Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent), and two items for consideration under Part II of the agenda following the public part of the Authority meeting.

## **59. Minutes of meeting on 18 October 2007**

- 59.1 The minutes of the meeting on 18 October 2007 were agreed as a true record.

## **60. Public Question Time**

- 60.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

## **61. Revision of the Authority's Local Protocols**

- 61.1 Kevin Gardner presented the report (NFNPA 216/07), and explained that the proposed revisions to the Protocols had been considered in detail by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 18 October 2007.
- 61.2 One amendment to the revised protocols was proposed and agreed by members prior to their adoption, being the deletion of the words "*and serve only so long as their term of office lasts*" at the end of the first sentence of paragraph 2.1 of the Protocol for Member and Officer Relations.

**Resolved:** That, subject to the amendment agreed at the meeting, the revised "Protocol for Member and Officer Relations" and the "Local Protocol for Members and Officers dealing with Planning Matters", be adopted by the Authority.

*Voting: None voting against*

## **62. Appointment of Authority representative on the Commoners' Dwelling Scheme Panel**

- 62.1 Lindsay Cornish presented the report (NFNPA 217/07) and explained that the representative should be a member who was not a member of the Planning Development Control Committee and who possessed the requisite financial and legal skills which would complement the detailed commoning knowledge provided by other Panel members and officer advice. Roger Heape had expressed an interest in the position.

**Resolved:** That the appointment of Roger Heape to the Commoners' Dwelling Scheme Panel for the period up to the next Annual meeting of the Authority be approved.

*Voting: None voting against*

### **63. Chief Executive's Report**

63.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 218/07).

63.2 With reference to the third bullet point of paragraph 5 of the report, which mentioned the testing of materials for road edging on Rhinefield Ornamental Drive, it was requested that the Authority should ask the Highways Department of Hampshire County Council to apply such testing to all new road materials as part of their routine maintenance programme, to ensure they were suitably quiet. It was suggested that the Hampshire Action Team be approached on this subject. Chris Gregory, the Authority's Transport and Tourism Officer, would follow up this point.

63.3 Members congratulated officers on the installation of the first boundary markers, referred to at the fourth bullet point of paragraph 6 of the report, which had received enthusiastic support. In response to a query on the second bullet point under "Conservation of Cultural Heritage" at page 6 of the report, Lindsay Cornish said she would report back as to what a "Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment" would entail.

63.4 It was pointed out that a number of positive developments and achievements were reflected in the report and the Authority should ensure maximum publicity was achieved for these. The Minister for National Parks had reported back very favourably on his recent visit to the Park.

63.5 In response to a query, Lindsay Cornish said that the Authority was about to make a further response to the Civil Aviation Authority on the National Air Traffic Services airspace extension proposals.

63.6 Members then noted the report.

### **64. Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee**

64.1 Roger Heape, Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee, updated members on matters dealt with at the last meeting of the Committee on 6 November 2007. The minutes of that meeting had been tabled at the current meeting. He said that the Committee had received positive feedback on the staff appraisal process but supported a request by the staff that the paperwork involved in the process be simplified.

64.2 Members then noted this report.

### **65. Budgetary Control Report for the period to 30 September 2007**

65.1 Pat Higgins introduced the report (NFNPA 219/07) and reported that the current under-spend for the period was £163,000 against the profiled budget of £1.8 million. However, part of the under-spend resulted from the non-payment of the staff pay award of 2.5% that had been agreed after the end of the period. The Authority expected to receive a payment in respect of an adjustment to the Defra core grant, resulting from a miscalculation in the funding formula.

**Resolved:** That the current report be noted and the transfers to reserve agreed by the Resources and Performance Committee be approved, subject to confirmation of the increase in Defra core grant.

*Voting: None voting against*

**66. Treasury Management Performance for period 1 April 2007 to 31 October 2007**

66.1 Pat Higgins introduced the report (NFNPA 220/07) and said that bank based interest rates had gone up by half a percent during the financial year; and that there was still volatility in the money markets. The Authority's investments were currently performing better than benchmarked.

66.2 Members noted the performance of the Treasury Management function for the six months to 31 October 2007.

**67. New Forest Tour: 2007 Review**

67.1 Chris Gregory introduced the report (NFNPA 221/07). A number of members congratulated officers on the success of the tour so far, and the low level of subsidy contributed per passenger journey, in comparison with other subsidy levels. Members raised concerns that the bus operator was not willing to disclose details of its operating costs; officers would continue to endeavour to obtain this information.

67.2 Members noted the report.

**68. Response to the New Forest District Council Core Strategy preferred options consultation**

68.1 John Clements introduced the report (NFNPA 222/07) and explained that the document applied to land around the edges of the National Park. On some areas the Authority's officers were questioning the approach of New Forest District Council, which was to be expected. Graham Ashworth (Planning Policy Manager, New Forest District Council) explained that at this stage of the process the Council was focussing on the policy outline rather than the detailed wording. The draft had to correlate with the requirements of the South East Plan, which included affordable housing considerations. It was based on detailed evidence.

68.2 Discussion focused mainly on the proposed level of new housing, which was 20% above the regional requirement, and in particular the related question of affordable housing provision and proposals for use of greenfield sites. Advice was sought on whether the Authority should have a policy in the Park which only permitted development of affordable housing.

68.3 The issue of not producing one Core Strategy jointly with the District Council had been settled in June 2007 when the Authority had not been able to meet the District Council's timetable and also needed to align the work on its Management Plan and Core Strategy more closely. The differences in geographical area, focus and purposes were also relevant. It was nevertheless desirable to continue the joint working process. Mel Kendal proposed an amendment to the wording of the first recommendation to clarify that the proposed response was submitted as a means to continue the work in progress towards a common theme, whilst understanding each other's different priorities.

**Resolved:**

1. That the proposed response, as a means to assist the work in progress with the New Forest District Council Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation, be approved.
2. That the Director of Strategy and Planning be authorised to make any minor amendments to the document in advance of submitting it to the District Council.

*Voting: None voting against*

**69. New Forest National Park Authority Annual Monitoring Report 2007**

- 69.1 Sarah Applegate introduced the report (NFNPA 223/07) and explained that the production of the Annual Monitoring Report was a statutory requirement which contained information on the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and the extent to which existing planning policies were effective, and flagged up issues which needed to be addressed, whether through further monitoring or to be reviewed as part of the Local Development Framework.

**Resolved:**

1. That the draft Annual Monitoring Report be approved for submission to the Secretary of State in December 2007.
2. That the Director of Strategy and Planning be authorised to insert any outstanding data, when available, and make any necessary minor changes prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

*Voting: None voting against*

**70. Report on New Forest Consultative Panel meeting (15 November)**

- 70.1 Members noted issues of interest at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 15 November 2007 and the date of the next Panel meeting on Thursday 3 January 2007.

**71. Urgent Items by the Chairman**

- 71.1 The Chairman asked Lindsay Cornish to introduce a report (NFNPA 225/07) on the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer for the Authority. The Chief Executive explained that this report was brought to the Authority as a matter of urgent business as it had not been possible to confirm the recommendation prior to the issue of the reports. The Chairman was satisfied therefore that, in these special circumstances, the item should be considered as a matter of urgency. The Chief Executive explained that of the three local authorities that had been invited to bid for the appointment, only Hampshire County Council had done so. New Forest District Council, the current supplier, had not bid to continue with the provision.
- 71.2 Roger Heape, Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee, expressed a debt of gratitude to Pat Higgins for the work she had done for the Authority since 2004, including assisting with the Authority's set-up and rolling out the corporate governance arrangements. She had been very assiduous in ensuring grants were collected on time and financial deadlines met. The work she had carried out had gone beyond her role as Chief Finance Officer. It was decided that, since Pat Higgins was not present at the meeting at this point, the Chairman would write a letter to her along these lines.

**Resolved:** That the appointment of Paul Carey-Kent, Deputy Treasurer, Hampshire County Council, as Chief Finance Officer for the New Forest National Park Authority with effect from 1 January 2008, be approved.

*Voting: None voting against (4 abstentions)*

**PART II – ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPTED INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED**

**Resolved:** That the public be excluded from the meeting during the following two items of business, as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during those items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within (in the case of agenda item 17) Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and (in the case of agenda item 18) Paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons set out in the report.

The public and press were accordingly requested to leave the meeting.

**72. Accommodation update**

72.1 The Monitoring Officer reminded members that, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, information disclosed in private session is confidential. Lindsay Cornish then updated members on the position regarding long term accommodation for the Authority. (This is a summary of a minute which contains exempt information).

The developments in the search for accommodation were noted by members.

**73. Update on a legal issue**

73.1 Lindsay Cornish updated members on a legal issue. (This is a summary of a minute which contains exempt information). The report was noted by members.

**74. Defra funding**

74.1 Lindsay Cornish reported on a third matter, namely that the Authority's grant award had now been determined by Defra.

The meeting closed at 12:20 pm.

Signed ..... Date:.....  
(Chairman)