PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

58. Apologies for absence.

58.1 Apologies for absence were received from David Harrison, Roger Heape, Maureen Holding and Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman).

59. Declarations of interest.

59.1 On advice from the Monitoring Officer, local authority appointed 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 advised that members of New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute items 65 (Revised Draft Recreation Management Strategy), 66 (New Forest Tour 2009 Review) and 67 (Proposed partnership to establish Higher Level Stewardship Scheme on the New Forest Crown Lands).

59.2 Pat Wyeth declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 64 (Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee meeting on 18 January
2010) as a Trustee of the New Forest Centre. Peter Frost and Clive Maton declared personal but not prejudicial interests in minute item 67 as Verderers.

60. Chairman’s announcements.

60.1 The Chairman paid tribute to Colonel Peter Sweet, a long standing resident of the New Forest who had played an active role in local affairs, who had recently passed away.

61. Minutes of meeting on 10 December 2009.

61.1 The minutes of the meeting on 10 December 2009 were agreed as a true record.


62.1 Sue Baillie spoke on behalf of ‘One Voice’, asking that the NPA hold a public meeting to discuss the draft Recreation Management Strategy (‘RMS’) rather than the ‘drop in’ session that had been planned, as she felt this would assist members of the public in giving their own views and hearing the views of others. She also asked whether a website for the Equine Forum could be set up, as had previously been agreed.

62.2 David Dickenson, a resident of the National Park and member of New Forest Dog Owners’ Group (‘NFDOG’), then said that following the most recent revisions to the RMS, he questioned whether the draft document represented an appropriate framework to manage recreation in the New Forest through the next five years and beyond. He felt that the draft document included too little coverage of issues relating to dog walking, as a key aspect of recreation in the National Park.

62.3 Penny Gayler, a member of NFDOG, then said that although she tried to ensure her impact on the New Forest was kept to a minimum, unfortunately a small number of other dog owners did not do so, and she felt that more input on dogs was needed in the draft RMS to tackle problems of dog fouling, out of control dogs and stock worrying. She urged the Interim Chief Executive to meet further with interest groups and other individuals to devise a plan to address the problems caused by a minority of irresponsible dog owners, without unfairly affecting responsible dog owners.

62.4 John Allsopp, a resident of the New Forest, commended the recently adopted Management Plan which he felt successfully reconciled the divergent views of a number of interest groups, and he also commended the Interim Chief Executive’s work to date and hoped that his stay would be extended.

62.5 Heather Gould, speaking for the Chairman of NFDOG, said that NFDOG was pleased with the draft RMS and felt that it struck the right note. A productive meeting had been held between members of NFDOG, the Forestry Commission, and the Interim Chief Executive of the NPA, which had addressed ground nesting birds, dog fouling and stock worrying. The organisation now wanted to pose the question to the NPA as to what its strategy was to ensure the smooth implementation of the RMS.

62.6 Thorold Masefield, the Chairman of Brockenhurst Parish Council, said that the Parish Council supported the cycle route proposals in the draft RMS. A meeting
had been held between representatives of the NPA, the Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, Brockenhurst Parish Council, the New Forest Access Forum, Brockenhurst College and the Brockenhurst Transition Group, to discuss the need for an integrated network of cycle routes. Six projects were selected for further study, each of which would contribute towards connecting Brockenhurst with the Forestry Commission’s network of cycle routes.

62.7 Russell Horne, Brockenhurst Parish Council, asked that the campsite at Hollands Wood should not be relocated as suggested in the draft RMS; it was essential in order to maintain trade in the village centre, particularly in the current economic climate, and would ensure less car journeys were made by campers requiring provisions.

63. Chief Executive’s Report

63.1 Barrie Foley introduced the report (NFPNA 329/10) and highlighted some key points for members. He reported that Hampshire County Council had not submitted any significant adverse feedback in respect of the Management Plan and Core Strategy; a copy of this would be circulated to members. With regard to the questions raised by Sue Baillie during minute item 62 (Public Question Time), he explained that the NPA felt that the Recreation Plan was considered at the last public meeting and it was more appropriate to hold a longer ‘drop in’ session on the RMS as this would be of greater value to members of the public who wanted a full discussion with officers, it would also be less expensive than a public meeting.

63.2 Most members were in support of retaining the Chief Executive’s report at NPA meetings, but discussed whether the format of the report should be altered for future occasions. One member requested that in future the report set out the number of full time equivalent staff employed by the NPA, compared with six months and one year previously. It was also requested that Authority efficiency would be covered in the report.

Resolved:
1. That the Chief Executive’s report be noted; and
2. That future reports set out staffing information and efficiencies as requested by members.

Voting: None voting against

64. Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee meeting on 18 January 2010.

64.1 Julian Johnson, the Deputy Chairman of the Committee, updated members on matters considered at the last meeting of the Committee, draft minutes of which had been tabled at the current meeting. The Committee had considered the third quarter outturn, noting an expected overspend of approximately £180,000, and had also looked at the ongoing arrangement with the New Forest Centre, approving expenditure of £50,000 per year for the next two years. It was anticipated that discussions with the Ninth Centenary Trust might lead to future income generation for the NPA, in return for future investment. Committee members had received an oral report on the draft Corporate Plan; a workshop would be held on 24 February 2010 to consider the draft in more detail. Following members’ comments during minute item 63, Julian Johnson suggested that a report on staffing matters be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.
64.2 The resolution to look at future income generation opportunities in respect of the New Forest Centre (draft RPC minute item 32) was criticised by one member, as this was something he felt should have been considered already. He was also critical of the structure and achievements of the Committee, and questioned its authority to approve the further expenditure on the New Forest Centre arrangements. The Chairman said he would discuss these issues with the Chairman of the Committee.

64.3 Members raised concerns with the NPA’s projected level of overspend; the Chairman suggested that this be further scrutinised by the Committee. The Interim Chief Executive commented that there were no major concerns regarding the organisation’s overall efficiency and much of the projected overspend could be accounted for owing to the timing of required expenditure set against the timing of incoming funds; but nevertheless it was important that the Committee consider the matter in detail.

**Resolved:**

1. That the oral report on the meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee be noted; and

2. That the Committee be asked to further consider the NPA’s projected overspend as detailed in the Third Quarter outturn report presented to the Committee and the NPA’s staffing levels.

**Voting:** None voting against

65. **Revised Draft Recreation Management Strategy.**

65.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 330/10), explaining that officers had endeavoured to reflect comments they had received on the RMS in the revised draft, which members were now requested to approve subject to any final changes agreed by members following the further three week period of public feedback. He then summarised key changes for members, as set out in the report, explaining that some changes had been made in order to bring the draft RMS into line with the Management Plan. It was felt that the overall tone of previous versions had been too negative in respect of recreation in the New Forest and efforts had now been made to redress the balance. In response to queries, it was explained that there was felt to be a need for a Recreation Management Steering Group, and members asked that it be considered how members and Parish Councillors would fit into this process.

65.2 Members commended the revised draft document, and there was a general consensus that it had improved, but it was also recognised that work remained to be done. Some concerns were raised that the overall direction of the document had changed.

65.3 One member requested a number of amendments to the draft, including emphasising the NPA’s role in delivering sustainable recreational activities rather than merely supporting them (at page 25 of Annex 1 to report NFNPA 330/10), emphasising the positive aspects of children enjoying out of doors recreational activities in the area, and placing more weight on activities such as cycling and camping. Concerns were also raised regarding the provision of adequate car parking to accommodate increased visitor numbers.
Resolved: That the revised draft Recreation Management Strategy be approved, subject to any final amendments agreed by members following the period for public comment.

Voting: None voting against

66. New Forest Tour 2009 Review.

66.1 Chris Gregory introduced the report (NFPNA 331/10) and drew members’ attention to key results of the customer feedback on the Tour in the 2009 season.

66.2 He then responded to questions by members including queries relating to:

- funding of the Tour in 2010 and depreciation provisions to replace the existing buses;
- possible further promotion of the Tour through enhanced links from Hythe, Bournemouth and Southampton which would allow travellers to purchase Tour tickets on Wilts and Dorset and Bluestar buses travelling to the New Forest from these areas – this facility had been initiated in 2009 and would be further publicised in 2010;
- specific marketing initiatives in 2010 to counter decreased usage of the Tour by car users and increased use by foot passengers which had been highlighted in the survey results; and
- reducing reliance on parking in the Lyndhurst town centre, also through marketing material in 2010, although Chris Gregory advised that many Tour customers currently used the free parking facility at Exbury Gardens.

66.3 The report was then noted.


67.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFPNA 332/10), explaining that it was proposed to implement a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme covering the commonable Crown Lands of the New Forest, in partnership with the Verderers and the Forestry Commission. It was anticipated that the associated funding from the Scheme, if secured, would bring significant benefits to Commoners and for the management of the commonable lands. It was a good opportunity for the NPA to play an active and positive part in the land management of almost half of the New Forest.

67.2 Members questioned the extent of the NPA’s ultimate financial liability under the scheme, and received assurances from the Interim Chief Executive that the draft agreement had been reviewed by the NPA’s legal advisers. Steve Trotter added that although there was the potential for Natural England to say particular projects had not been properly implemented and to reclaim money in these circumstances, this was unlikely to affect all of the funding. Delivery of projects would also be monitored intensively by the NPA.

67.3 Members considered whether it would be appropriate to appoint a member or officer to represent the NPA to the Scheme. It was felt that the Chairman at the relevant time should take on this role or appoint another person, whether member or officer, as he or she thought fit. Accordingly, members resolved to amend the wording of paragraph 5.2(c) of the report.
Resolved:

1. That the NPA’s representation to the proposed scheme as set out in report NFNPA 332/10 at paragraph 5.2(c), be amended to: ‘the Chairman of the NFNPA (or a person appointed by him/her)’. 

Voting: 12:2 (2 abstentions)

2. That the interim Chief Executive be authorised to enter a legal agreement with the Verderers of the New Forest and the Forestry Commission to establish a Partnership to deliver Higher Level Stewardship on the Crown Lands along the lines set out in report NFNPA 332/10 as amended.

Voting: None voting against (3 abstentions)

68. Appointment of Monitoring Officer.

68.1 Barrie Foley introduced the report (NFNPA 333/10). Following the vote, the Chairman thanked Barbara Beardwell for the work she had done for the NPA and welcomed Julia Mutlow as the new Monitoring Officer.

Resolved: That Julia Mutlow, Senior Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer for the New Forest National Park Authority, be appointed as Monitoring Officer in accordance with Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, with effect from the end of the current meeting, under the terms of the agreement for the provision of legal services by Hampshire County Council.

Voting: None voting against

69. Amendment to approved Scheme of Delegation – determining applications for Lawful Development Certificates (existing).

69.1 Steve Avery introduced the report (NFNPA 334/10), in which members were asked to amend the NPA’s Scheme of Delegations so that applications for Lawful Development Certificates for existing development (‘LDCEs’), in respect of which the local Parish Council took a contrary view to officers that was not evidence-based, could be determined by the NPA’s solicitor rather than being presented to the full Planning Development Control Committee.

69.2 In view of the amount of evidence that needed to be considered in reaching a view on LDCE applications, he also proposed that a small panel of Planning Development Control Committee members be appointed by that Committee to deal with LDCE applications in those cases where in the relevant member’s opinion it was appropriate for members to consider the matter.

Resolved:

1. That Members agree that the Scheme of Delegation be amended to allow the Authority’s Senior Solicitor to determine LDCE applications under delegated powers notwithstanding that there may be a contrary Parish Council view that in the opinion of the Senior Solicitor is not evidence based.

Voting: 12:1 (3 abstentions)

2. The Planning Development Control Committee be asked to appoint a panel to consider LDCE applications in those cases where the Member is not content to leave the final decision to the Authority’s Senior Solicitor.

Voting: 14 (2 abstentions)
70. Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent.

70.1 There were no urgent items on this occasion.

PART II – ITEMS THAT 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 item 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 this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 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, namely the need to avoid disclosure of personal data and to avoid compromising the position of the Authority in making its decision on the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer.

Voting: None voting against

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

71. Review of Interim Chief Executive arrangements and update on Chief Executive Recruitment Process.

71.1 Members discussed the Interim Chief Executive arrangements and received an update on the Chief Executive recruitment process (this is a summary of a minute that contains exempt information).

The meeting closed at 13:12 hours.

Signed:…………………………………………………………………………………………Date:……………………..

(Chairman)