

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 10:00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON

#### **Present:**

##### *Members:*

David Harrison (Chairman)  
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre  
Patrick Heneghan  
Edward Heron  
Neville Penman  
John Sanger

##### *Officers:*

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive Officer
Steve Avery	Executive Director Strategy and Planning
Nigel Stone	Chief Finance Officer
Rosalind Alderman	Acting Monitoring Officer
Nigel Matthews	Head of Recreation Management and Learning
Paul Walton	Head of Environment and Rural Economy
David Stone	Corporate Services Manager
Hilary Makin	Communications Manager
Jim Mitchell	Interpretation and Outreach Manager
Adam Vasey	National Park Access Ranger
Frances Connolly	Executive Assistant

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mel Kendal, Richard Frampton and Marian Spain (Deputy Chairman).
- 1.2 Apologies were also received from Kevin Suter, Associate Partner, Ernst and Young.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to minute item 10 as a Trustee of the New Forest Trust.

#### **3. Chairman's announcements**

- 3.1 There were no announcements on this occasion.

#### **4. Minutes**

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting on 14 May 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

**Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.**

*Voting: None voting against*

## 5. Public Question Time

5.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

## 6. Annual Audit Letter

6.1 Nigel Stone informed members that a representative from Ernst and Young was unable to attend the meeting and they had sent their apologies. He reported that the audit had not identified anything to cause concern and that the paper was a summary of the 2017/18 audit findings which had been previously reported to the Committee.

6.2 A member asked what the impact would be on the Authority with changes to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Mr Stone said that these particular ones were largely in respect of treasury functions that the Authority did not have, that there was no financial impact on the Authority as a result and most often the impact of IFRS changes were to mandate additional disclosures in the final accounts.

**Resolved, that the letter be accepted on behalf of the Authority**

*Voting: Unanimous*

## 7. First Quarter Progress Report 2018-19

7.1 David Stone introduced the report (NFNPA RAPC 370/18) which comprised first quarter progress against the actions in the 2018/19 Work Programme which was the first of the annual programmes under the new 2018-2021 Business Plan. The actions in the Work Programme were closely aligned to and supported, the priorities set out in the new Business Plan. He said that the report also contained first quarter progress against the key performance indicators, both national and local.

7.3 The Committee then considered and discussed the sections of the Work Programme and specifically the following:

- *Protect, page 2, 4 km of boundary features such as hedgerows* – in response to a query on the timeframes for the progress reported on this action, officers advised that this set out what had been achieved to date on the project and not over the quarter. Future reports would clarify the period covered by the information provided.
- *Enjoy, page 2, promote understanding of the special qualities of our work and key messages.* Members commented that the effectiveness of engagement with the public (e.g. the degree to which it results in positive behaviour change) can't be measured solely by the number of face to face contacts made. Nigel Matthews advised that face to face contacts were counted because this is thought to be one of the more effective ways to achieve the desired effect. Rangers do monitor the impact of their work through a range of means, and the Recreation Management Strategy will have an action to ensure all educational campaigns use the most effective means available, including social media, printed materials, face to face etc.

- *Enjoy, page 5, England Coast Path* – members expressed concern that ‘spreading room’, (the area between the coastline and the coast path), could be accessed by walkers and potentially disturb protected habitats along the routes. This was further compounded by the fact that these protected areas were not separately designated on OS maps and were included within the colour designation for spreading room. Nigel Matthews advised that a letter setting out these concerns was being drafted and would shortly be sent to Natural England.
- A member mentioned that some actions in the work programme with progress scheduled to commence in subsequent quarters were marked as green whilst others such as the action dealing with woodland management in Prosper, page 7, reported the same progress but were marked as amber. Officers undertook to ensure consistency in subsequent quarterly reports.

7.4 The Chairman thanked all officers involved in reporting progress in the work programme. The report was then noted by the Committee.

## **8. First Quarter Budgetary Control Report 2018-19**

8.1 Nigel Stone introduced the report, which provided a summary of the financial performance for 2018/19 covering April, May and June. The key figures were expenditure that showed £1.34m spend over the first 3 months (26% of budget) and the income position which showed £1.06m received (21% of budget). Overall, after the first three months of the financial year the budget figures were on-track.

8.2 He drew attention to the budget provision for legal costs of £28,000 in respect of a planning case which was currently on-going and informed members that, if the costs rose, the shortfall would need to be taken from the Planning/Risk Reserve.

8.3 Nigel Stone also reported that funds would need to be spent on two upcoming ICT projects:

The Authority would be upgrading its Agresso and HR systems in conjunction with the New Forest District Council who operated off the same system - the procurement process for this project had commenced.

The Authority’s planning database would likely be moved from the present Acolaid to a new system called Uniform. The Authority was in negotiations with the New Forest District Council regarding this changeover, with the likelihood of a better deal should a significant amount be paid up-front.

As both the above were major projects, any up-front funding could be sourced from reserves and then repaid. He said he would bring a report to the next Authority setting out the details of the projects and asking for delegated authority to the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer to approve the expenditure at the appropriate time.

8.4 Mr Stone was asked how the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) would be allocated. He said the SCF allocation for 2018/19 was £50,000 of which £30,000 had already been earmarked for a contribution towards the OPOF project. Further funds had been allocated in previous years, but at present unclaimed.

**Resolved, that the current income and expenditure position, including the potential savings and pressures identified be noted.**

## **9. New Forest Centre – Procurement of Services and Grant Proposal**

- 9.1 Nigel Matthews presented the report and advised that the Ninth Centenary Trust had decided that various services should be procured by the NPA from the Trust as and when needed rather than them being within a Memorandum of Agreement.
- 9.2 Mr Matthews said that the report focused on the current financial year during which, of the £30,000 allocated in the budget, £20,000 had been paid to the Trust over the first two quarters. The report recommended that of the remaining £10,000, £5,000 be paid to the Trust in respect of services provided by the Trust and a further amount of £5,000 be allocated towards core costs in this financial year to assist the Trust with the transition to a heritage centre. The Trust could request grant funding for future financial years which would be considered by the Authority; a process for considering such applications would be developed by officers and referred for members' approval.
- 9.3 Following discussion, members supported the above approach.

**Resolved, that:**

- 1. the Committee notes the decision of the Ninth Centenary Trust that NPA officers should procure from the Trust specific services as and when needed (without entering into an ongoing Memorandum of Agreement); and**
- 2. the Committee recommends to the full Authority that the remaining £10,000 that was put aside for the New Forest Centre in the 2018-19 NPA budget is allocated as follows:**
  - £5,000 for the purchase of services from the Trust in this financial year; and**
  - £5,000 to be given to the Trust to assist with the transition to a heritage centre.**

*Voting: 5-1*

## **10. Love the Forest Visitor Giving Scheme**

- 10.1 Andy Brennan presented the report giving the background to the Visitor Giving Scheme. He outlined the support provided by the Authority following an approach for assistance from the New Forest Trust in 2016 which resulted in the agreement in January 2017 on a Memorandum of Understanding setting out the terms of the Authority's support and the future arrangements of the Scheme. He said that over the next 12 months, he will be aiming to build more resilience into the Scheme by increasing the revenue generated.
- 10.2 Members welcomed the assistance provided in developing the Scheme and noted that the Scheme was projected to generate £30,000 income over the next 12 months with

the cash equivalent cost to the Authority for supporting the Scheme being £22,000 (less 25% recovery from the income of the Scheme to offset the Authority's costs).

10.3 Members then noted the report.

## **11. Annual Health and Safety Report 2017-18**

11.1 Steve Avery updated members on how the Authority had executed its Health and Safety duties over the last financial year. He said that the Authority was reviewing the current Health and Safety Policy.

11.2 Mr Avery said that in the last financial year various activities had taken place to ensure staff were able to work in a safe environment, for example, DSE assessments, fire safety checks and protective equipment for those employees who had exposure to work place hazards.

11.3 He informed members that no major incidents had been reported and only four minor incidents had been logged.

11.4 The focus of the report was the sickness absence in 2017/18, which had almost doubled from last year. This figure had been investigated to see what had given rise to both long and short-term absence. Mr Avery said that within a small organisation, the long term sickness absence could be heavily influenced by just one member of staff being absent on long term sickness. Referring to the short term sickness figure, he said that last winter there had been a steep rise in flu and cold cases with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight being one of the areas most affected. He advised that the Executive Board would keep sickness absences under close review.

11.5 In response to a query, Steve Avery advised that the option to provide staff with free flu vaccinations would be investigated by officers.

11.6 Members noted the report.

## **12. Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent**

12.1 No items were raised on this occasion.

## **13. Date of next meeting**

13.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 5 November 2018.

The meeting closed at 11:45 hours

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