

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 4 MARCH 2019 AT 10:00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON

Present:

Members:

David Harrison (Chairman)
Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chairman)
David Bence
Mel Kendal
Neville Penman
John Sanger

Officers:

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive Officer
Steve Avery	Executive Director Strategy and Planning
Rosalind Alderman	Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Nigel Stone	Chief Finance Officer
Nigel Matthews	Head of Recreation Management and Learning
Paul Walton	Head of Environment and Rural Economy
Hilary Makin	Communications Manager
David Stone	Corporate Services Manager
Fiona Wynne	Grants Officer
Frances Connolly	Executive Assistant

Also in attendance:

Antony Harvey, Deputy Head of Partnership (Southern Internal Audit Partnership)
Amanda Chalmers, Audit Manager (Southern Internal Audit Partnership)

43. Apologies for absence

43.1 An apology for absence was received from Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, Edward Heron and Richard Frampton.

44. Declarations of Interest

44.1 A declaration of interest was received from Mel Kendal

45. Chairman's announcements

45.1 There were no announcements on this occasion.

46. Minutes

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February be confirmed as a correct record.

Voting: none voting against

47. Public Question Time

47.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

48. Accord Between the Forestry Commission (England) and National Parks England

48.1 Bruce Rothnie briefed members on the background to the Accord which had been launched at the New Forest Show in 2018. He and Alison Barnes then elaborated on existing areas of collaboration and the work planned locally to strengthen joint working in taking forward the five shared priorities outlined in the report. In this regard, Ms Barnes advised that, since the launch of the Accord, a series of workshops had been held between officers of the Forestry Commission and the NPA to focus on potential local initiatives of mutual benefit which developed the existing relationship between the two partners and which were deliverable over the coming financial year - the last of the workshops had been held on 28 February. The potential activities and projects identified through this process would be incorporated into the 2019/20 Work Programme and included - sharing resources and capacity, data and evidence, skills and expertise (especially around land management and woodland creation projects), community engagement and staff development and training (secondments, apprenticeships and shared posts).

48.3 Other partners which could be included in the delivery of the above work were Forestry Services, Forest Enterprises, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Woodland and landscape management initiatives would involve wider co-ordination with stakeholders and landowners across the National Park and the surrounding areas. Local Enterprise Partnership and Lottery funding were potential sources to generate funding for the various projects envisaged as well as the use of developer contributions.

48.4 Members thanked Ms Barnes and Mr Rothnie for their update and requested that a short report be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee to update members on further progress.

Resolved, that the proposed local outcomes for enhancing the current level of collaboration with the Forestry Commission in terms of the five shared priorities set out in the Accord be noted.

Voting: none voting against

Action: that the Chief Executive report to the next meeting of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee to update members on progress on the joint collaborative work outline above.

49. Draft Work Programme 2019-20

49.1 Following brief discussion, members agreed that there had not been sufficient time before the meeting to fully consider the actions within the draft Work Programme and

that a further opportunity be explored for Committee members to meet with officers to discuss the programme in more detail.

- 49.2 In response to a query, the Executive Leadership Team drew attention to key areas of work which had been reflected in the programme under the Protect, Enjoy and Prosper themes.

Action: that an informal meeting of RAPC members and relevant officers be held on Friday 8 March at 10.00 am to afford members an opportunity to input in more detail into the draft 2019/20 Work Programme before this was recommended to the Authority on 28 March.

Resolved, that the draft Work Programme for 2019/20 be recommended for approval to the Authority meeting on 28 March 2019, subject to the amendments agreed at the informal meeting of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee with officers on Friday 8 March 2019.

Voting: none voting against

50. Draft General Revenue Budget for the Financial Year 2019-20, Treasury Management Strategy and Medium-Term Position to 2022

- 50.1 Nigel Stone explained that the report set out the proposals for a revenue budget for 2019/20 for consideration by the Authority. He drew members' attention to the four-year grant settlement figures and pointed out that the 2019/20 financial year would be the final year of the settlement period. Mr Stone said that the Authority expected to hear from Defra later in the year with regard to details of the new settlement figures.
- 50.2 Mr Stone referred to section 3 of the report which outlined the proposed income and expenditure for the year and drew attention to the additional key funding for partnership projects, namely Our past, Our Future, Higher-Level Stewardship, Land Advice Service and Pedall. He added that income for shared services had fallen as the Trees, Building Conservation and Design work had been taken back in-house by New Forest District Council.
- 50.3 Nigel Stone pointed out that employee costs for 2019/20 showed a net decrease of £65,000. The agreed pay award would cost an additional £45,000, the scale point rises a further £20,000 and an increase in pension costs of approximately £35,000. This was netted off by the staffing changes due to the reduced SLAs (£135,000) and some other smaller savings totalling £30,000.
- 50.4 Mr Stone said there were a number of risks and uncertainties, the main ones being possible changes to the Defra grant; planning fee income and legal costs.
- 50.5 Referring to the future grant settlement figure beyond 2019/20, Mr Stone said that the forecast figures showed additional income or expenditure savings were required in the amount of £130,000-£200,000 to meet the projected budget shortfall. As mentioned at the last meeting, measures would not yet be explored to bridge this gap but officers would be in a process of internal reviews leading up to the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement in the Autumn.

Resolved that,

- 1 the General Fund Budget for 2019/20 be supported and recommend for approval at the Authority meeting on 28 March 2019;
- 2 that the underlying minimum level for the General Fund Reserve which remains at £0.3 million be noted;
- 3 the implications on the Reserves of the proposed budget for 2019/20 be noted;
- 4 the Risk Assessment and Section 25 Statement (Section 7) be noted;
- 5 the Treasury Management Strategy in Annex 3 be supported and recommended for approval at the Authority meeting on 28 March 2019; and
- 6 the Medium Term Financial Plan up to 2021/22 in Annex 4 be noted.

Voting: none voting against

51. Internal Audit Charter 2019-20

- 51.1 Antony Harvey informed members that the Internal Audit Charter was reviewed annually by the Chief Internal Auditor and presented to Senior Management and the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.
- 51.2 Mr Harvey said that there had not been any significant changes since last year.

Resolved, that the Internal Audit charter 2019/20 be approved.

Voting: none voting against

52. Internal Audit Plan 2019-20

- 52.1 Anthony Harvey explained that the Internal Audit Plan detailed the work to be carried out during the financial year 2019/20 which had been agreed with the Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team.
- 52.2 Mr Harvey said this year the focus would be on the core ICT systems due to the changes to the Finance and HR/Payroll systems, to make sure they were operating as they should be.
- 52.3 He informed members' that the aim of the internal audit's work programme was to provide a clear statement of assurance on risk management, internal control and governance arrangements.

Resolved, that the Internal Audit Plan 2019/20 be approved.

Voting: none voting against

53. Internal Audit Update 2018-19

- 53.1 Mr Harvey advised that the purpose of the report was to update members on the delivery of the approved audit plan for the current 2018/19 financial year and to provide an overview of the status of “live” internal audit reports. He drew members’ attention to the flexibility of the rolling work programme and advised that any days not used would be rolled across to the following year.
- 53.2 Members noted the report.

54. Invitation to take up Membership of the UK National Parks Charity Foundation

- 54.1 Alison Barnes gave an update on the progress made by National Parks Partnerships LLP in establishing the UK National Parks Charity Foundation. Ms Barnes said the New Forest National Park Authority had received an invitation to apply for membership of the new charity and asked members to consider whether or not the Authority should apply. She informed members that not all National Park Authority’s would join to be founding members in the first instance. Once the charity was established, members of the charity would nominate or second the nomination of a trustee of the charity.
- 54.2 After some discussion it was agreed that it would be a good way for the Authority to invest and support existing charities such as ‘Love the Forest’ and a good opportunity to generate income.
- 54.3 Members said that they would be happy to approve membership if the charity didn’t conflict with the Authority’s ethics.

Resolved that, it be recommended to the full Authority that:

- 1 the New Forest National Park Authority submit a formal application for membership of the UK National Parks Charity Foundation;**
- 2 authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, acting in consultation with the Chairman, to take all steps as necessary to implement this decision, including entering into any agreements and signing any documentation; and**
- 3 authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, acting in consultation with the Chairman, to take any subsequent decisions on behalf of the Authority as a member of the UK National Parks Charity Foundation, including the nomination or seconding of Trustees and reporting regularly to the Authority on this matter.**

Voting: none voting against

55. National Park Authority Involvement in Creative People and Places 2019-23

- 55.1 Fiona Wynne presented her report and advised that the NPA had been invited to join a core consortium of New Forest organisations in bidding for up to £1.2 million of Arts Council England funding to develop local arts provision across the New Forest district. She said that the New Forest consortium comprised five organisations and, if the bid was successful, the funds would be used to develop a four-year programme of activity

reflecting the success of arts festivals delivered through the Our Past, Our Future Programme.

- 55.2 Following discussion, members fully supported the recommendation in the report and raised the possibility of an NPA champion for arts and culture.

Resolved, that the commitment of officer time to the core consortium to develop a programme of activity and bid for funding be approved and, if the bid is successful, that the NPA’s involvement in the consortium be continued for the duration of the contractual period to 2023.

Voting: none voting against

56. Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent

- 56.1 There were no urgent items on this occasion.

57. Date of next meeting

- 57.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 3 June 2019.

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 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 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 disclosing sensitive information relating to the Authority’s financial affairs.

58. Burley affordable Housing

- 58.1 Members received an update on an affordable housing scheme in Burley. This is a summary of the minute which contains exempt information.

59. Planning for the future

- 59.1 Members received an update on planning for the future. This is a summary of the minute which contains exempt information.

The meeting closed at 13.00 hours

SignedDate.....
(Chairman)