

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 3 JUNE 2019 AT 10:00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON

Present:

Members:

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

Officers:

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
Jo Murphy	Information and Data Protection Officer
Frances Connolly	Executive Assistant

Also in attendance: Antony Harvey, Deputy Head of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership and Chief Internal Auditor to the Authority

60. Apologies for absence

60.1 David Bence, Oliver Crosthwaite–Eyre, Richard Frampton, Edward Heron and Alison Barnes (Chief Executive)

61. Declarations of Interest

61.1 David Harrison declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to minute item 66 (Work Programme – Enjoy: PEDALL update) as Chairman of Friends of PEDALL.

62. Chairman’s announcements

62.1 There were no announcements on this occasion.

63. Minutes

63.1 In Alison Barnes absence, Paul Walton gave members an update on the Accord between the Forestry Commission (England) and National Parks England and advised that he had attended a meeting in April which had looked at progressing the Accord at both national and local level. Members noted that the relationship with FE is likely to be different here in the New Forest in comparison to other National Parks because of the extent of the Crown Lands. It will be important that the Accord continues to allow local priorities to be addressed where necessary. Mr Walton highlighted that implementation of the Accord here in the New Forest had focussed on how the FE and NPA can work better together to address local issues.

63.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

64. Public Question Time

64.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

65. Annual Internal Audit Report and Opinion 2018-19

65.1 Antony Harvey introduced the report explaining that its purpose was to provide an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of risk management, control and governance processes for the year ending 31 March 2019.

65.2 Mr Harvey informed members that the internal audit opinion undertook five assurance reviews during the year ending 31 March 2019. There were two adequate assurances and three were substantial. There were no anti-fraud and corruption investigations undertaken by internal audit during 2018-19 which he said was reassuring.

65.3 In response to Members' questions regarding the new payroll and HR Hub system which had been launched on 1 April, Mr Harvey confirmed that this area and finance systems would be audited in August.

Resolved, that the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Internal Audit Report and Opinion for 2018/19 be approved.

Voting: Non-voting against

66. Year End Progress Report 2018-19

66.1 Members reviewed the KPIs and considered the four sections of the final quarter of the 2018/19 work programme. A member made a general comment that the quarterly progress reports in the Plan needed to reflect the progress achieved against the target.

66.2 In noting that the planning application for the potential undergrounding of high-voltage pylon lines in the New Forest had been paused (Protect 7), members discussed a potential approach to National Grid regarding the possibility of their reallocating the funds to other projects in the New Forest. However, the Committee was advised that the funds would likely be transferred by National Grid to the next priority project for undergrounding elsewhere in the country. It was noted that the New Forest was benefiting from associated funding such as the work at Franchises Lodge. Following further discussion, it was agreed that a possible request for reallocation of funding from National Grid should be considered later in the process.

66.3 Referring to promotion work through Local Information Points (Enjoy 2) and community engagement in the New Forest, members mentioned that this work could be further enhanced by collaborating with local vendors who were highly visible in the community, either by equipping them to promote responsible recreation or by rangers working alongside them with the mobile unit.

- 66.4 Referring to progress on the review of the Recreation Management Strategy (Enjoy 12), Nigel Matthews reminded members that an update on the RMS review and the potential for creating a Local Development Order to assist with the review process was planned for a members' day on 14 June.
- 66.5 Responding to a query regarding efforts by the Authority to support low carbon/renewable energy technologies, Steve Avery advised that proposals for a biomass boiler and other sustainable initiatives planned for the Authority's new office building in 2011 had not been progressed due to significantly reduced grant funding allocated for the new offices by Defra. Such opportunities were also limited under the Authority's current building lease. However, two vehicle charging points had been installed in the parking area and one of the pool cars was an electric vehicle. He added that any future move to new offices would include plans to achieve a carbon neutral building.
- 66.6 Members then noted the report.

67. Financial Outturn and Treasury Report 2018-19

- 67.1 Nigel Stone presented the report and highlighted the following:
- savings were slightly lower than forecast due to costs for temporary planning posts and higher than usual employee travel expenses;
 - the planning fee income was £36,000 higher than originally forecast, so would be used to resource the planning team and cover costs of the Local Plan; and
 - the overall financial position required £27,000 from the Revenue Support Reserve for this year, £13,000 less than originally budgeted. A further £324,000 had been utilised from other Earmarked Reserves which decreased the total earmarked reserves held to around £1.56m.
- 67.2 There was some discussion about the higher than expected employee travel expenses. Nigel Stone informed members that there was £25,000 allowed each year but that this year costs had been £31,000. He advised that he was already undertaking some analysis to establish the reason for the increase and would report his findings to the Committee if necessary.

Resolved, that:

- 1. the provisional outturn position be noted;**
- 2. the Treasury Management Stewardship Report and Prudential Indicators 2017/18 in Annex 6 of the report be noted; and**
- 3. the *indicative* transfers to/(from) Reserves in 2017/18 as set out in section 6 of the report and detailed in Annex 5 be approved.**

Voting: Non-voting against

68. Annual Governance Statement

- 68.1 David Stone presented the report and advised that the purpose of the Annual Governance Statement was to provide assurance that the Authority's business was conducted in accordance with the law and that public money was safeguarded and accounted for. The Statement also ensured that there are arrangements in place for continuous improvement of the Authority's functions.
- 68.2 Some of the key areas of work in 2018/19 which are included in the Statement were:
- start of the review of the Partnership Plan to cover the period 2020-2025;
 - progressing the Local Plan and RMS reviews;
 - agreement of the new Business Plan and the 2018/19 Work Programme;
 - progressing the drafting the People Plan;
 - start of the review of the Authority's records management systems;
 - review of the Authority's risk register; and
 - increased collaborative working with the Forestry Commission on implementing the Accord between the Forestry Commission (England) and National Parks England.
- 68.3 He added that, following acceptance by this Committee, the draft Statement would be passed to the external auditors together with the draft financial report for audit before being brought back to the Authority meeting in July for final approval and then signed off by the Chairman and Chief Executive and published on our website.

Following brief discussion, it was:

Resolved, that the Draft Annual Governance Statement for the financial year 2018/19 be approved and passed to the External Auditors.

Voting: Non-voting against

69. Health and Safety Update 2018-19

- 69.1 Steve Avery informed members that there had been two meetings of the Health and Safety forum. Staff training had been undertaken and qualifications gained in First Aid; most of those staff being seasonal and apprentice rangers.
- 69.2 There were seventeen minor incidents reported over the twelve months which had been investigated. Steve Avery said all staff were encouraged to report accidents however small, so that steps could be taken to prevent them from happening again.
- 69.3 There had been a decrease in long-term sickness absence statistics down to 4.93 days per full-time equivalent. Mr Avery informed members that hand sanitizers had been installed on each floor to reduce the spread of germs in the office.
- 69.4 Members noted the report.

70. Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent

70.1 There were no urgent items on this occasion.

71. Date of next meeting

71.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 9 September 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.

72. External Funding Report

72.1 Members received an oral update on external funding. This is a summary of the minute which contains exempt information.

The meeting closed at 11.50 hours

**SignedDate.....
(Chairman)**