

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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

Present:

Members:

David Bence
Sue Bennison
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre
David Harrison (Chairman)
Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chairman)
Mel Kendal
George Meyrick
Neville Penman
John Sanger

Officers:

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive
Steve Avery	Executive Director Strategy and Planning
Rosalind Alderman	Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Nigel Stone	Head of Resources
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
Frances Connolly	Executive Assistant

84. Apologies for absence

84.1 No apologies for absence were received.

85. Declarations of Interest

85.1 Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to minute item 9 as a Trustee of the New Forest Trust.

86. Chairman's announcements

86.1 The Chairman welcomed George Meyrick to the Committee.

87. Minutes

87.1 A member referred to the planning fee payment of £150,000 in minute item 80.3 and commented that this amount would be reduced by costs associated with the development, resulting in a substantially lower net figure.

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

Voting: none voting against

88. Public Question Time

88.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

89. Half-Year Progress Report 2019-20

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

89.2 **Protect, page 7:** In response to a query, Mr Avery advised that the New Forest National Park Authority did not collect CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) on new developments at the present time. He advised members that a progress report regarding potential CIL charges would be taken to an Authority meeting for consideration.

89.3 **Enjoy page 5:** Members discussed the England Coast Path (ECP) signage and were informed that the Special by Design project would help inform signage across the National Park, including the ECP and Rights of Way. The Special by Design project is a partnership project funded by the NPA, Verderers, CDA, Test Valley Borough Council, Forestry England and Hampshire County Council; a members' day on the project was planned for 4 December 2019. In response to a query, members were advised that maintenance of ECP signage will be the responsibility of the NPA as the Access Authority.

89.4 **Enjoy page 9** Members noted that recreation management had been discussed at the last Committee meeting in connection with behaviour change to encourage people to take individual responsibility for protecting habitats. In this regard, members discussed the NPA's influence on the management of events in the New Forest. Nigel Matthews advised that there were actions in the Recreation Management Strategy which looked specifically at events and how they are managed and that there had been positive discussions on this with a range of organisations.

89.5 Members then noted the report.

90. Half-Year Budgetary Control Report (including Treasury Performance Report) 2019-20

90.1 Nigel Stone introduced the report which provided a summary of the financial performance for the first six months of the 2019/20 financial year. He said that the overall expenditure position showed £2.35m spend over the first six months of the year (48% of the budget). Without the partnership projects, spend of was £2.07m from a budget of £3.90m which represented 53% of spend, a very positive expenditure position for the year.

90.2 He mentioned that investment income was above the original projection for the year and cumulative savings identified across the budget lines would likely add up to £5,000-£10,000.

90.3 On potential pressures, he said that core planning income was slightly below forecast for this stage of the year (45% of annual budgeted total) but those figures excluded the one-off fee for the proposed development at Fawley.

- 90.4 On the Defra grant position, Mr Stone advised that there would unlikely to be any update on this until the end of December/early January as significant Defra resources were being tied up with Brexit issues.
- 90.5 He reported that at a meeting with the Hampshire Pension Fund the previous week, NPA officers had been advised that it would no longer be necessary for the Authority to make significant 'top up' payments to the fund as had been done for the previous few years. As the full top up had been provided for in future budgeting, this change could save the Authority around £180,000 per year for the next three years. Given the size and volatility of such pension valuation calculations, the Authority had been advised that it would be prudent to consider putting some of this funding aside in a 'Pension Risk' reserve.

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

Voting: Non-voting against

91. Forestry England-NPA Accord

- 91.1 Mr Walton presented the report which updated members on joint working between Forestry England and the NPA in relation to the Accord between Forestry England and National Parks England. He drew members' attention to the examples of progress against each of the 5 priority areas of joint working mentioned in the Accord and elaborated on the detail of these shared activities and advised that the Deputy Surveyor would be attending the March meeting of the Committee to provide an annual update on progress of the Accord.
- 91.2 A member expressed concern that Forestry England did not attend meetings of local community groups such as the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group and this was an area for further improvement.
- 91.3 Following discussion, members noted the report.

92. Love the Forest Visitor Giving Scheme – two year review

- 92.1 Andy Brennan introduced the report, informing members that the scheme was an opportunity for visitors to contribute to the upkeep of places they loved to visit by giving a donation. The funds raised through the scheme were used to support the New Forest Trust and enable the Trust to provide grants to other charities and organisations which supported its charitable aims.
- 92.2 The New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) had run the scheme since 2017 during which time twelve new businesses had joined and income had stabilised and risen to £30,454 in 2018-19. An independent report previously commissioned by the NPA had forecast that there was scope to increase the level of donations to £160,000 per annum by 2020-21. Mr Brennan said that going by the current performance it would be unlikely that that figure would be reached, and although new businesses joined the

scheme, others left for a variety of reasons. He added that when the scheme was set up in 2006 the suggested donation was £1 and there was a reluctance to increase it further.

- 92.3 The Authority already supported the scheme with 18.5 hours of officer time but there was a need for additional communications support. Mr Brennan suggested that if officer time was reduced to 15 hours per week and 5.5 hours provided for a communications assistant there would be no overall cost to the NPA.
- 92.4 Andy Brennan reported that the Love the Forest Ambassador training had been well received and there was an interest from businesses to pay a rate of £150 which could cover costs for a ranger or commoner to run the sessions. This model would also be used to increase the education work of the Trust.
- 92.5 The Chief Executive thanked Andy Brennan for the hard work he had done which had made a real difference. She informed members that a national charity had been set up and was in place with National Parks Partnership. She asked Nigel Stone to circulate the report to members.

Action: Nigel Stone to circulate the report dealing with the setting up of UK National Parks Charity Foundation in place of the National Parks Partnership and the NPA's application for membership of this charity.

93. Corporate Risk Log

- 93.1 Members considered and noted the updated risk log.

Resolved, that the updated risk log attached to the submitted report be noted.

Voting: Non-voting against

94. Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent

- 94.1 The Chairman advised that there was one item of urgent business which is recorded below.

95. Paediatric Fellowships

- 95.1 Nigel Matthews explained that Public Health England (PHE) would like to work with the National Park Authority on health and wellbeing projects in the National Park. This initiative would help both organisations to develop an understanding of how greenspace and interaction with National Parks can deliver opportunities for people to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- 95.2 It was proposed that a paediatric doctor studying to be a Fellow would work for two days a week (both remotely and locally) to develop projects with officers of the NPA. He said that administrative costs of the Authority would be borne by PHE and that the proposal is for one paediatric doctor in each of over five successive years. The NPA's contact at PHE would be the Fellows' supervisor.

Following discussion, members expressed their support for the above initiative and noted the report.

96. Date of next meeting

96.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 3 February 2020.

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.

97. Planning for the Future – Oral update

Members received an oral update on Planning for the Future. This is a summary of the minute which contains exempt information.

The meeting closed at 12.40 hours

SignedDate.....
(Chairman)