

## RAPC 437/20

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 2 NOVEMBER 2020

### CORONAVIRUS UPDATE REPORT – NOVEMBER 2020

**Report by:** Alison Barnes, Chief Executive & Nigel Stone, Head of Resources

**Purpose:**

This report is to provide Members with a brief overview of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic since the last update at the Authority meeting in October. Officers will of course be available at the meeting to cover the very latest positions and answer more specific points which Members may wish to raise.

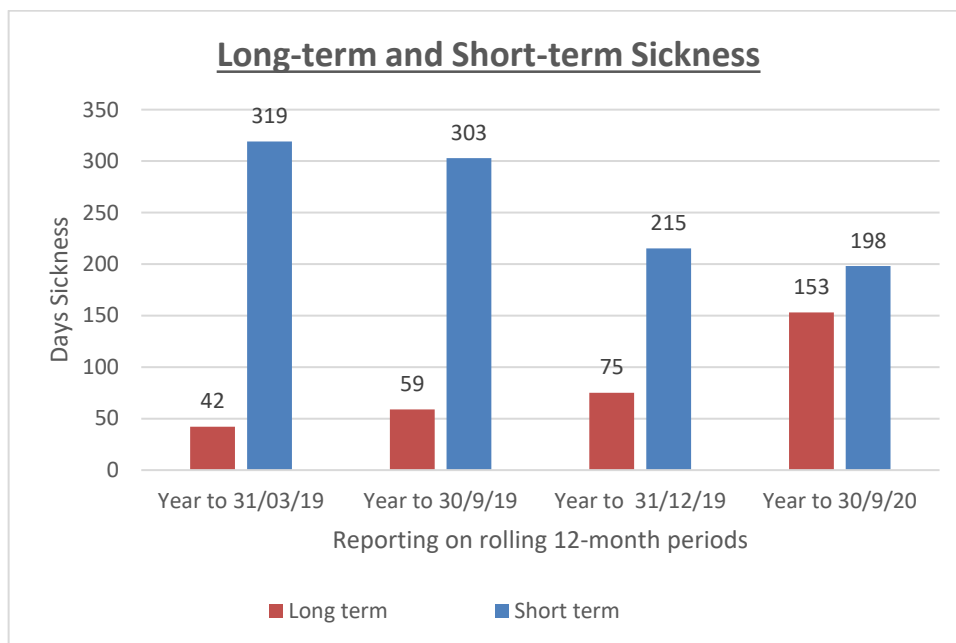
This update is focussed around the specific impacts on the Forest, the Authority and our staff.

#### **1 New Forest and Authority-Specific Updates**

- 1.1 The Authority has continued to hold virtual Planning and Resources Committee meetings throughout the summer period. Rangers have continued their engagement and campaigns out in the Forest with partners throughout this time. Further staff, including Pedall, have also restarted their outdoor work since July and recently we have begun to offer some volunteering opportunities for small work groups of up to six. All such work is kept under constant review given the changing pandemic circumstances and guidance.
- 1.2 Internally, the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) have continued to meet virtually at least every two weeks, we have held All-Staff meetings every six weeks and increased the frequency of our Health & Safety Forum from every six months to around once every six weeks.
- 1.3 During September we held an official consultation with staff, the Health & Safety Forum and the Union on our Risk Assessment and Guidance regarding the use of the Town Hall offices. This ensures that everyone is aware and comfortable with the covid-secure measures we have put in place such as limits on overall numbers (20), team rota's, one-way systems and clear procedures for any known or suspected C19 cases. We had already made evident during this process that use of the offices would require a strong business need and therefore the newly introduced Covid 'tier' system would only affect the potential office usage should the New Forest enter the 'Very High' Tier 3.

1.4 Members will be aware we conducted a survey of staff in June/July to see how they were initially coping with the pandemic and the new ways of working with the results being very positive – this was to be repeated again in late September to gain further insight and ideas from staff as we move into the winter months and potentially more longer-term, permanent changes to our ways of working. Due to other commitments and staffing changes, the survey was unfortunately only recently sent out and is therefore currently still ongoing – members will be updated on the latest position at the meeting and a full update will be provided to (all) Members later in November following analysis of the results by officers.

1.5 SLT have been carefully monitoring staff leave and sickness levels over recent months. The chart below shows the rolling 12-month sickness statistics split by long and short-term:



There are a very small number of staff who had non-covid, long-term sickness over the summer which has disproportionately skewed that data in red. However, the short-term sickness in blue shows a continuing decline, even during the most recent period of the pandemic. The average number of total sickness days per FTE is still below 5 which compares favourably with the public sector average of around 9 days and the average among the National Parks of over 6 days. Managers have recently been sent details of leave taken since April for all their team; this will help them ensure all staff are continuing to take appropriate leave/breaks during these difficult and unusual times.

1.6 Our staff Wellbeing Group have continued their incredible work over recent months putting on events such as mental health awareness sessions, virtual discovery days and coffee chats. They have now developed a comprehensive package of engagements for the upcoming quarter including WonderWalks (small groups of staff from a local area, getting together for a catch-up whilst walking), virtual Halloween-themed events and plans for the lead up to the festive period too.

## **2 Recommendation**

### **It is recommended that Members**

#### **1 Consider and note the report**

#### **Equality and Diversity Implications:**

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report, however a full review of all our equality and diversity considerations, entitled “New Forest Voices”, will be undertaken over the coming year.

#### **Contact:**

Nigel Stone

Head of Resources

Tel: 01590 646655

Email: [nigel.stone@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.stone@newforestnpa.gov.uk)