

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 10:00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON

Present:

Members:

Gordon Bailey
David Bence (Deputy Chair)
Sue Bennison
Patrick Heneghan (Chair)
Victoria Mander
Alexis McEvoy
Caroline Rackham
John Sanger
Ann Sevier

Officers:

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive
Steve Avery	Executive Director Strategy and Planning
Rosalind Alderman	Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Nigel Stone	Head of Resources (CFO)
Paul Walton	Head of Environment and Rural Economy
Hilary Makin	Communications Manager
Jim Mitchell	Access and Learning Manager
Olivia McGregor	Net Zero with Nature Programme Manager
David Stone	Corporate Services Manager
Vicki Gibbon	Member Services Administrator

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Neville Penman.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 None

3. Chair's Announcements

3.1 The Chair welcomed David Bence as the new Deputy Chair of the Committee and thanked Alexis McEvoy for her tenure as Deputy Chair.

4. Minutes

4.1 In response to a query in connection with minute item 131.2, Nigel Stone advised that a positive response had now been received from the Unions (Unison, Unite, GMB) in connection with the employers pay award offer, which would now be paid to staff in their November salary (including backpay to April). Rosalind Alderman advised that the action contained within minute item 131.8, on the Authority's levying powers, would be taken up by her with the member concerned shortly. The

minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

5. Public Question Time

5.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

6. Half-Year Progress Report 2022-23

6.1 The Committee considered and discussed the sections of the second quarter progress (July - Sept) and specifically the following:

6.2 **Key Performance Indicators, page 5:** Commenting on the number of planning consultations carried out by the Archaeology team it was asked if the Authority were charging enough for the service level agreement and how this was monitored. Nigel Stone replied that in his opinion the Authority was charging a sufficient amount and was based on a core amount of hours at a standard charge, anything above that was charged at a further given rate which was agreed within the service level agreement. A robust monitoring excel spreadsheet system was kept on a case by case basis including all hours taken to complete the work.

6.3 **Key Performance Indicators, page 6:** Member participation was highlighted and it was asked if any analysis was carried out as to reasons why members were not attending meetings, which meetings these were and if there was a trend specifically in respect of an overlap of meetings with those of other public bodies. David Stone explained that the Member Services team do check with all neighbouring authorities to check if there was a clash with other meetings and to also keep a record of attendance for each committee which was available if required.

6.4 **Nature Recovery, page 2:** A member asked about the environmental land management scheme, Paul Walton responded that the Authority was currently waiting on Defra and due to the changes in Environment Secretary's within the government, progress on this was taking some time but it was anticipated that the Authority should hear by the end of the year. He explained that he was aware of the uncertainties being faced by commoners and the farming community.

6.5 **Nature Recovery, page 3:** A member raised concerns regarding mitigation projects and the effect this was having on the Forest. Steve Avery advised that all new development must work within a specified mitigation framework, the situation was improving and the team were currently awaiting the update on the NFDC Local Plan along with the outline of the Planning Bill which was currently going through parliament and how housing needs will be assessed in the future.

6.6 **Net Zero With Nature, page 6:** Jim Mitchell responded to a question regarding the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, he advised that work was still progressing and that there was no change since the last RAPC meeting where he updated members on the progress.

6.7 **Thriving Forest, page 9:** A member asked whether broadband expansion had come to a halt in the Forest, Mr Avery commented that the Authority was quite limited as to what it could do but had been working with Natural England. Natural

England was waiting for information from BT Openreach as they were required to conform to the Habitat Regulations before work could continue.

- 6.8 **Thriving New Forest, page 10:** Concern was raised in regard to mapping issues and what could be done to resolve this. Steve Avery advised that the Authority was looking into this and would like to resolve this issue by hosting the Geographical Information System in-house with the ICT team. It was then asked what impact this would have on ICT budgets, Mr Avery assured members that this would not have an overall impact on ICT budget.
- 6.9 **Thriving New Forest, page 11:** A question was raised regarding the New Forest Knowledge website being available. Nigel Stone advised that this would need to be taken down for at least a few weeks whilst a new server host was found. The Authority was currently discussing hosting the website with the New Forest Heritage Centre and would like to get the website up and running as soon as possible.

Members then noted the report.

7. **Half-Year Budgetary Control Report 2022/23**

- 7.1 Nigel Stone introduced the report and provided a summary of financial performance at the mid-point of 2022/23. He said that the overall financial position provided reassurance with expenditure matching income at 50% for this stage of the year. He then referred to a small number of variances such as payment of increased salaries through the pay award, matched by additional interest on investments and some other smaller savings.
- 7.2 He then responded to a small number of queries in connection with the half year expenditure. Members noted the on track position of the Authority's finances at this stage of the year.

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

Voting: none-voting against.

8. **Corporate Risk Register and Countermeasures**

- 8.1 David Stone introduced the report and advised that any updates to the existing risks within the log had been identified by italic type.
- 8.2 Alison Barnes suggested that risk item 9 be increased by a score of 4 and 5 (likelihood and impact respectively) in the light of uncertainties around future grants by Defra. This would increase the overall severity score of this risk item to 20 (red status).
- 8.3 Members supported the above change and agreed that the log be amended accordingly.

Resolved, that the updated corporate risk register be noted and that risk item 9 be amended to reflect a risk score of 4 and 5 (likelihood and impact respectively) in the light of

uncertainties around future grants by Defra, increasing the overall severity risk score of this item to 20 (red status).

Voting: none-voting against.

9. Team New Forest – Authority Partnership working to encourage investment of the private finance in the natural capital of the National Park

9.1 Paul Walton began his report by reminding members that in March 2021 the Committee approved the submission for the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund, which was to secure resources for the National Parks Partnerships and National Park Authorities. The application was successful and the project began in September 2021 and had now subsequently ended. He explained that this report gave a brief summary of the project and its findings along with some initial discussions for future opportunities arising from the project. He then highlighted aspects of the report and responded to queries from members.

9.2 Members then noted the report.

10. Any other items that the Chair decides are urgent

10.1 None

11. Date of next meeting

11.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 6 February 2023 in the Council Chamber at Lymington Town Hall.

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.

12. Authority Financial Reserves Review

12.1 Members received an update on the Authority Financial Reserves Review. This is a summary of the minute which contains exempt information.

13. Planning for the Future

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

The meeting closed at 14.10 hours

Signed**Date**.....
(Chair)