

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 21 MARCH 2024 AT 10.00 AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON SO41 9ZG

Present:

Members

Victoria Mander (In the Chair)

Gordon Bailey (*left at 11:50*)

Zoe Clewer

Richard Clewer

Mary Davies

David Harrison

Patrick Heneghan

Mel Kendal (*left at 13:10*)

Keith Mans

Neville Penman (*left at 11:15*)

Gavin Parker

Caroline Rackham

Joe Reilly

Ann Sevier

Derek Tipp (*left at 13:40*)

Steve Trow

Officers

Alison Barnes

Steve Avery

Rosalind Alderman

Nigel Stone

David Stone

David Illsley

Helen Robinson

Vicki Gibbon

Chief Executive

Executive Director

Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)

Corporate Services Manager

Policy & Conservation Manager

Lead Education and Youth Officer

Member Services Administrator

Also present: Simon Mathers, Janet Dawson and Katie Lean, Ernst & Young LLP

79 Apologies for Absence

79.1 Apologies for absence were received from David Bence (Chair), George Meyrick, Dan Poole, Brice Stratford and Michael Thierry.

80. Declarations of Interest

80.1 None.

81. Chair's Announcements

81.1 There were no Chair's announcements on this occasion.

82. Building Design Awards

82.1 Steve Avery was pleased to announce the Building Design Award winners for 2024, each of whom were then presented with a certificate and plaque by the Chair. The winners were as follows –

Best Residential Scheme – Chestnut Plantation, Tatchbury Mount –

Architect: John Pardey Architects, Owner: Mr Mark Loftus and Dr Christine Ullmann

Best Non-Residential Building – The Living Room, SpudWORKS

Architect: Delve Architects, Owner Mr Mark Drury, SpudWORKS

Best Green Building – The Clay Retreat, Norleywood

Architect: PAD Studio

83. Minutes

83.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024 were approved as a true record.

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024 be approved as a true record.

Voting: None voting against

84. Public Question Time

84.1 Presentations to the Authority were made by Brian Tarnoff in relation to the Consultative Panel, Peter Hebbard in relation to flooding in Brockenhurst, and Alexander Fothergill in relation to the Local Plan. These are available on request from Member Services.

85. Chief Executive's Report (AM 671/24)

85.1 The Chief Executive reminded members that her report covered the period since the Authority meeting on 25 January 2024 and that the report would fit within the Re:New Forest themes from the newly agreed Business Plan. Ms Barnes gave a detailed presentation using PowerPoint giving a thorough overview of the Authority's work over the last quarter under each of the purposes.

Following discussion, members noted the report. A copy of the presentation is available on the website.

86. External Auditor's Report 2023/24 – Ernst & Young LLP (AM 672/24)

86.1 Janet Dawson from Ernst & Young presented the report and advised that the paper comprised two reports, the first being a general update on the NPA's audit position for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years and the second provided an update on the Value for Money work from 2022/23. She then responded to a number of queries from members specifically in connection with the national backlog in the publication of audited accounts, which had an impact on the audit and publication of the Authority's own accounts.

Resolved that:

1. the external audit update (Annex 1) be noted and,
2. the Value for Money Report 2022/23 (Annex 2) be approved

Voting: Unanimous

87. Oral Report from Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 5 February and 4 March

87.1 Patrick Heneghan referred to the two substantive items discussed at the meeting of the Committee on 5 February 2024, namely the third quarter progress report 2023-24

and third quarter budgetary control report 2023-24, and highlighted various issues contained therein.

- 87.2 He then drew members' attention to salient points contained in the reports considered by the Committee at its meeting on 4 March 2024, including the Substantial Assurance which had been concluded by the Auditors in respect of the new Planning System, and the new Work Programme for 2024/25 which would be considered at the current meeting.

Members noted the report.

88. Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for the Financial Year 2024/25, Treasury Management Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan (AM 673/24)

- 88.1 Nigel Stone highlighted aspects of the report which dealt with the proposed revenue budget for the 2024-25 financial year and draft Treasury Management Strategy and medium term projection for the Authority financial position up to the 2027/28 financial year and which had been considered at the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 4 March 2024.
- 88.2 He referred to the establishment of a new Task & Finish Group to review the ongoing financial position and future facilities requirements of the Authority as agreed at the RAPC meeting and said that an invitation for membership of the Group would be sent to all members shortly.
- 88.3 He also mentioned that as of the date of the current meeting, the NPA had still not received details of its grant allocation for 2024/25, which was disappointing, and a longer term funding plan was needed from Defra to assist in achieving financial stability over the medium term although the next two years Authority finances were fully balanced. He added that Defra were currently reviewing the grant formula for national parks and the NPA had been extremely successful in sourcing external grant funding.
- 88.4 Following further discussion, the recommendations contained in the report were approved.

Resolved that:

- 1 the General Fund Budget for 2024/25 be approved
- 2 it be noted that the underlying minimum level for the General Fund Reserve remains at £0.35 million
- 3 the implications on the Reserves of the proposed budget for 2024/25 be noted
- 4 the Risk Assessment and Section 25 Statement (Section 7) be noted
- 5 the Treasury Management Strategy in Annex 3 be approved
- 6 the Medium-Term Financial Plan up to 2027/28 and the Forward Projection in Annex 4 be noted
- 7 the Task & Finish Group being established by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee as set out in the report be noted.

Voting: 10-2 (1 abstention on item 5)

89. Draft Work Programme 2024/25 (AM 674/24)

- 89.1 Nigel Stone introduced the report and said that the proposed new Work Programme for 2024/25 was aligned with the Partnership Plan and was more concise than in previous years, allowing for more focused reporting on the actions in the plan. The actions would be challenging but achievable and flexible in terms of responding to new challenges which might come up during the year.
- 89.2 He said that the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee had considered the 10 new national targets detailed in paragraph 2.1 of the report and which had been set out in the Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. These were applicable to all 10 National Parks and the 34 National Landscapes in England. Arising from this, Officers were working on a suite of national performance indicators for the NPA in collaboration with the partners of the Partnership Plan designed to monitor progress against the achievement of the 10 new national targets. Officers would also be reviewing the current local performance indicators used to measure performance across the range of outcomes delivered by the Authority to ensure they remained fit for purpose.

Resolved, that the Draft Work Programme 2024/25, as set out in Annex 1 of the report be approved.

Voting: Unanimous

90. New Forest National Park Local Plan Review (AM 675/24)

- 90.1 David Illsley began his report by reminding members that all planning authorities must prepare a local plan setting out the local planning policies for their area. He explained that national planning guidance stated that most local plans were likely to be updated in whole or in part after five years and that reviews should be proportionate to the issues in hand. With the five-year date from the adoption of the National Park's Local Plan being August 2024, the high-level assessment undertaken of the Plan (Annex 1 to the report) by officers had concluded that there were several areas of local planning policy where an update would be beneficial. Members were then asked to support the recommendation as detailed below.

Resolved that:

a partial review of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (August 2019) be commenced, and authority be delegated to officers to carry out all that is necessary in this regard; and members noted that a revised Local Development Scheme will be presented at the Authority meeting in July 2024.

Voting: Unanimous

91. Net Zero with Nature (AM 676/24)

- 91.1 Paul Walton gave members an update on the Authority's commitment to work with partners to develop a plan for the National Park and surrounding area to be 'net zero with nature' by 2050. Members then noted the report.

92. Review of Charges for Written Pre-Application Advice (AM 677/24)

- 92.1 Steve Avery advised members that his report was to seek members' approval to increase discretionary pre-application charges with effect from 1 April. Following discussion, it was agreed to amend recommendation 2 to reflect that in subsequent years the pre-application fees would increase annually in line with inflation.

Resolved that:

1. the proposed increase in fees for written pre-application advice, as detailed in report AM 677/24, be approved, to take effect from 1 April 2024; and
2. in subsequent years the pre-application fees will be increased annually in line with inflation, and authority is delegated to officers to word the fees charging schedule in order to give effect to this annual increase in line with the provisions in respect of planning application fee increases set out in the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2023.

Voting: Unanimous

93 Interim Report for Youth Board Task & Finish Group (AM 678/24)

- 93.1 Helen Robinson gave members an overview of the Youth Board task and finish group, and advised that the group had now set a schedule of priorities. A full report would be made at the July Authority meeting.

94. Date of next meeting

- 94.1 Thursday 25 July 2024 at 10.00am – Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall, Lymington

PART II ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPTED INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED**95. Request of Release of Affordable Housing Contribution (AM 679/24)**

- 95.1 This was a part 2 report and was minuted as such.

Part 1 of the meeting closed at 1:00pm.

Signed: Date: (Chair)