

## RAPC 537/24

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 3 JUNE 2024

### ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24

**Report by:** Nigel Stone, Head of Resources and David Stone, Corporate Services Manager

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the New Forest National Park Authority for the financial year 2023/24, detailed in **Annex 1**.
- 1.2 Following acceptance at this Committee, the draft AGS will be passed to the External Auditors (Ernst & Young) alongside the draft Financial Report for the year. These will then be subject to the usual audit processes/amendments and both finalised documents will then come back to the full Authority for definitive approval.
- 1.3 The AGS must be signed by the Authority Chair and Head of Paid Services (Chief Executive) prior to final publication.

#### 2. Annual Governance Statement

- 2.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and 'proper practice' (CIPFA/SOLACE) require the Authority to produce an AGS and conduct a review of its governance framework. The AGS seeks to demonstrate that the Authority's business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. There is a duty under the Local Government Act 1999, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.2 The AGS is compiled using a wide range of evidence sources from across the Authority, such as:
  - the Internal Auditor's opinion for the financial year 2023/24,
  - corporate risk register,
  - External Audits reports,
  - the Monitoring Officers' on-going review of governance.

- 2.3 Any significant issues (weaknesses) found as a result of the review of the governance framework, are recorded in the AGS. An action plan for their improvement will be drawn up and monitored by this Committee.
- 2.4 Members are reminded that whilst the AGS sets out the key *governance* issues for 2023/24, the NPA's 2023/24 Annual Report summaries the Authority's significant activities and achievements over this period. The Annual Report is currently being compiled and will be considered by members in July.

### **3. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 3.1 The Authority takes equality and diversity extremely seriously when considering all its working and governance arrangements. For example, this report makes mention of our wide-ranging community engagement and application of procurement rules to assist our Small & Medium Entities.

### **4. Recommendation**

**It is recommended that Members approve the Draft Annual Governance Statement for the financial year 2023/24 and that the draft is passed to the External Auditors.**

#### **Papers:**

RAPC 537/24 – Cover report

RAPC 537/24 Annex 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

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