

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 22 MARCH 2018 AT 10.00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, LYMINGTON

#### **Present:**

##### *Members*

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre (Chairman)

Edward Heron (Deputy Chairman)

Gordon Bailey

George Bisson

David Bence

Richard Frampton

David Harrison

Patrick Heneghan

Penny Jackman

Keith Mans

Phil Marshall

Harry Oram

Gavin Parker

Neville Penman

Leo Randall

Barry Rickman

John Sanger

Marian Spain

Richard Taylor

Pat Wyeth

##### *Officers*

Alison Barnes

Chief Executive Officer

Steve Avery

Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

Nigel Stone

Chief Finance Officer

Julia Mutlow

Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Nigel Matthews

Head of Recreation Management and Learning

Paul Walton

Head of Environment and Rural Economy

David Illsley

Policy Manager

Holger Schiller

Partnerships and Communities Officer

David Stone

Corporate Services Manager

Vicki Gibbon

Member Services Administrator

#### **47. Apologies for absence.**

47.1 Apologies for absence were received from Richard Clewer and Mel Kendal.

#### **48. Declarations of Interest.**

48.1 Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre declared an interest in minute item 51 as a member of the New Forest Association.

48.2 Barry Rickman declared a personal interest in minute item 58, Roeshot SANG due to a work connection and therefore left the meeting during debate and vote on this item.

48.3 Members who were also New Forest District Councillors namely Richard Frampton, Edward Heron, Penny Jackman, Barry Rickman, Neville Penman and Pat Wyeth declared an interest in minute item 60.

#### **49. Chairman's announcements.**

49.1 The Chairman was pleased to announce that the Members of the Building Design Award panel had now made their decision for the winners of 2018, he then presented the awards to the recipients.

The winners were – Mill Stream in Burley for Individual Building and Stuckton Farm for their extension.

## **50. Minutes**

50.1 The minutes of 18 January 2018 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## **51. Public Question Time**

51.1 Peter Roberts of the Friends of the New Forest (New Forest Association) addressed members in connection with the Association's concerns regarding Item 14 on the agenda (Joint Working Partnership) and advised that the Association was opposed to the proposal to appoint a joint head of planning for the NFDC and NPA (a copy of the full presentation is available from Member Services).

51.2 Brian Tarnoff Chairman of the Habitat and Landscape Committee of the Friends of the New Forest (New Forest Association) addressed members on the Association's concerns regarding the England Coast Path (a copy of the full presentation is available from Member Services).

## **52. Chief Executives Report (NFNPA 541/18)**

52.1 The Chief Executive was pleased to present her report which covered the period from January 2018 and advised that this would be the last Chief Executive's report that would look at the current Business Plan.

52.2 Under the 'Protect' programme Ms Barnes reminded Members that prior to the last meeting the Government had launched its '25 Year Environment Plan' and reiterated some of the strands that it contained which included taking a natural capital approach, the importance of education and the focus on health and wellbeing. The National Planning Policy Framework consultation had been launched on 5 March with responses due by 10 May. The framework very much focused on house building and housing demands, Ms Barnes advised that National Parks still had the highest protection but further investigation was necessary into achieving 'environmental net gain' and how this would affect the New Forest.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the New Forest Future Farming Group recently hosted three Deputy Directors from Defra where they visited farms, commoners' holdings, a wetland restoration site and the Verderers Court and they also met a wide range of key stakeholders and organisations. Defra had also recently released the 'Health and Harmony' consultation on the future of agriculture which Ms Barnes advised that the Authority would be responding.

52.3 Under the 'Enjoy' programme the Chief Executive highlighted the recent Volunteer Fair which had taken place, Dr Julian Lewis MP attended and supported the Fair along with over 40 organisations and 6000 people. The #pledge10000 campaign was launched at the Volunteer Fair which asked people to help the Authority gain 10,000 volunteer hours by the end of 2018, around 2,700 hours had been pledged so far.

The Authority recently welcomed two new apprentice rangers; Peter Dovey and Martyn Meaker who would also be working alongside the Forestry Commission, National Trust and the Wildlife Trust.

Ms Barnes advised that at the beginning of March the great British Spring Clean was launched, with over 20 events organised however due to the snow, many of the events had been postponed. They would be rescheduled for the end of March.

- 52.4 Under the 'Prosper' programme Ms Barnes was pleased to announce that the education team had visited over 60 primary schools to tell the children how to help save our 'plastic planet'. She also informed Members that over 30 businesses across the Forest had now signed up to the Refill New Forest scheme where people could fill up their water bottles using taps which would help to reduce the number of disposable plastic bottles.
- 52.5 Under the 'Excellence' programme the Chief Executive was delighted to announce the recent acquisition of land by RSPB in the north of the Forest, Franchises Lodge, which the Authority was supporting with £200,000 and extensive input and support by Authority staff. This reserve would be available for nature and would link the open Forest up to Wiltshire.

Following brief discussion, Members noted the report.

**53. Oral Report from the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 5 March 2018**

- 53.1 David Harrison, Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee updated Members on the meeting which had taken place on 5 March drawing Members' attention to the item on the New Forest Centre. John Pemberton had attended the meeting and had reminded the RAPC Members of the value the Centre brings to the Forest. Mr Harrison advised that following discussion the Committee resolved to extend the current agreement for six months and budget £10,000 funding for the first two quarters giving officers time to liaise with the Ninth Centenary Trust to draw up a four-year Memorandum of Agreement and would be reporting back to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee in June. He advised that there was nothing further to report and the Authority's finances were on track.

Members noted the report.

**54. Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for the Financial Year 2018/19, Treasury Management Strategy and Medium Term Financial Position to 2021. (NFNPA 542/18)**

- 54.1 Nigel Stone presented his report which set out draft proposals for a revenue budget for the financial year 2018/19 and provided a medium term financial projection of the Authority's financial position up to March 2021. He advised that a draft of the report was considered by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee on 5 March 2018 and was recommended for approval.
- 54.2 Mr Stone pointed out some key highlights of the report which included the 20% increase in planning fees which would be ring fenced for the planning service, and that staff would receive a 2% pay increase from 1 April.

Following discussion Members unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

**Resolved**, that

1. the General Fund Budget for 2018/19 be approved;

2. the underlying minimum level for the General Fund Reserve remains at £0.3 million be noted;
3. the implications on the Reserves of the proposed budget for 2018/19 be noted;
4. the Risk Assessment and Section 25 Statement as detailed in section 7 of the report be noted;
5. the Treasury Management Strategy as detailed in Annex 3 be approved and
6. the Medium Term Financial Plan up to 2020/21 as detailed in Annex 4 be noted.

*Voting: unanimous*

**55. Business Plan and Work Programme 2018/19 (NFNPA 543/18)**

- 55.1 Holger Schiller presented his report reminding Members that the current Business Plan came to an end in the current financial year. Following six months of preparation and liaising with both staff and Members, a new Business Plan had been formulated. The new Business Plan would detail how the Authority would deliver a range of objectives over the next three years and how the Authority would react proactively to the challenges and opportunities affecting the New Forest National Park. A more detailed Work Programme had then been drafted for the first year, 2018/19, of the new Business Plan.

**Resolved**, that

1. the Business Plan 2018-21 be approved and
2. the Work Programme 2018/19 be approved

*Voting: unanimous*

**56. Review of Charges for Pre-application Advice (NFNPA 544/18)**

- 56.1 Steve Avery presented his report to Members advising that, at their February Planning Committee meeting, Members unanimously agreed to increase charges for written pre-application advice and proposed that the full Authority endorse the recommendation as set out in the paper.

**Resolved**, that as per the recommendation from the Planning Committee on 20 February, the proposed increase in fees for written pre-application advice, to take effect from 1 April 2018, be approved.

*Voting: unanimous*

**57. Adoption of Members Allowance Scheme (NFNPA 545/18)**

- 57.1 Phil Marshall, Chairman of the Standards Committee advised Members that the Authority must adopt a new Scheme of Members Allowances by 1 April 2018 and at the Standards Committee meeting on 2 October 2017, Members were minded to continue on the same terms of the current scheme which would include cost of living pay increases in line with those awarded to staff.

**Resolved**, that as per the Standards Committee recommendation, the draft scheme of allowances as detailed in Annex 1 of the report be adopted for four years with effect from 1

April 2018 and that the allowances be increased in line with any annual NFNPA staff cost of living pay awards applied from that date.

*Voting: None voting against*

**58. Any other items the Chairman decides are urgent**

- 58.1 The Chairman advised that at the Planning Committee meeting on 20 March a report had been discussed and subsequently recommended to the full Authority for approval. Members agreed to consider the report.
- 58.2 Julia Mutlow introduced her report advising Members that on 20 March 2017 the Authority's Planning Committee granted planning permission for a SANG (suitable alternative natural greenspace) at Roeshot, Christchurch, a similar application was also granted by NFDC for land in their administrative area. The permissions were granted for the delivery of the SANG to mitigate the impact of a proposed residential development in Christchurch.
- 58.3 It was explained that as proposed by the Planning Committee this report asked Members to authorise the Executive Director of Strategy and Planning to enter into an agreement delegating enforcement powers to Christchurch Borough Council over the Roeshot SANG.

**Resolved**, that as proposed by the Planning Committee, the Executive Director of Strategy and Planning be authorised to enter into an inter-authority agreement, relating to land at Roeshot and being the subject of planning permission 1/00846, delegating such enforcement powers, as he deems appropriate to Christchurch Borough Council

*Voting: 15 For, 3 abstentions*

**PART II – ITEMS THAT MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPTED INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED**

**59. Land North of the Forest (NFNPA 547/18)**

- 59.1 Under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act Members considered a report on land in the North of the Forest (this is a summary of a minute that contains exempt information).

***NB – The following matter was initially within Part 2 of the agenda in accordance with Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act (Access to information: Exempt information, Parts 3 and 4) but, as per minute 59.2 below, members agreed that the matter should be debated in public within Part 1.***

**60. Requests for Joint Working (NFNPA 546/18)**

- 60.1 Alison Barnes referred to the letter from the Chief Executive of the New Forest District Council (attached as Annex 1 to the report) about increased engagement between the District Council and the Authority and requested members to provide officers with a steer on how they wanted this and similar requests to be considered.

- 60.2 Members queried why the report was in Part 2 of the agenda and the Monitoring Officer advised that this was in accordance with Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act (Access to information: Exempt information, Parts 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information) and 4 (information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority and employees of, or office holders under, the authority); this being consistent with the position at the Resources Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 5 March 2018. However, members noted that since the RAPC meeting, the letter from the New Forest District Council was now available in the public domain. It was also learned that the exemption was finely balanced, and in view of the above, members agreed that the matter should be debated in public within Part 1 of the agenda.

**Resolved**, that the Chief Executive's report on requests for joint working received from the New Forest District Council be considered in Part 1 of the agenda.

*Voting: None voting against*

- 60.3 Significant debate then followed with some members reporting that there was no need to appoint a joint working group in response to the request from NFDC pointing out that there was already a good degree of co-operation between the two organisations on a variety of levels with a number of SLAs in place. Nor was there a need to share a planning service as the NPA's planning service was functioning well and should remain independent and focused on its purposes and duty. Marian Spain reminded the meeting that the specific planning role of National Parks was set out in statute and this independent position had been reaffirmed in every government review since the 1950's.
- 60.4 Other members indicated that they thought that there was scope for a degree of joint working or shared services and that any potential savings and efficiencies on joint working should be explored through a working group which would be able to meet at short notice outside the set timeframes of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.
- 60.5 Some members also pointed out that the planning proposal put forward by the District Council was only for a shared managed planning service across the NPA and District Council, with one Head of Service working for both organisations and was not about a merging of functions and policies. The National Park operated under different planning policies from those of the District Council and the two organisations had two separate planning committees. The status of the NPA's planning committee in determining all applications within its area was a red line position and would not change.
- 60.6 Following further discussion, members were of the view that there was already a forum in place to consider proposals such as that which was proposed by NFDC, namely the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee with membership balanced between local authority and Secretary of State Members. A joint working scrutiny working group was therefore not supported.

**Resolved**, that a Joint Working Scrutiny Group be not established and that the proposals for improved working arrangements set out in the letter from the Chief Executive of the New Forest District Council dated 23 February 2018 be referred to the next meeting of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee for assessment in terms of the criteria

contained in the report by the Chief Executive of the Authority and that the matter be thereafter reported back to the Authority meeting on 12 July 2018.  
Voting 15-0 (3 abst.)

The meeting closed at 13.15pm.

Signed: .....  
(Chairman)

Date: .....