

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 10:00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON

#### **Present:**

##### *Members:*

John Pemberton (Chairman)  
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre  
David Harrison  
Maureen Holding  
John Sanger  
Marian Spain  
Ken Thornber  
Pat Wyeth

##### *Officers:*

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive
Steve Avery	Executive Director Strategy and Planning
Nigel Matthews	Head of Recreation Management and Learning
Paul Walton	Head of Environment and Rural Economy
David Stone	Corporate Services Manager
Nigel Stone	Finance and Performance Manager
Rosalind Alderman	Member Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jo Murphy	Information and Data Protection Officer
Frances Connolly	Executive/Admin Assistant

#### **32 Apologies for absence**

32.1 No apologies for absence were received.

#### **33 Declarations of Interest**

33.1 Declarations of interest were received from Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, Marian Spain, and Pat Wyeth in relation to minute item 37, the Third Quarter Budgetary Control Report 2014-15 as Trustees of the Ninth Centenary Trust who own and run the New Forest Centre.

33.2 A declaration of interest was received from Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre in relation to minute item 35 (this is a summary of the declaration of interest that contains exempt information.)

#### **34 Chairman's announcements**

34.1 There were no announcements on this occasion.

## 35 Minutes

- 35.1 Alison Barnes advised the Committee that the Sabbatical Leave policy report, as detailed in minute item 20.2, was not before the Committee as planned because the Human Resources team needed more time to collect and collate the benchmarking information requested by Members and she added that the report would be considered at the Committee's next meeting.

**Action:**

*The Sabbatical Leave Policy report to be added to the agenda of the RAPC meeting on the 9 March 2015.*

- 35.2 Members asked for an update on the Broadband Scheme in the New Forest. Steve Avery advised that he was giving an update to the New Forest Consultative Panel in March and that he would prepare a paper for the Committee's next meeting.

**Action:**

*Steve Avery to update the Committee on the Broadband Scheme in the New Forest at the March Meeting.*

- 35.3 Members queried whether the briefing note on the New Forest Centre upgrade had been circulated to Members, as detailed in minute item 25.4. Nigel Matthews confirmed that an article had been placed in the Members' Bulletin (No. 486, 19 December 2014).

**Resolved, that:**

**the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.**

*Voting: none voting against*

## 36 Public Question Time

- 36.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

## 37 Third Quarter Budgetary Control Report 2014-15 (NFNPA RAPC 246/15)

- 37.1 Nigel Stone notified Members that the NPA had received verbal confirmation from Defra that the grant allocation for 2015-16 was, as anticipated, subject to a reduction of 1.7%. He reassured Members that the required savings had already been identified and advised that the NPA would receive the confirmation letter from Defra within the next few days. Alison Barnes reminded Members that in the context of a tough settlement for Defra the reduction for National Parks at 1.7% was as good as could be expected. Ms Barnes informed Members that she was meeting with Lord de Mauley, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for natural environment and science, and that she would take the opportunity to highlight to him the good work that the Authority delivers on the ground.
- 37.2 Nigel Stone introduced the report and explained that it covered the first nine months of the year to the end of December 2014. He drew Members' attention to paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 which summarised the overall expenditure and income position. Mr Stone

reminded Members that the planning income was still ahead of initial targets and that, as previously advised, this was owing to a small number of applications that attracted significant planning fees.

- 37.3 Mr Stone reminded Members that, following the decision not to progress the Public Bike Scheme project, the funding for this had not been drawn down and therefore the report now set out the reduced budget for the revised list of schemes within the New Forest Cycling Experience. He also pointed out that salaries, which had been marginally ahead of forecast in the last quarter, were now on track owing to some staffing changes and vacancies. He commented that a small underspend may now accrue on this budget line during the final quarter of the year.
- 37.4 Members noted that the funds already allocated to projects from the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) were now being drawn down. Marian Spain, who chaired the SCF, explained that there were varying timescales depending on the particular circumstances of each project, however she was confident that the allocated funds would be claimed within the appropriate timescales.
- 37.5 Nigel Matthews updated Members on the Funding position at the New Forest Centre. He explained that £35,000 had been set aside and of this £20,000 had already been released for the front of house works and the balance remained in the reserves.
- 37.6 In response to a query, Nigel Stone informed the Committee that the Secretariat budget was already 100% spent because the majority of this budget was allocated to membership fees of ANPA and National Parks England which were paid annually in advance.
- 37.7 Members noted the report.

### **38 Proposed Corporate Partnership (NFNPA RAPC 247/15) - WITHDRAWN**

- 38.1 This report was withdrawn prior to the commencement of the meeting and was therefore not considered by the Committee.

### **39 Risk Log (NFNPA RAPC 248/15)**

- 39.1 David Stone introduced the report and explained that the main areas of risk centred on resources and funding issues. He reminded Members that the risks identified with the Authority's banking arrangements had now been addressed with the Authority's move from the Cooperative Bank to Lloyds Bank.
- 39.2 One Member queried the usefulness of the log in real terms. Officers advised that not only was it a statutory requirement but that having a list of potential risks provided a focus for the Authority. Another Member noted that the NPA was a staff intensive organisation and asked how staff morale was monitored. Steve Avery advised Members that the NPA undertook regular surveys to monitor staff morale and that there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that staff morale was good.

- 39.3 Members noted some recent press coverage relating to the cycle event charter and suggested the log should include the risk to the Authority's reputation when it took decisions which may be unpopular with certain stakeholder groups.

**Action:**

*David Stone to add a section to the log on risk and mitigation measures for protecting the Authority's reputation in the decision making process.*

- 39.2 Members noted the report.

**40 Members' Attendance Monitoring (NFNPA RAPC 249/15)**

- 40.1 David Stone introduced the report and advised Members that, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, the report had been referred back to this Committee rather than the Authority meeting as previously agreed. There was a consensus that attendance figures should be available for public inspection; however some concerns were raised as to the format for publication of this information. Members pointed out that a Member who was only on the Authority would maintain 100% attendance by attending the four Authority meetings per year, whilst a Member who was on one or more Committees may have a poorer attendance record in percentage terms but have attended many more meetings. Members agreed the data should set out the numbers of committees/meetings attended rather than percentage attendance.
- 40.2 Members indicated that the appointing Authorities may find the attendance figures useful in assisting them in future appointment decisions. A number of Members commented that it should be mandatory for Members to be on at least one committee.
- 40.3 An alternative recommendation to the one on the paper was proposed and duly seconded.

**Resolved, that:**

- 1. A spreadsheet detailing Members' attendance data be circulated to all Members by email in order that a consensus on the format can be reached.**

*Vote: Unanimous*

**Resolved, that:**

- 1. Once the format is agreed, Members' attendance at meetings be published from April 2014.**

*Vote (6-0, 1 abstention)*

**41 Members' Attendance at ANPA Induction Course (NFNPA RAPC 250/15)**

- 41.1 David Stone advised the committee that he had worked with John Sanger to prepare the report which was then presented by John Sanger with the Chairman's permission. Mr Sanger advised the Committee that he felt the National Parks UK (formerly ANPA) Induction Course should be attended by all new Members and that all existing Members should be offered the opportunity to attend again if they wished to do so.
- 41.2 A number of Members spoke about their very positive experience of attending the course and expressed a willingness to attend the course again to update their

knowledge. Members considered that the recommendation on the paper was not robust enough and it was proposed and seconded that new Members should be required to attend the course when it was offered.

**Resolved, that:**

- 1. all existing Members be offered an opportunity to attend or re-do the course and**
- 2. all new Members selected for appointment, on their appointment be required to attend the course.**

Vote (Unanimous)

**42 Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent**

42.1 There were no urgent items on this occasion.

**43 Date of next meeting**

43.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 9 March 2015 at 10.00 am at Lymington Town Hall.

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

**Members 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 Paragraph 3 of 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.**

**35 Minutes**

35.1 Members discussed minute items 30 and 31 contained in the Part II section of the minutes of the previous meeting on 10 November 2014 (this is a summary of the declaration of interest that contains exempt information).

The meeting closed at 12.00 hours

Signed .....Date.....  
(Chairman)