

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Friday 16 March 2018**

**Present:** S Barker; W Cann; A Cooper; P Harper; S Hill; P W Hitchins; M Jeffery; D Moyse; N Oakley; C Pannell; M Retallick; P Sanders; M Simpson; D Webber; P Woods

**Apologies:** J McInnes; K Ball; J Christophers; G Gribble;

**3323 Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 5 January 2018**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2018 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**3324 Declarations of Interest**

Mr Harper informed Members that he has a personal interest in report NPA/DM/18/011 as he was a former director in the company

**3325 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman reported that it has been a busy month; three major events were held. The Devon information centre staff event held at Buckfast Abbey was very successful and reflected the South West Tourism awards. It was a good cross over with the Abbey's Millennium celebrations.

The Moor Health meeting was well attended and highlighted the benefits of Dartmoor for health.

The Parishscapes meeting showed off what the twelve Parishes are achieving with the Moor than meets the eye funding. It has had a very positive PR outcome.

**3326 Items requiring urgent attention**

The deadline for travel expenses 2017/18 is Tuesday 3 April.

**3327 Public Participation**

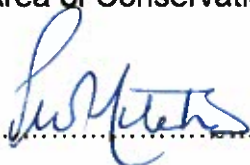
None.

**3328 South Hams Special Area of Conservation Joint Supplementary Planning Document Approval for Consultation**

Members received the report of the Forward Planning Manager (NPA/18/006).

The Forward Planning Manager informed Members that the South Hams Special Area of Conservation Joint Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Signed .....



Date ..... 6.4.18 .....

has been created to enhance the protection of the Greater Horseshoe Bat population. The sites within the designated area are integral for the Greater Horseshoe Bat population and the areas between the maternity and hibernation roost are vital for the survival of the species.

The SPD would work with the Local Plan to enable planning applications to be made with a better understanding of protection areas and sustenance zones. The Mitigation areas would be mapped and the flow chart would simplify the process.

The Forward Planning Manager stated that workshops would be available for Members and Developers to gain a greater understanding of the SPD.

**RESOLVED:** Members approved the publication of the South Hams Special Area of Conservation Joint Supplementary Planning Document for joint public consultation.

### **3329 2018/19 Draft Business Plan**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (NPO) (NPA/18/007). He stated that the six priorities for 2018/19 are listed in the report and have been based around Member discussion. The priorities have picked up on Members comments regarding the Authority being more ambitious and focused.

The Chief Executive explained that the draft Business Plan was ambitious and reflected the success of the Authority in securing external grant aid for a number of projects. He outlined a few of the key projects, including: Love Moor Life – a campaign to ensure that visitors to Dartmoor help protect the National Park and do not impact negatively on its special qualities and on local communities; the work the Authority is doing on the future of farming – to help shape the Government's thinking post Brexit; and the partnership with Connecting Devon and Somerset to bring superfast broadband and improved mobile telephony to Dartmoor (for the benefit of local communities and visitors). In response to Members questions, the Chief Executive explained that staff time could not always be claimed back in external funding bids and even when the funding provided for a project officer there was still an impact on senior staff in terms of project management. He also explained that the Authority needs to use its priorities to guide bids for external funding - funding bids were not a nice to do but an essential element of work programmes and this does create a pressure.

Mrs Oakley left the meeting

**RESOLVED:** Members reviewed the draft business plan for 2018/19 and delegate authority to the Chief Executive (NPO), in consultation with the Chairman, to agree the final version.

Signed .....



Date .....

6.4.18

**3330 2018/19 Net Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Budget**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/18/008) which consisted of a robust and balanced budget for 2018/19 and an outline budget for the following two years – which, when combined, makes up the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

2018/19 is year three of a four year National Park Grant (NPG) settlement; but Defra has not given any indication of the level of NPG beyond 2019/20 and so the outline MTFP is based on an assumption that Defra will continue to at least increase NPG by a similar amount to the current four year settlement (1.72%).

Pay awards have been capped at 1% per annum; however, as the current pay offer being negotiated for 1 April is 2% per annum for two years, this has been built into the MTFP; with a potential 3% award in the last year.

The Head of Business Support reminded Members that with NPG increasing by just 1.72% that if pay awards do continue to increase year on year, that an annual uplift of less than 2% in NPG will prove tricky to manage and makes planning beyond 2019/20 quite difficult.

The Head of Business Support drew Members' attention to some of the most significant projects, income targets and externally supported projects over the MTFP period set out on sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the report. She also confirmed that both South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils had confirmed their contributions to the Communities Fund this year. Mr Barker then confirmed that Teignbridge District Council would also be making a further contribution. It was suggested that a simplified way of allocating the much smaller pot of money, this year, should be investigated with the three Councils.

Members were informed that the 2018/19 budget is the most robust and accurate of the three years; the second two years being subject to change. The 2019/20 financial year is looking particularly challenging at this time because of rising pay awards, and below inflation increases in NPG; and because some vehicles could need replacing; the need to resurface car parks; and the need to renew of various ICT licences and upgrade some software systems. The 2019/20 Budget will be re-assessed during the next 12 months.

A reasonable Project Fund balance has been provided for within the MTFP for two of the three years, but it was noted that the balance for 2019/20 is currently almost non-existent; reflecting the budget pressures in that year.

Members were reminded that in 2017 they approved a slightly enhanced employer pension contribution rate of 19.5% instead of the required 19%. This higher rate is still considered affordable and sustainable; it has been applied to the whole MTFP.

Signed .....



Date .....

6.4.18

The Head of Business Support presented the current Reserve Balances describing how reserves supported the MTFP; based on the current position and reserve balances will reduce by almost £623k over the next three years. There are no plans to change the unallocated general reserve however; which would be maintained at £450k and represents 12% of the net budget for all three years of the MTFP. The level of reserves held as confirmed as being sufficient, prudent and sustainable and that the Authority continued to maintain and robust, but flexible financial position.

A Member commented that the woodlands owned by the Authority could be worth a lot of money, which could be spent elsewhere if sold; or could generate revenue if put to better use. Mr Harper offered his expertise to look into options. The Chief Executive (NPO) thanked Mr Harper and Mr Simpson who agreed that they would undertake some initial thinking about how the woodlands might be used more efficiently. Members were reminded that the woodlands do already contribute to National Park Purposes in their own right. The Chief Executive noted that officer capacity to support this initiative in very limited.

**RESOLVED:** Members approved the Net Revenue Budget for the 2018/19 financial year and the Medium Term Financial Plan for the years 2019/20 and 2020/21. It was agreed that Mr Harper and Mr Simpson would look into how the Authority's woodlands might be better used and generate an income stream.

**3331 Treasury Management and Investment Support Strategy 2018/19**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/18/009). The Head of Business Support informed Members that the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management has been revised this year and highlighted the main changes which affected the Authority's Treasury Management & Investment Strategy and its Treasury Management Practices.

One key component is the requirement to produce a Capital Strategy document which can be phased in as the code was issued late. A capital strategy will be presented for approval if and when a capital programme is set.

The Authority remains debt free and capital expenditure plans are normally funded from NPG, reserves or capital receipts.

The Authority continues to invest its in-year surplus working balances via Barclays Bank Treasury Deposit Accounts. The overriding objective continues to be to invest prudently, with priority being given to Security & Liquidity before Yield.

**RESOLVED:** Members approved the revised 2018/19 Treasury Management & Investment Strategy and the Treasury Management Practices.

Signed .....  .....

Date ..... 6.4.18 .....

**3332 Tree Preservation Orders and Section 211 Notifications (Works to Trees in Conservation Areas Determined Under Delegated Powers)**

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/18/010).

**RESOLVED:** Members NOTED the content of the report.

It was duly proposed and seconded that, in accordance with s.100A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, report NPA/19/011 should be taken in the absence of the Press and Public, on the ground that exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 Paragraph 3 to Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act (as amended) will be discussed, namely:-

*Information in respect of commercial sensitivity.*

**RESOLVED:** Members resolved to move into Part II private session.

**3333 PART II – National Parks Partnerships Limited**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (NPO) (NPA/18/011).

**RESOLVED:** Members :

- (i) delegated authority to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chairman, to agree a further contribution to the operating costs of National Parks Partnerships LLP (NPP) for 2018/19 up to a maximum of £10,000;
- (ii) delegated authority to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chairman of the Authority and the Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee to withdraw from National Parks Partnerships LLP should the need arise.

Signed .....  .....

Date ..... 6.4.18 .....