

COMMITTEE	PLANNING
DATE	27 March 2012
SUBJECT	South Downs National Park and the delivery of the Planning Service within the National Park Area Post 31st March 2012
REPORT OF	Leigh Palmer Development Manager within Planning Department

Ward(s)	ALL
Purpose	To inform and update Members of the implications of the handing back the planning function to the South Downs National Park Authority after 31 st March 2012
Contact	Leigh Palmer leigh.palmer@eastbourne.gov.uk 01323 415 215
Recommendation	That Planning Committee note the content and conclusions of the report

1 Background

- 1.1 As Members will be aware The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) adopted its full administrative powers in April 2011.
- 1.2 This meant that since that date parts of Eastbourne Borough are within the boundary of the newly formed National Park and as such any planning application that was submitted after April 2011 fell to the SDNPA as the relevant Planning Authority to deal with and determine
- 1.3 Since that date Eastbourne, along with the 14 other Local Authorities that have been included in the new park boundary signed a Legal Agreement to enable them to act as an agent for the SDNPA in terms of pre application advice and also processing and determining planning applications on their behalf.
- 1.4 This agency agreement was arranged in order to assist the SDNPA in lifting some of the burden of work whilst their new organisation and infrastructure was established and bedded in.
- 1.5 The SDNPA has identified that their chosen 'back office' software provider was different to that currently used by Eastbourne. This added to the very low volume of applications that are received for the parts of Eastbourne that fall within the National Park has resulted in Eastbourne withdrawing from the agency agreement.
- 1.6 Eastbourne along with Wealden, Arun and Brighton and Hove Councils have all withdrawn from the agency agreement.

The SDNPA have accepted the desire of the above Councils to withdraw from the Agency agreement.

2 South Downs National Park Authority (Planning Function rolling forward)

- 2.1 The SDNPA now have an establishment large enough to begin to take control over the planning function for those Councils withdrawing from the agency agreement as referred to above.
- 2.2 In acting as the determining planning authority the SDNPA has committed to consult with Eastbourne on every application that is deposited with them.
- 2.3 On receipt of this consultation the application and the issues involved will be reported to the Chair of Planning Committee at the weekly Delegated meeting and if issues arise then the views of the Eastbourne Borough Council will be reported to the SDNPA in writing and will be reported to the Planning Committee of the SDNPA if there is a difference of opinion between the SDNPA case officer and the views of Eastbourne Borough Council.
- 2.4 The formal consultation process as outlined above does not prohibit any Eastbourne Member or constituent from making their views known direct to the SDNPA.
- 2.5 The SDNPA will be holding a Planning Committee on a 4 week cycle and normally be held in their main administrative centre in Midhurst. Notwithstanding this however they have committed that if there is a major application in or near to Eastbourne to which there has been a high level of interest, comment and objection then they may decide on an exception basis to move their planning committee to a more accessible location; this may be in Eastbourne.
- 2.6 Notwithstanding the consultation regime as outlined above the SDNPA and Eastbourne Borough Council are currently in discussions with a view of adopting a 'Memorandum of Understanding' that will establish on a formal basis that we wish to continue to work together in order to deliver a high calibre planning service for the SDNPA whilst ensuring that their planning functions remains available, transparent and open to all who may choose to access it.

3. Human Resources

- 3.1 There are no financial-resource implications for this monitoring as it can be delivered within the existing staffing establishment.

4. Human Resources

- 4.1 There are no financial-resource implications for this monitoring as it can be delivered within the existing staffing establishment.

5. Legal

- 5.1 The 'Memorandum of Understanding' will be reviewed and influenced by officers within the Councils Legal Department in order to ensure that

the views of Eastbourne Borough Council, its elected members and or its constituents are not inhibited and or prohibited from engaging in the planning process.

6 Environmental/Community Safety/Human Rights/Anti Poverty

- 6.1 There are no adverse impacts on these implications as a direct result of this report.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 That Members agree to endorse this report and acknowledge the SDNPA consultation and Planning Committee regime.

Leigh Palmer
Development Manager
