

RECORD OF OFFICER EXECUTIVE DECISION

Subject: Ashdown Forest SPA Visitor Survey

Officer: Judy Holmes

(1) **Record of decision taken:-** to agree for Mid Sussex District Council to financially contribute towards the Ashdown Forest SPA Visitor Survey

(2) **Date of decision:-** 1st July 2016

(3) **Statement of reasons for making the decision**

Legal Basis for Decision - Contracts up to £20,000

- (a) *Where the estimated value or amount of a proposed contract does not exceed £20,000 and provision has been made in the Council's annual budget for such expenditure, the Head of Service concerned shall have the authority to enter into any such contract provided the Head of Service is satisfied that the Council is receiving value for money. In the event of a Head of Service exercising their right to enter into a contract under this Rule 5 the Head of Service or other officer appointed to do so on their behalf shall prepare and retain a report detailing the reasons for the appointment of the relevant contractor having regard to the experience, competency, workmanship and the financial status of the contractor.*
- (b) *A Head of Service may at his/her discretion invite quotations in accordance with Rule 6 where the estimated value or amount of a proposed contract is £20,000 or less.*

To provide further joint evidence on the recreational use of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA), a visitor survey is being undertaken during summer 2016 by a consultant, Footprint Ecology. A Monitoring Strategy will also be developed by the same consultant to provide information to measure the success of access management projects, as well as ongoing bird and visitor monitoring.

Wealden District Council is co-ordinating this project on behalf of the local authorities affected by the Ashdown Forest SPA (Mid Sussex District Council, Wealden District Council, Lewes District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Tandridge District Council and Sevenoaks District Council). Following a procurement process, Footprint Ecology was assessed as the most suitable consultant for this work. The total cost of the project is £29,685 of which the visitor survey element will cost £24,000. Dividing this between the six affected local authorities results in a contribution for each local authority of £4,000 for the visitor survey. Wealden District Council will invoice each affected local authority at the appropriate time.

The cost for the Monitoring Strategy element (approx. £6,000) will be met from the Joint Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy. This is a framework of measures that are focused on access management projects on Ashdown Forest and bird and visitor monitoring. The Joint SAMM Strategy is being

co-ordinated by Wealden District Council on behalf of the affected local authorities, however, all the local authorities will need to agree the measures contained within it. The Joint SAMM Strategy forms part of the mitigation for the Ashdown Forest SPA and will be funded by developer contributions from relevant development in all the affected local authorities' areas. This means that the cost for the Monitoring Strategy will be partly funded from developer contributions collected within the Mid Sussex area and sufficient money has already been collected to cover this cost.

(4) Alternative options considered and rejected

This work is being undertaken on behalf of all the affected local authorities to provide shared evidence so Mid Sussex District Council undertaking this work alone is not a viable option. It would also cost a lot more if Mid Sussex District Council were to commission a separate visitor survey and it would not provide joint evidence to support the District Plan.

(5) Name of Cabinet Member with whom decision discussed

Councillor Andrew MacNaughton

(6) Any Code of Conduct Interests of the Cabinet Members

None

(7) Any relevant Code of Conduct dispensations

N/A

Signed: 
Officer – Judy Holmes, Assistant Chief Executive