

OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

17 March 2021

Present: Councillor K Doolin (Chair)
Dr M Havard, Mrs J James, Councillor PJ Morgan, Dr R Plummer,
Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor S Yelland

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 11.45am)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor ML Evans and Councillor P Harries.

2. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16 December 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020 be confirmed and authenticated.

4. Risk Register

Members were asked to consider the latest Risk Register. The Finance Manager advised that it had been reviewed by both Management and Leadership Teams and changes since the previous report were highlighted.

It was noted with regard to Risk 40 that a member of the public had highlighted that the controls for third party cookies on the Authority's website were insufficient. The issue had now been resolved and the matter reported to the Information Commissioner, however no response had been received from them to date.

Members thanked the officer for the table highlighting the main changes from the previous report, which they had found helpful, but asked whether a general introduction explaining how risks were identified/escalated and how the Register was used could also be provided. There was also a general discussion regarding risk appetite and the potential for improvements to the Register, learning from best practice, and it was suggested that this could usefully be discussed at a workshop. Noting that the Register was considered by both this Committee and the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee, the Chief Executive also suggested that the Risk Register should be reported to the Authority annually.



With regard to Risk 40, and in anticipation of the appointment of a Data Protection Officer at the forthcoming National Park Authority meeting, Members asked for training on data protection matters and it was suggested that a workshop, possibly jointly with staff, could be arranged later in the year. Comments were made on other risks, such as Risk 20 and Risk 39, where the mitigating actions did not change the residual score. Concern was expressed regarding data security and the general risk to the Authority's IT infrastructure, especially when transitioning to new systems, and attention was drawn to a report by Audit Wales on the resilience of public organisations. The Chief Executive replied that he was aware of the report and hoped that it, together with the Internal Audit report on cyber security, would be presented to the next meeting of the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee. Copies of those reports could be made available to Members of this Committee. Finally with regard to Ash Dieback (Risk 43), it was questioned whether the risk should remain at 'high', given the widespread nature of the disease and the measures being undertaken to mitigate the risks.

NOTED.

5. Performance Report for the Period Ending 31st January 2021

The report followed the structure of the Corporate and Resources Plan for 2020/21. The Plan was in two parts - the first section was based on progress against short and mid-term priorities focused on the Authority's COVID-19 response and recovery planning, while the second section outlined progress against work streams that contributed to the longer term delivery of the Authority's Well-being Objectives and impacts within the National Park Management Plan. This section going forward would provide insight into the impact of COVID-19 and recovery on long term delivery and projects across well-being objectives.

It was reported that some activities within work streams might be progressed during 2020/21, however a number of them, particularly those involving face to face contact between individuals, were influenced by the lifting or re-instating of restrictions and regulations. Actions were being reviewed as part of the development of the Corporate and Resources Plan 2021/22 and certain activities would need to be put on hold due to the impact of COVID-19.

The report presented the performance to 31 January 2021 for monthly data and quarter 1 – 3 (April – December) statistics for some data sets. An explanation of the RAG (Red Amber Green) status had been appended to the report.

It was noted that support for the Authority's external Ffynnon performance reporting system had now ended and in-house development of a



replacement system had been carried out. The new system was in use and the data inputted formed the basis for the report before the Committee.

The report went on to outline the impact of the December lockdown. Visitor centres remained closed, however it was reported at the meeting that the Warden teams were now once again undertaking routine maintenance work under appropriate risk assessments. The Authority's headquarters at Llanion had also closed in December and most staff continued to work from home. Most site visits were not permitted and this had had an impact for some teams. Planning had been particularly impacted by this, in addition to restrictions on office based planning tasks. As a result of this and the impact of previous lockdown restrictions the percentage of planning applications determined within time periods required ytd was significantly below target at 57.61%, although this was an improvement on the Q2 figure. The average time taken to determine all planning applications had increased ytd from 102.5 days in Q2 to 113 days in Q3.

The lockdown had also seen a cessation of a number of the face to face services that had restarted during Q2 and Q3 and the report set out what had been achieved as a result of the adapted and flexible approach during those months. In addition the report outlined some of the work that had been undertaken towards progressing long-term objectives.

Thanking the officer for a comprehensive report, Members also wished to thank staff across the Authority for their work during difficult circumstances. Officers provided answers to a number of detailed questions, and agreed to liaise with HR on providing further information regarding the Kick-start scheme to Members. Concern was expressed regarding the difficulties being experienced in making the beach wheelchairs available, and it was hoped that new ways of doing this could be found.

With regard to the Welsh Government's carbon calculation methodology, the officer advised that its publication was expected the following week. She added that information on relevant awards via the Sustainable Development Fund grant would be included in the Greening our Communities Action updates..

NOTED

6. Progress Report on the Management of Trees with Ash Dieback Disease

It was reported that Ash dieback was a tree disease caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, affecting the Common Ash and was now endemic within the UK and widespread in Pembrokeshire. Infected trees



would eventually become unstable, shedding branches and becoming a potential risk to the public. Dead trees also posed an increased risk during felling operations.

Trees on the Authority's estate were regularly surveyed as part of the Authority's Tree Safety Policy, usually when conducting the annual site risk assessment and after adverse weather events. However in 2019 it was agreed that an additional Ash dieback survey should take place on all PCNPA owned sites due to the rapid spread of the disease and rapid deterioration of some trees. Further details were set out in the report.

As part of this process all sites were zoned according to usage, with some sites consisting on multiple zones depending on the frequency of visits by the public or staff. A survey of all Zone 1 sites took place during the summer of 2020, when the trees were in leaf and the disease most noticeable, with remedial action taken during winter 2020/21. Trees would continue to be monitored on three or six monthly basis with the surveys making use of the Arc Online software used by the Authority.

It was reported that to date 73% of trees had been inspected, and approximately 50% were significantly diseased. The removal of all 42 trees earmarked for felling had now been carried out. These would be replaced with trees of a different species. Inspections would continue in Zone 1, and trees in Zone 2 and some of Zone 3 would be inspected during the forthcoming summer.

Members thanked the officer for an excellent report and commended the team for the work undertaken. In response to a question regarding the conservation impact of the trees removed, the officer advised that all trees were assessed for conservation value, however many of those removed had been young and not significant. However it was also noted that the Authority was carrying out a separate project to map veteran trees across the National Park. With regard to disposal of the felled wood, the officer noted that most of it was not commercially valuable and was chipped or left to rot. However some had been sold by contract or used by the Authority for fuel. The officer also advised the Committee that only trees on the Authority's estate had been inspected, however if staff came upon a diseased tree on a public right of way they would inform the landowner and may remove the tree as part of the management of the right of way although there was no duty to do so.

NOTED.

7. Continuous Improvement Group: delegation of issues

It was **RESOLVED** that there were no issues that needed to be delegated to the Continuous Improvement Group for consideration.



The Minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the meeting of the Operational Review Committee held on 23 June 2021 without amendment

