

Report of the Finance Manager

Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

The Authority is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement and Members are invited to contribute to and shape the contents of the attached draft 2021/22 statement.

The Annual Governance Statement will be agreed by the Authority and be an Annex to the Annual Accounts.

Recommendation: Members are asked to COMMENT on this report

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2021/22 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

I. Introduction

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (“the Authority”) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Authority is a public body as defined under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act legislative requirement since 1st April 2016. The Authority is required under the Act to set and publish well-being objectives, take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives and act in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting well-being objectives and taking steps to meet them.

The Authority has an approved Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA)/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (UK) (SOLACE) Framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Guidance for Welsh Authorities 2016’. This guidance recommends that the review of effectiveness of the system of internal control that local authorities are required to undertake in accordance with the Accounting and Audit Regulations should be reported in an Annual Governance Statement. In Wales the inclusion of the Annual Governance Statement in the Statement of Accounts is voluntary. CIPFA also published an “Application Note to Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: A Framework”. This note has been developed to advise on the application of the “Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer on Local Government” under the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”. The Authority reviews and adopts any additional guidance as issued and has decided to adopt the CIPFA framework and Annual Governance Statement approach for 2016/17.

II. The purpose of the Governance framework

The governance framework comprises the committees, systems and processes, cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. Although mitigations steps are in place it cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks associated with the achievement of the Authority’s policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

III. The Governance framework

There is clear definition of the roles of Members and officers and a clear committee and decision making structure. This is based on:

The Authority

The Authority comprises 18 Members and will meet at least 6 times a year and its main functions are:

- To approve the development of the Authority's strategic corporate planning framework through the National Park Management Plan (every five years), the Local Development Plan (formal review required every 5 years), and the Corporate and Resources Plan (annually).
- To determine all policy matters in support of its strategic planning objectives. The Authority may receive advice from its committees and may also set up task and finish advisory groups to investigate and advise on specific matters.
- To determine all Service Standards and the Authority's Statutory Duties.
- To agree policies relating to the management of the Authority's resources i.e. finance, staffing and assets; and to approve the budget, levy, charges, and the Annual Accounts.
- To ensure that the Authority complies with all legislation affecting its services.
- To determine membership of other committees, task & finish groups, working groups and advisory groups, within the Authority, and their terms of reference, and the Authority's representation on external bodies and organisations.
- To determine the delegation of the Authority's responsibilities to other committees of the Authority and when appropriate to the Chief Executive.

Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

The Committee will comprise 9 Members of the Authority to be selected and/or confirmed at the Annual General Meeting each year. The Committee meets quarterly, and its role is to exercise the powers and duties of the Authority in relation to the following functions:

1. Regulatory Framework
 - To monitor the Authority's performance against the National Park Management Plan
 - To oversee the production of the Annual Governance Statement and to monitor the Authority's performance against the associated Action Plan
 - To monitor the Authority's performance against the annual Strategic Remit Letter
 - To monitor performance against the Welsh Government's Standards relating to the Welsh language
 - To monitor performance against the Authority's adopted Service Standards
2. Audit Activity
 - To consider reports from Audit Wales (e.g. the Annual Improvement Report, Annual Audit Letter) and to monitor the Authority's performance thereon

- To consider reports from Internal Audit on the Authority's financial systems and controls
3. Finance
 - To consider quarterly reports on the Authority's financial performance and budgetary matters
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to its Annual Statement of Accounts
 4. Human Resources

To monitor the Authority's performance:

 - against its adopted HR policies
 - in relation to Health and Safety
 5. Information Technology
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to its Information Technology Strategy
 6. Performance Management
 - To consider quarterly reports on the performance reporting management system and to monitor the Authority's performance thereon
 - To review the Authority's Risk Register in terms of Audit and Corporate functions and make any recommendations to the National Park Authority to change levels of risk
 - To consider reports of the meetings of the Continuous Improvement Group
 7. Communications
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to Communications and Marketing
 8. Other issues
 - To review any issue referred to it by the National Park Authority, any of its Committees or the Chief Executive Officer
 - To determine an Authority response on any proposals that affect the National Park or the Authority, its powers, duties, functions and responsibilities, particularly but not exclusively, from central, regional or local government, neighbouring authorities, partnerships and other external bodies where the proposals are relevant to the functions of the Committee and where the Chief Executive considers that such response should be determined by the Committee

Development Management Committee

The Development Management Committee is made up of the Authority's 18 Members, and is responsible for carrying out the Authority's statutory planning functions in relation to the determination of applications, appeals and enforcement matters, and allied issues relating to development and the regulation of uses and activities.

The terms of reference of the Development Management Committee are:

- (a) Except where those powers and duties have been delegated by the Authority to one of its officers and subject to its decisions being in conformity with the Authority's approved statements and plans the Committee shall exercise, with power to act, all the powers and duties of the Authority relating to the consideration of planning, listed building and conservation area applications, notification schemes, tree preservation orders, the control of development and the enforcement of such control, and other consultation schemes where appropriate.
- (b) Where Members resolve to take a decision, contrary to an officer's recommendation, which the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), (or, in his/her absence the officer with appropriate delegated authority) identifies as constituting a significant departure from an approved plan or policy of the Authority and in particular, the Local Development Plan, or as otherwise having significant implications for the Authority, the decision shall be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.
- If, ultimately, the Committee's decision is contrary to the officer recommendation, there shall be taken a full minuted record of Members' reasons for rejecting the officer recommendation, together with a recorded vote.
- (c) To receive reports from time to time from the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) and other officers on the exercise of any functions relating to the control of development which may have been delegated to them.
- (d) To deal with all matters relating to the designation and administration of Conservation Areas.

Operational Review Committee

The Committee comprises 9 Members of the Authority, to be selected and/or confirmed at the Annual General Meeting each year. The Committee meets on a quarterly basis and considers reports to the Authority on its performance. The role of the Committee is:

1. To monitor performance and make recommendations to the National Park Authority in relation to the functions of:
 - Development Management
 - Park Direction
 - Countryside, Community and Visitor Services
2. To review the Authority's financial performance in relation to the functions of the services referred to in 1 above.
3. To review any issue referred to it by the National Park Authority, any of its Committees or the Chief Executive.

4. To determine an Authority response on any proposals that affect the National Park or the Authority, its powers, duties, functions and responsibilities, particularly but not exclusively, from central, regional or local government, neighbouring authorities, partnerships and other external bodies where the proposals are relevant to the functions of the Committee and where the Chief Executive considers that such response should be determined by the Committee.

Member Support And Development Committee

The Committee Composition comprises 9 Members and may, from time to time and without setting a precedent, invite other Members to attend a meeting in relation to a particular area of expertise.

Remit

1. To oversee the delivery of support to, and development of, Members of the Authority.
2. To oversee the delivery of the Member Development Strategy, including Member induction and the Training Plan.
3. To develop an application for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and to recommend it to the Authority prior to submission to the Welsh Local Government Association.
4. To review the support available to Members and to make recommendations to the Authority as necessary.
5. To consider any other matter referred to the Committee by the National Park Authority.

Human Resources Committee

The Human Resources Committee is responsible for all matters appertaining to the employment and deployment of staff by the Authority. The terms of reference of the HR Committee are:

1. To make recommendations to the Authority as to Human Resource Policies which might be adopted with regard to the employment relationship that exists between PCNPA and its staff.
2. To review, scrutinise and approve existing Human Resource Policies, where proposals are put forward to change their general aims and objectives.
3. To review and approve any National Joint Council (NJC) Terms and Conditions where discretion on its implementation is provided to the Authority and this discretion has a potential impact on financial or other resources.

4. To contribute to the formation and implementation of the Human Resources Strategy, be consulted on all new Human Resource Policies subject to NPA approval, and have general oversight of HR Policies in development and any legislative changes.
5. To keep under review the establishment, organisation and remuneration of the Authority's staff and to make recommendations to the Authority from time to time as to any changes which may be desirable.
6. To establish arrangements for, and to conduct negotiations on behalf of the Authority with Unions representing the interests of its staff via the Employee Forum or any other negotiating arrangements.
7. To make appointments including the conduct of recruitment and selection procedures in accordance with the Authority's Human Resources Strategy, and to make any recommendations on the exercise of the appointments function as may be deemed appropriate and relevant.
8. To contribute to the Authority's Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, such as they extend to staff mental health and general wellbeing.

The following duties have been delegated to the Authority's Leadership Team:

1. To review and approve new and existing Human Resource Policies, which are required as a result of new legislation or changes in the NJC's Terms and Conditions.
2. To review and approve existing Human Resource Policies where there is no change to the general aims, objectives or direction of decision making.

Continuous Improvement Group

The Continuous Improvement Group consists of four Members of the Authority plus the Chief Executive. The membership includes the Chair of the Authority, Development Management Committee and the two Review Committees. The Group has authority to invite attendance of other Members or officers if the work programme indicates that their attendance or experience would add value to its work and meets as and when required.

Internal Audit

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors and their reporting to the Authority. This work is undertaken via a contract with TIAA. The terms of reference for internal audit require that work is conducted in accordance with standards as set out in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government. TIAA provide an audit opinion which is reported to the Authority.

External Audit

Audit Wales act as the Authority's external audit and make comments following their financial accounts and performance work and in the annual audit letter.

Section 151 Officer

Within the Authority the Finance Manager also acts as the Section 151 Officer. The Authority complies with the CIPFA “Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government”. The Finance Manager is also a member of the Authority’s Leadership Team.

Sustainable Development Fund Committee

The Authority has a Sustainable Development Fund Committee that consists of 6 Authority Members and may appoint up to 2 independent advisors who provide advice on the awarding of SDF grants. The Committee’s aim is to help reduce local carbon emissions in our environment and to respond to the climate emergency.

The Executive

Drawing from numerous sources the Executive structure for decision making for officers is based on a Senior Management Team and a Leadership Team.

Principles of Governance

The review of the effectiveness of the Authority systems of governance is undertaken in accordance with the following 6 CIPFA principles:

- Focusing on the Authority’s purpose, on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, with clearly defined functions and roles
- Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk
- Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

IV. Actions Taken During The Year

Previously identified Significant Governance Issues, the actions taken to tackle these issues and their evaluations are shown in the table below

Governance Issues / Risks Identified	Action to be taken	Evaluation
Take action to ensure that the Authority and the National Park is able to recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic	Review how we can ensure internal organisational efficiency and how we can support recovery in the wider community	New ways of working development to allow the authority to continue normal business activities
Prepare for future financial challenges through reviewing the mid-term financial plan	Revise plan	Review as part of the annual budget process. A new reserve for decarbonisation has been created. Discussions ongoing with WG re longer term settlements.
Undertake a review of Corporate Priorities and develop a new strategy.	Develop a new strategy and undertake work to ensure that the Authority is able to deliver that new strategy	New high level Corporate Strategy to be developed & agreed.
Undertake a review of procurement to take account of changes as a result of Brexit and the need to decarbonise the organisation.	Work with the other 2 Welsh National Park Authorities to review procurement.	Completion of Welsh Government Net Zero calculation including supply chain emission section. <i>External consultants carried out decarbonisation baseline and options report for Authority.</i> Authority will build on this to further develop its approach to decarbonisation and supply chain/ procurement.
Develop an effective Business Continuity arrangements it should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the impact of its Business Continuity Plans during the response to COVID-19. This will ensure they are up to date and have the right actions and measures to help counter likely threats in responding to future emergencies; 	New BCP drafted

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure staff are aware of updated Business Continuity arrangements and understand the procedure for their use; and • ensure that ICT Business Continuity arrangements are sufficient to enable officers and Members to deliver their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. 	
<p>Improve workforce resilience the Authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider the impact of the COVID-19 response and the switch to full remote working on staff wellbeing and identify how it can best support staff; and • ensure Health and Safety policies and procedures are updated to take account of new working arrangements. 	<p>Performance Management reviews changed to include focus on both Work and Wellbeing.</p> <p>Regular manager and employee briefings on physical and mental health via workplace counselling service – Care First.</p> <p>Implemented a Member lead Employee Assistance Service called the ‘Listening Service’ to provide counsel and coaching.</p> <p>Pilot training programme being delivered which focuses specifically on building resilience in the workplace. Programme includes a coaching programme to address individual development needs.</p> <p>Flexible Working Policy updated to reflect new work reality and new Home Working Policy issued.</p>

		<p>Manager support guides in place.</p> <p>Other developed have been: Member care scheme Member listen service</p>
<p>Review the switch to online meetings and delegated decision making and identify opportunities to learn from its response to the pandemic and strengthen governance arrangements.</p>	<p>Undertake Review and develop appropriate policies to support this work</p>	<p>Formalise online meetings in line with prevailing legislation</p> <p>Public Participation at Development Management Committee Meetings approved by NPA.</p>

V. Review of Effectiveness

The Authority is responsible for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. This review is informed by the work of the Authority's Members and its Committees, internal and external auditors, other review agencies (as appropriate) and senior managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment. The normal process of review has been impacted by the delay in the production of the Annual Improvement Report from the Audit Wales.

The review is based on the six principles of the CIPFA Code of Corporate Governance.

Principle 1

Focusing on the Authority's purpose, on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.

The Authority has been focusing on developing work to ensure that it is 'fit for purpose' to meet the challenges of the future.

Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks

The Authority, in partnership with other designated areas has undertaken work to deliver the priorities identified in 'Valued and Resilient'. During the year discussions were held with Welsh Government officers on a new Term of Government Remit letter outlining priorities over the next five years.

Demonstrating Strategic Leadership

The Authority has a National Park Management Plan (NPMP) for the period 2020/24. Members had been involved with the development of the Plan through workshop sessions and in agreeing Action Plans to deliver the plan.

Corporate and Resources Plan and Well-being of Future Generations Act

The three National Park Authorities in Wales have agreed to work to a common format of an annual Corporate and Resources Plan to meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Corporate and Resources Plan document sets out the Authority's Well-being objectives and steps the Authority will take to achieve them. The Corporate and Resources Plan has been prepared to deliver against the seven Well-being Goals and take account of the Sustainable Development Principles within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The plan shows budget distribution across the Well-being Goals and the Authority's Well-being Objectives.

New priorities and High Level Strategy on a Page

At the July 2021 NPA, Members agreed a new high level strategy for the Authority, with four priority areas to provide focus for the Authority's work over the 2022-2026. The identification of the priorities was informed by online survey with staff and

Members and then a wider survey for the Public and a Seminar with representatives of City, Town and Community Council. An integrated assessment was carried out on the new high level strategy. *Following adoption of the high level strategy the Authority reviewed its Well-being Objectives to ensure alignment to support delivery of both the priorities and the Well-being Objectives.*

Quality of Service

The Authority carries out surveys of the effectiveness of its service delivery through customer satisfactions surveys, performance against quality standards and by monitoring formal complaints which remain at a low level.

Performance Reporting Management System

The Authority has in place a performance reporting management system to ensure that we develop and manage a robust system of performance information to highlight the impact of the work undertaken by the Authority. Performance review committee reports are prepared from information captured on the performance reporting management system. External support for the Authority's Ffynnon performance management system ended in 2020/21. As a result following a review of external options in terms of cost and capabilities, an internal replacement performance reporting management system was developed. This system was deployed in January 2021 and has continued to be used for the duration 2021/22. Staff update the Performance reporting management system directly with information to update performance reporting on a regular basis.

Community Engagement

The Authority has endorsed Participation Cymru's 10 National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. An engagement action plan has been developed to help focus and drive action in this area with three priority areas and three longer term areas. An engagement action plan group is in place to monitor implementation of the action plan and has representation from across Authority departments

The three priority areas within the engagement action plan are:

- Development of mechanisms for young people to influence the work of the Authority
- Engaging Volunteers and Service Users
- Engaging with people through National Park Management Plan implementation

A presentation was delivered to the group during 2021/22 on the Experiences for All project outlining initial findings from this engagement project.

The Authority's Youth Committee continued to meet, with Member representation during 2021/22. Minutes of the Youth Committee meetings are shared with Members via NPA.

The Authority established a Volunteer Forum, providing an opportunity for volunteers to learn more about the Authority and influence its priorities, policies and volunteer offer. The forum draws on volunteer representatives from across the volunteer offer, including representatives from Pathways, Volunteer Wardens, Youth Rangers and Activity Leaders.

The Authority engaged with local communities in developing its plans for its site that was purchased via Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places funding for Carbon Sequestration, through hosting a number of community walks at the site.

Membership of Public Services Board

The Authority is an invited member of the Pembrokeshire Public Services Board (PSB). The PSB agreed the Pembrokeshire Well-being Plan, and the Authority's Corporate Plan reflects the Well-being Objectives in the Plan.

Welsh Language Strategy

The Authority has in place a 5 year Welsh Language Strategy and has developed SMART measures that sit under it. Under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, all local authorities in Wales must comply with a framework of Welsh Language Standards. Standard 145 requires the Authority to produce a 5-year strategy that sets out how we propose to promote the Welsh language more widely in the National Park. The strategy must also include a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in the National Park) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the National Park by the end of the 5 year period concerned, together with a statement setting out how we intend to reach that target.

Socio Economic Duty

The Socio Economic Duty (under the Equality Act 2010) commenced in March 2021, the Authority has reviewed its approach to Equality Impact Assessments, in order to take an integrated approach that includes Socio Economic Disadvantage considerations, through trialling the use of integrated assessments..

Principle 2

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, with clearly defined functions and roles.

National Park Grant and Levy

The NPG / Levy for 2021/22 increased by 10% from the 2020/21. The Authority was in receipt of a number of Welsh Government grants which were used to offset the additional Covid related operating costs.

Member and officer Joint Training & Development

The Authority actively promotes joint training sessions between Members & officers. During the year there were 3 training events and a further 5 workshops.

Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development

The Authority was successful in achieving the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development in December 2021. The Charter is awarded by the Welsh Local Government Association, which works with local authorities, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities across Wales to provide a broad framework for local planning, self-assessment, action and review of the support and development opportunities extended to Members to enable them to meet the challenges of their role.

The Authority is one of only three authorities across Wales who have been awarded the Advanced Charter.

Consultations

Members have contributed their comments to responses to Welsh Government and other bodies' consultation papers including:

- National Development Framework
- Sustainable Farming
- Independent Remuneration Panel For Wales

Virtual Meetings and Web Casting

In response to COVID 19 and changes in legislation, the Authority held its Committee meetings virtually during 2021/22. Meetings were also web cast.

Employee Forum

The Authority has in place an Employee Forum. The purpose of the Forum is to provide a platform for Members and staff to maintain open and collaborative employee relations by discussing a range of employee matters and gaining an understanding from each other on issues facing the Authority.

Principle 3

Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

A Code of Conduct for Members and a Code of Conduct for Officers is in place. Issues relating to breaking the Code of Conduct are dealt with by the following:

The Standards Committee

It is the responsibility of the Authority's Standards Committee to promote high standards of conduct by Members and officers. It does this by advising on and promoting awareness and understanding of the code of conduct for Members and the code of conduct for officers, both of which have been adopted by the Authority. During the year the Independent Members of the Committee increased from three to four and no cases were brought to the Committee.

Monitoring Officer

The statutory Monitoring Officer functions are set out in Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended) i.e., in short, to report to the Authority if the Monitoring Officer considers that any proposal, decision, or omission by the Authority may give rise to unlawfulness or maladministration.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has jurisdiction over the Authority's functions by virtue of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005. He has not made any investigation into the Authority either in relation to any alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by the Authority on 25 June 2008, or in relation to a complaint made against the Authority.

Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development

Members of the Authority are encouraged to undertake annual personal development reviews (PDR), which gives them an opportunity to reflect upon their role(s) within the Authority and to highlight any areas where they might need further support or development. A training plan is compiled from the results of the PDR, and the resulting development programme is rolled out to Members during the course of their term of office. A code of conduct workshop is also delivered annually to Members, this year's being delivered by an external consultant.

Staff Members

Issues relating to the conduct of staff are normally considered in accordance with the Authority's Disciplinary procedures. All Authority staff have Work and Well-being Reviews. This process allows an opportunity for managers and staff to review past performance, highlight potential areas of concern and agree future objectives to ensure they are linked to service plan/corporate targets.

Whistle Blowing Policy

In the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 the Government has given statutory protection to employees who 'blow the whistle' by speaking out against corruption and malpractice at work. It protects them against victimisation and dismissal. In its commitment to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability, the policy states "The Authority encourages employees and others with serious concerns about the Authority's work to come forward and raise their concerns with the Authority".

Safeguarding Policy

The Authority approved an updated safeguarding policy and staff participated in an online training course. The policy had been revised to take account of changes to legislation (Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) and in the way these changes have been interpreted and delivered at a local level in West Wales. The new policy includes additional guidance and provides updates regarding processes and procedures. The policy aims to ensure that sound working practices are in place that put safeguarding as a priority and which are effective in managing risk for these vulnerable groups, but which will also protect staff and volunteers against wrongful or malicious allegations.

Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy

The Authority has in place approved an Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy. The policy covers all employees, volunteers and members of the Authority. It incorporates the changes to the bribery legislation that have been included in the Bribery Act 2010. The Bribery Act 2010 establishes criminal offences and individuals found guilty can face an unlimited fine and imprisonment up to ten years. Where an organisation itself is found guilty of the offence then the penalty is an unlimited fine.

Financial Standards

During the year the Authority revised its Financial Standards and Contract Standing Orders, the purpose of which is to provide a financial and procurement framework within which the Authority can operate. These will assist the Authority in ensuring that:

- Legislation is complied with.

- The assets of the Authority are safeguarded.
- The funds available are spent wisely and efficiently.
- Appropriate income generation is undertaken.
- Best value is achieved

Data Protection and GDPR compliance

The Authority has in place an external DPO who has carried out an evaluation of current practices in 2021 to identify areas for improvement. The Authority's data protection policy was updated in 2021 and the updated version approved by Members. The Authority has carried out a number of data protection impact assessments as required during the year.

Principle 4

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.

The Authority has taken the following action to improve its processes and structures and also to tackle identified issues of risk.

Risk Management

The Risk Register is presented to each meeting of both the Audit & Corporate Services and Operational Review Committees. It is regularly reviewed by the Leadership Team when current risks are reviewed and new risks evaluated. During the year a review of Risk Management was undertaken by our Internal Auditors. The recommendations of the review were discussed in a Workshop with Members and will be implemented over the next year.

Upgrading systems infrastructure

During 2021 the Authority undertook work on the following IT systems:

- Completion of all infrastructure and associated server applications (Production, Disaster Recovery and Backup) to ensure currency, security, resiliency and support.
- Microsoft 365 Phase 1 Complete:
 - Configuration of Microsoft 365 Tenant for PCNPA and requisite licences purchased/assigned.
 - Migration of all User and Shared Mailboxes to 365 within a hybrid Exchange environment.
 - Implementation of the Multifactor Authentication Mandate for all user accounts in accordance with direction from the National Cyber Security Centre.
 - Cessation of the legacy practice of forwarding Authority emails to Member's private email account with a requirement for Members to use their Authority email accounts directly implemented further mitigating the risk of Data loss.
- Microsoft 365 Phase 2 In Progress:
 - Migration of the Office 2016 desktop suite to Microsoft Enterprise for Apps (Office 365) and OneDrive
- 3CX (Voice over IP Telephony) upgrade to new V18 Desktop, integration with Microsoft 365 completed with platform extension to Visitor Centres and Depots in progress.

- An upgrade to the Exchequer platform (Finance system)

Internal Audit 2021/22

As part of the Authority's corporate governance programme a risk assessment was made on all its services and formed the basis of the work carried out during 2020/21 by the Authority's internal auditors Gateway Assure. The focus of the Audit was on the following areas:

- Risk Management – Mitigating Controls
- ICT Strategy
- Procurement and Creditor Payments
- Equality and Diversity
- Resilient and Sustainable Services

Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion

At the Authority's Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on the 12th May 2021 the following audit opinion was given for 2021/22:

"TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place.

This opinion is based solely on the matters that came to the attention of TIAA during the course of the internal audit reviews carried out during the year and is not an opinion on all elements of the risk management, control and governance processes or the ongoing financial viability or your ability to meet financial obligations which must be obtained by the Authority from its various sources of assurance"

Committees

Individual service team leaders update Members of their respective Review Committee with details of the work in progress within their respective teams. There is a clear documenting of decisions, meeting agenda and minute process. Members therefore make decisions based on timely and accurate information, although some decisions are deferred to allow Members more time for considered decisions.

Audit Wales Reports

Audit Wales passes an opinion on its review of the Authority's performance and Statements of Accounts which is recorded in the AWO Improvement Assessment Letter and the ISA 260 report.

Audit Wales National Park Authorities

During 2021/22 the Audit Wales carried out field work which focused on:

"Is the Authority doing all it can to effectively manage sustainable tourism in the National Park?" They carried out an online survey with stakeholders promoted through Visit Wales and held focus groups and interviews with Members, staff and external stakeholders to inform this work.

Annual Report on meeting the Well-being objectives

In 2021/22 the Authority published its Annual Report on meeting the Well-being Objectives (which also acted as our final Annual Improvement Plan Part 2 under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011). This report sets out our performance on delivery in 2020/21 against the Authority's Well-being Objectives.

Benchmarking

The Authority undertakes benchmarking activities across a number of areas. Key performance indicators within the annual Corporate and Resources Plan are benchmarked against other National Park Authorities where comparative data is available.

The Authority submits an Annual Performance Report every November as part of the Welsh Government Planning Performance Framework. The annual report discusses how the Authority has performed against the indicators, identifying what it had done well so that this can be shared with others, and what steps might be taken to address areas of performance in need of improvement. Through the Framework the Authority is able to benchmark its performance against other Planning Authorities in Wales. As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic the Authority was not required by Welsh Government to submit an Annual Performance Report in 2021/22. However the Authority has continued to submit to Welsh Government quarterly performance data to support benchmarking activities.

Public Sector Net Zero reporting

In 2021 the Authority adapted its methodology to recording carbon emissions to the Welsh Government's public sector net zero reporting methodology that was released in May 2021. A group of staff from across the Authority worked together to complete submission of 2019/20 and 2020/21 data to the Welsh Government. In addition the Authority through the Designated Landscape Partnership has been leading on the delivery of two decarbonisation projects looking at baseline data and options for the National Park Authority and the National Park to get to net zero.

Principle 5

Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective.

The Authority continuously looks to develop the capacity and capability of Members and during the year has undertaken the following:

Member induction

No new Members were appointed to the Authority in the last year, therefore no induction training took place. However, a training workshop on the Members' Code of Conduct, together with an overview of delegations to officers, was held.

Member Support and Development Committee

The Member Support and Development Committee meets on a quarterly basis and, over the last year, has reviewed the Personal Development Review framework for Members, encouraged Members to undertake their PDR, and has developed a training plan as a result of the process.

Wales Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development

The Authority was awarded the Welsh Local Government Association's Advanced Charter for Member Support & Development in December 2021. The Charter is awarded to those authorities who can evidence a robust support and development framework that enables Members to be better informed in their decision making.

Staff Development

Learning and Development needs are identified through the annual performance review cycle and this is then rolled up into a wider organisation Development Plan. The Authority will be drafting an annual Learning and Development Plan from 2021.

All new staff are 'inducted' on an individual basis when they start, and the Authority is currently reviewing its practices to deliver this on-line and in tandem with the other National Parks. Mandatory and job related training is scheduled and refresher training undertaken periodically.

Professional Development Programmes are utilised through Pembrokeshire County Council and Academy Wales and delivered by e-learning.

Employee Opinion Survey

A Staff Survey was undertaken in 2020. Results from the survey will be used to formulate a plan of action which will be incorporated into the HR strategy and Plan. This will be the Authority's main tool in gauging staff satisfaction and helping to drive capacity and capability of Officers.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety is delivered through a dedicated Health and Safety Committee, which includes representatives from across the organisation. The minutes of these meetings are presented to Members and progress is tracked monthly.

Work is being undertaken to schedule a review of all HR and Health & Safety Policies, Procedures and Risk Assessments. Funding has been allocated to deliver some staff training on-line, where this is possible, to ensure evidence and compliance. Progress has also been taken to progress accreditation towards the Welsh Government's Corporate Health Standard.

Principle 6

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

During the past year the Authority has sought to engage with local people and stakeholders through a range of consultations. Following last year's survey of community councils training sessions on planning have been provided to all who requested it.

The Authority proposes to continue to undertake consultation with residents, visitors, organisations and other stakeholders on a long term strategy on service delivery on the reducing funding anticipated over the next few years.

Strategic Plans

Following receipt of the Independent Inspectors report Local Development Plan 2 was adopted by Members in September 2020. Following this a work programme of consultation, review and adoption of supplementary planning guidance has commenced.

To support delivery of the National Park Management Plan the Authority has produced a range of action plans, including Responding to the Climate Change Emergency, Restoring Nature, Health and Wellbeing, Sustainable Recreation and Visitor Management and Celebrating Heritage. Stakeholders have been consulted where appropriate as part of the development of these action plans.

At the July 2021 NPA, Members agreed a new high level strategy for the Authority, with four priority areas to provide focus for the Authority's work over the 2022-2026. The identification of the priorities was informed by online survey with staff and Members and then a wider survey for the Public and a Seminar with representatives of City, Town and Community Council.

Partnership working arrangements

The Authority works with a number of external bodies helping to improve value for money and in communicating with various other interest groups to deliver a number of common projects, e.g.:

- Carmarthenshire County Council; SLA's Payroll / Pension, Minerals
- South Wales Local Authority Purchasing Group
- Brecon Beacons & Snowdonia National Parks Authorities, brokerage Insurance
- There has been significant engagement with Town and Community Councils on the changes in planning guidance and on Budget priorities for the Authority.
- Pembrokeshire Public Services Board
- National Park Partnership on corporate social responsibility options and other sponsorship funding
- The UK National Parks and National Parks Wales.
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Charitable Trust.
- Joint Planning Ecologist with Pembrokeshire County Council.
- Joint Tree Officer with Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority.
- Pembrokeshire County Council – Local Access Forum.
- Landscape Wales a partnership of the 8 Welsh Designated Landscapes.
- South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

Engagement with Young People

The Authority's Youth Committee continued to meet, with Member representation during 2021/22. Minutes of the Youth Committee meetings are shared with Members via NPA Committees.

VI. Significant Governance Issues

The following table highlights governance issues identified during the year which the Authority targets to resolve within the next financial year.

Governance Issues / Risks Identified	Action to be taken
Further develop our decarbonisation practices across the organisation, with particular focus on challenges relating to procurement.	Aquatera recommendation on Net Zero to be reported to NPA
Successful implementation of Microsoft 365 across the organisation.	Complete the full implementation of Office 365 across the Authority
Managing change across the organisation and successfully in order to consolidate delivery of new Authority priorities and Well-being Objectives.	
Work in partnership with organisations across Pembrokeshire to support the development of a new Well-being Plan for Pembrokeshire.	Engage with organisation as part of the Pembrokeshire Public Services Board
Implement the recommendations of the audit of Risk Management	

VII. OPINION

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters referred to in part VI to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

SIGNED _____
Chairman

DATED _____

SIGNED _____
Chief Executive

DATE _____

SIGNED _____
Section 151 Officer

DATE _____