

National Park Authority

8 February 2023

Present (In Person)

Councillor Mrs D Clements (Chair)

Councillor Steve Alderman, Councillor Dr SL Hancock, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Mr GA Jones, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor PJ Morgan, Dr RM Plummer, Councillor Mrs V Thomas, Councillor Mrs M Wiggins and Councillor C Williams BEM.

Present (Remotely)

Councillor M James and Councillor Mrs S Skyrme-Blackhall.

Matthew Brushett and Charles Rigby from Audit Wales were also in attendance remotely as observers.

[Councillor A Wilcox joined the meeting remotely prior to consideration of the report providing an Update on the Corporate and Resources Plan and the Development of Delivery Plans (Minute 8 refers).

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely 10.00am – 11.30am; 11.40am – 1.35pm]

1. **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R Owens. Councillor A Wilcox had indicated that he would be joining the meeting c11.30am.

2. **Disclosures of Interest**

Dr R Plummer made a general (personal) declaration in respect of her membership of the Natural Resources Wales Board and as a trustee of Plantlife. Dr M Havard and Councillor M Wiggins each declared a personal interest in Report 02/23 Draft Budget 23/24 as the Authorities' representatives on the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 December 2022 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 December 2022 be confirmed and signed.

4. **Action Log**

Members were pleased to see the inclusion of an Action Log on the Agenda, the contents of which were noted.



Noted.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted that there had been few formal engagements since the last meeting, however she had joined some volunteers at Carew Castle before Christmas who were undertaking maintenance work to footpaths and hedgerows. She commended the work undertaken by volunteers across the Authority and thanked them, and encouraged Members to participate in volunteering activities if they had the opportunity.

There had been a meeting of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) when the Authority had been represented by the Chief Executive. The main business had related to the Freeport bid and an update on the Regional Energy Plan. The Chief Executive added that the Co-option agreement for the National Park Authority was still awaited, and he hoped to report this to the next meeting of the Authority. He also clarified that the Authority was not required to make a financial contribution to the CJC in the coming year.

The Chair noted that her responsibilities as Chair of the National Parks UK Chair's Forum had ceased after Christmas and she would shortly be handing over to Tiffany Hunt at the Lake District. Alongside other National Park Chairs, she had also been party to some correspondence regarding DEFRA funding for the National Parks Partnership which would increase its capacity and therefore be of benefit to the Authority.

Finally she noted the sad passing of Caerwyn Roberts, former longstanding Chair of Snowdonia NPA who would have been known to various Members.

Noted.

6. Reports of meetings of various Authority Committees

The following reports of meetings of a number of the Authority's Committees were presented to Members for consideration/information:

- (i) Development Management Committees held on 17 December 2022 and 18 January 2023;
- (ii) Youth Committees held on 22 November 2022, 20 December 2022 and 10 January 2023;

It was noted that there were no dates on the first two sets of minutes. A summary of the activities that the Youth Rangers and Committee were undertaking was also provided by Mrs S Hoss who attended meetings when possible as the Authority's representative, and it was hoped that a



workshop, or a presentation to Members, could be arranged with the Youth Committee at a convenient time.

(iii) Human Resources Committee held on 23 November 2022;

Referencing the request for staff costs pre and post restructure, some Members noted that they had hoped for more information than had been provided at the December Budget Workshop, and this was noted. They also asked about a high level restructure chart and were advised that an updated version would be circulated once the structure was finalised. It was confirmed that a copy of the staff newsletter had been sent to all Members. Finally Members noted that a number of staff had chosen not to declare protected characteristics, and the HR Manager advised that further communication would be sent to staff to help them understand the importance of doing so.

(iv) Operational Review Committee held on 30 November 2022.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the above-mentioned Committees be adopted/received.

7. **Draft Budget Planning 2023/24**

The report set out the draft Revenue and Capital budgets for 2023/24 and forecast 2024/25 to 2025/26, the draft 2023/24 levy on Pembrokeshire County Council, Prudential Indicators for the capital programme and Investment Strategy, Reserves & Treasury Management Policy Statements for 2023/24.

Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2023/24 and Forecasts 2024/25 to 2025/26

With regard to the budgets for 2023/24, the report set out the Authority's budget strategy and the key assumptions on which this had been based, and as previously discussed by Members in a budget workshop. The Chief Financial Officer highlighted the main changes that had been made since that workshop, and key amongst these was the flatlining of the National Park Grant (NPG) for the foreseeable future. However the revenue position for 2022/23 was anticipated to show a surplus of £55k, with the reasons for this set out in the report, and this put the Authority in a more favourable position going forward.

It was reported that the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023/24 implied that the National Park Grant (NPG) for the three National Parks would remain at the 22/23 level; the final budget was expected in March 2023. While the expected NPG/Levy would remain unchanged from 2022/23, it was noted that the total reduction between 2010/11 and 2021/22 in cash terms had been £285k. Further when the consumer prices index was



applied, the overall reduction in real terms since 2010/11 equated to 36.5% or circa £1.7m. Sensitivity analysis and forecasts had been carried out regarding the scenarios outlined providing the potential revenue budget position to 2026/27.

The Authority had countered the reduction in core funding over recent years by making significant savings in its operating cost base, increasing income from other sources and attracting project specific grants. Authority generated incomes had increased by £1,053k from 2010/11 to 2021/22 with most sources of income improving. A summarised and more detailed revenue budget for 2023/24 was provided and it was noted that the budget had been balanced by utilising specific earmarked reserves. However, it is expected that during 2023/24 the deficit would also be managed by making efficiency savings together with additional income streams.

The report also set out the Capital Programme for 2023/24, which forecast a spend of £994,500, with most of the projects funded by Earmarked reserves. The largest item of expenditure was the Green Room replacement project, with that, and many of the other items having been carried forward from previous years.

With regard to financial reserves and balances, it was anticipated that the general reserves balance at the end of 2022/23 financial year was expected to be £1,196k and remain at this level until the end of 2023/24. In addition, the capital receipts reserve would be used to partially fund capital expenditure was therefore expected to fall from £221k at the end of 2022/23 to £34k by the end of 2023/24, with earmarked reserves also expected to fall to £2,985k by the end of the same period.

Members agreed that the report made sobering reading and that the potential for a future reduction in funding from Welsh Government could not be ruled out. It was suggested that targets for both efficiencies and income generation should be set. The Chief Executive noted that the Authorities reserves provided time in which to address the problem, and part of the solution had been to appoint staff with more of a fundraising outlook, however it would take time for this to produce results. They asked a number of other questions which officers were able to answer in the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Draft Budget 2023/24 be approved, subject to noting that the National Park grant/Levy was yet to be confirmed, and that the financial forecasts for 2024/25 to 2026/27 be noted.



Levy on Pembrokeshire County Council

The Chief Financial Officer reminded Members that Section 71 of the Environment Act 1995, sub-section 3, determined the way in which the levy which was to be raised on Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) should be issued. The following statement complied with this requirement. The Chief Executive added that he understood that PCC received a sum of money from Welsh Government which was equivalent to the levy raised on them.

Levy on Pembrokeshire County Council



Parc Cenedlaethol
Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast
National Park

The Authority must authorise the making of a levy of £1,083,329 from Pembrokeshire County Council, in accordance with Section 71 of the Environment Act 1995 and the National Park Authorities (Levies) (Wales) (Regulations) 1995 SI 1995 No.3019 as amended by the National Park Authorities (Levies)(Wales)(Amendment) Regulations 1996:

• the sum required to meet expenditure for the Authority which will fall to be charged for that year in the Revenue account is		£6,798,258
• making such provision as is appropriate for meeting Contingencies, the expenditure on which would fall to be charged in the Revenue Account		£Nil
• the sum required to secure the availability to the authority of adequate working balances on its Revenue Account		£Nil
• the sum required to provide the Authority with other requirements for covering any deficit brought forward from the previous financial year		£Nil

Sub-total		£6,798,258
LESS		
• Section 72, Grant (NPG)	£3,249,986	
• Income credited to the Revenue Account	£2,464,943	
• other sums not covered above which are likely to be available in the year	-	£5,714,929
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Levy requirement		<u>£1,083,329</u>



It was **RESOLVED** that Members authorise a levy of £1,083,329 (or other appropriate amount as determined on receipt of confirmation of the approved net funding from the WG) from Pembrokeshire County Council for the year 2023/24.

Prudential Code Indicators and Investment Strategy 2022/23

The Local Authorities (Capital Finance & Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003 required the Authority to have regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code in setting annual budgets. Members were asked to consider the advice of the Chief Financial Officer in determining an affordable, prudent and sustainable capital investment programme, as set out in the report before Members that day. It was noted that the Authority did not use borrowing to fund projects.

The report went on to present Financial Reserves Policy 2023/24 and Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Policy for 2023/24, which complied with statutory guidance and supported the prudential borrowing system.

With regard to the Financial Reserves Policy it was suggested that consideration should be given to rewording section 3 – working balances to reflect the fact that the Authority currently held reserves which did not need to be replenished at year end. The Chief Executive suggested that the word ‘baseline’ could be used to provide that clarification. The policy went on to outline the risk assumptions used to determine the level of reserves and one Member asked that these be checked against the Authority’s Risk Register to ensure that the risks did not contradict one another.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members **ADOPT** the Prudential Indicators as presented and **APPROVE** the Investment Strategy & Treasury Management Policy Statement for 2023/24, and the Financial Reserves Policy subject to the addition of the word ‘baseline’ and to cross-checking the risk assumptions with the Risk Register.

[The meeting was adjourned between 11.30am and 11.40am]

[Councillor A Wilcox joined the meeting at this juncture]

8. Update on Corporate and Resources Plan and Development of Delivery Plans

The report provided Members with an update on the timetable for the above-mentioned plans, explaining that the Corporate and Resources Plan 2022/23 and associated transitional performance framework would be carried forward to quarters 1 and 2 of 2023/24 with the plan being replaced by the creation of Corporate and Resources Plan 2023 – 2026.



It was proposed to provide this plan to Members for comment at the June 2023 meeting of the Authority with the final plan going for approval at the July 2023 NPA, when a new performance framework would be implemented.

It was noted that the 2023-26 time period would ensure the Corporate and Resources Plan aligned with timescales within the delivery plans and would provide a cross year focus. The Plan, together with the delivery plans, would be subject to light touch reviews annually during this period, with more detailed review following approval of the new National Park Management Plan in 2024.

Members welcomed the update and it was noted that the timing for production of the Delivery Plans would align with that of the Natural Resources Corporate Plan and Area Statements which would be produced in April. They also hoped that the plans would have the Authority's objectives as their focus with the ways that these contributed to other legislation as a secondary strand, and that the ways of delivering the objective relating to the Welsh language and culture in particular would be clearly demonstrated in each of the Delivery Plans. The Performance and Compliance Coordinator reassured Members that the plans would focus on the "4 C's" which comprised the Authority's objectives with a statement on the ways that the various cross-cutting themes would be delivered.

Noted.

9. Visit Pembrokeshire

Members were reminded that in February 2020 the Authority had agreed to support the setting up of Visit Pembrokeshire as a trade led, stand-alone Destination Marketing Organisation for Pembrokeshire through the appointment of a Director to sit on the Board, and the agreement of financial support – both cash and in-kind. It was noted that in September 2021, the Authority had agreed to amend the funding for that year from in-kind to cash to enable Visit Pembrokeshire to provide match funding to secure grant funding, however in general it had been challenging to identify how in-kind support could be provided.

It was reported that the main challenge that Visit Pembrokeshire currently faced was to attract sufficient members to make the organisation financially viable, and this was not a task that the Authority was well placed to support through its in-kind contribution. In view of this a proposal had been received from Visit Pembrokeshire to change the contribution for the current year from an in-kind £34,900 to a cash contribution of £25,000 in order to undertake a programme focused on attracting new Members. In order to facilitate longer term planning, it was



proposed to change the agreed £34,900 in-kind contribution to a £25,000 cash contribution for both 2023 – 2024 and 2024-2025. This would be on condition that the money was spent on developing the Membership base of Visit Pembrokeshire, thus contributing to its long-term sustainability. To ensure this, it was proposed to enter into a performance focused agreement with Visit Pembrokeshire where payments were reviewed, every six months, and linked to reaching membership targets. If these targets were not met, then payment might be withheld.

The Chair, in her capacity as a Board Member of Visit Pembrokeshire, explained that she sat on the Membership Subgroup which was instrumental in promoting the growth in membership and would be monitoring progress.

Members felt that this was a reasonable and appropriate request, however they would have like to have further information regarding the current membership and the targets for growth; it was hoped that the membership offer was attractive as that was essential. They also asked for a copy of the accounts to be circulated.

It was **resolved** that:

- a) the support provided to Visit Pembrokeshire for 2022-23 be changed from an in-kind contribution of £34,900 to a cash contribution of £25,000 in order to implement a proposal to attract new members; and
- b) For the years 2023 – 2024 and 2024 – 2025 the in-kind contribution of £34,900 to Visit Pembrokeshire be changed to a payment of £25,000 per year. This payment would be based on a performance focused agreement where payments were reviewed every six months and linked to reaching membership targets. If these targets were not met, then payment might be withheld.

10. Task and Finish Group on Car Park Charging

Members were reminded that at the previous meeting of the Authority in December 2022 it had been resolved that a Task and Finish Group be established to consider the future provision of season tickets and car park charges across the Authority's car parks. Draft Terms of Reference for the Group were appended to the report, and these suggested a total membership of 6 (4 County Council and 2 Welsh Government appointed Members), supported by Officers. Expressions of interest for sitting on the Group had already been received from Mr G Jones, Councillor M James, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor P Morgan, Dr R Plummer and Councillor C Williams.

Some suggested amendments to the Terms of Reference had also been received, including the addition of a further criterion to the role/purpose of



the group of 'offering any other insights and suggestions that were considered relevant'. This point was welcomed by Members as it would allow a more holistic consideration of car park policy across the Authority. Officers also clarified that the Group's recommendations would be presented to a meeting of the Authority, hopefully in the Autumn, due to the time needed for implementation prior to the next charging season.

At the meeting Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall noted that she had also expressed an interest in being a Member of the group, however as the recommended 6 Members had already been reached, she agreed to withdraw her request. All Members were encouraged to feed in ideas to Members of the Group or to the Estates Officer.

It was **resolved** that:

- a) the Terms of Reference as set out in Annex A to the report and amended at the meeting be agreed; and
- b) the membership of the Task and Finish Group be agreed as Councillor M James, Mr G Jones, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor P Morgan, Dr R Plummer and Councillor C Williams.

11. Exclusion of the Public

It was **resolved** that:

- a) the public be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, would be disclosed; and
- b) The Auditors attending the meeting be permitted to remain and observe the rest of the meeting.

[Councillor M James tendered his apologies and left the meeting before the vote was taken on the following item.]

12. Review of Recreational Management at Newport Sands

Members were reminded that this issue had been discussed at the October meeting of the Authority and the report provided Members with an update on progress.

It was **resolved** that the recommendation as set out in the report be agreed.

13. Urgent item

It was agreed by the Chair that, in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the following item should be considered as a matter of urgency.



14. Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome

Members were provided with an update on the current position and clarified a number of points with officers.

Noted.

