

Operational Review Committee

14 June 2023

Present: Dr R Plummer (Deputy Chair in the Chair)
Dr M Havard, Mrs J James, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor A Wilcox.

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 11.30am)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr S Hancock, Councillor R Jordan and Councillor C Williams.

2. Disclosures

Dr R Plummer made a general declaration as a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales and a Trustee of Plantlife however she remained in the meeting and played a full part in the discussions.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15 March 2023 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

On the proposal of Dr M Havard, seconded by Councillor A Wilcox, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 be confirmed and authenticated.

4. Action Log

a) Member Training in relation to Decarbonisation and Carbon Literacy
Members sought an update regarding this. It was confirmed that the Head of Decarbonisation was working on identifying the best course that could be used in a partnership approach with other public bodies in Pembrokeshire. It was reported that discussions were taking place with Pembrokeshire County Council regarding a joint training package with the hope of finalising this in the next month.

b) Report on Kickstart to future meeting

It was requested that this action be removed from the action log due to the current workload of the HR team. The Chief Executive agreed to this and confirmed that he would provide Members with a brief summary from Line Managers who were responsible for Kick Start candidates.

Noted.



5. Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Guidance and Monitoring

The Chair welcomed the Building Conservation Officer who presented an update on the recently approved supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for the Conservation Areas within the National Park and the latest condition review of each one. The presentation featured a general and legal background of the Conservation Areas, information on the Programme of surveys, and a breakdown of conservation areas both with and without Article 4 (2) Directions. Background relating to the Local Development Plan (LDP2) and SPG areas was also reported.

One Member noted that the last boundary review was conducted in 2017 and asked how often these were carried out. The Officer confirmed that based on the situation in Pembrokeshire, he considered it appropriate for these reviews to take place approximately every 10 years.

It was noted that due to Covid 19, the triennial survey of Conservation Areas had been postponed. As a result of this, some potential breaches that were later identified in the rescheduled survey were then 4 years old, meaning that no enforcement action could be taken. A Member asked whether despite this, were there opportunities to inform owners of these restrictions in the bid to influence their decisions in future. The Officer confirmed that where there had been potential breaches, each householder had been contacted, however when Article 4 control was placed on specific conservation areas, every individual householder was notified of these restrictions. It was added that Article 4 Planning Applications were free of charge to encourage property owners to follow the correct process and to subsequently avoid potential breaches. In response to a query raised by a Member, the Officer confirmed that since the recent survey of the Conservation Areas, there were approximately 7 or 8 enforcement cases open and 1 appeal.

The Chair along with other Members and Officers thanked the Building Conservation Officer for his notable impact and the influence his expertise has had in protecting the conservation areas over the years.

Noted.

6. Performance Report for the Period ending 31 March 2023

The report followed the structure of the Corporate and Resources Plan for 2022/23. As the Authority was going through a period of change, a transitional performance measurement framework had been put in place for 2022/23.

The report presented the performance up to 31 March and included Q1 – Q4 statistics for some data sets recorded quarterly; it highlighted those areas where targets were in red or amber or where positive progress had



been made since the previous report. The Officer reported on key areas and themes which included Organisational Change, Conservation, Climate, Connection, Communities, Planning Performance and Corporate Areas of Change.

A Member noted that the review of the Authority's Procurement policy and strategy was yet to begin and asked what the time scale was for this. The Chief Executive confirmed that procurement had been moved from the Finance Department to the Decarbonisation Department where it would fall under the remit of the new Decarbonisation Officer who was set to begin in July. It was added that once the Officer was in post, the review would take place.

One Member acknowledged the high level of change in the Authority and commended Officers for what had been achieved during the year. Concern was expressed however regarding the capacity of the Enforcement Team and a Member requested an update as to what was being done to improve this. It was confirmed that several individuals had successfully been appointed to various roles within the Planning Department and processes were being looked at in the bid to further strengthen the resilience of the team. It was reported that in the short term, arrangements had been made for Planning Officers and the Tree and Landscape Officer to support the Enforcement Team to address the backlog of enforcement investigations that had been caused by the pandemic. It was added that Enforcement was being looked at more thoroughly to identify whether there were additional opportunities to strengthen the resource for the long term.

Members agreed that due to the recent level of change within the organisation with several new members of staff in post, an updated organisational chart would be helpful for Members to understand which Officers were responsible for each area. It was requested also that a monthly email be distributed, listing the new starters and leavers. Officers agreed to circulate this information.

A Member noted that the Pay & Grading review was behind schedule due to staff changes and asked when this would be completed. The Chief Executive confirmed that the HR Manager was set to meet with the consultants the following week and after this, an updated timescale would be provided.

It was noted that one RIDDOR incident was reported during Q4 and a Member asked whether this involved a member of staff or a member of the public. The Chief Executive explained the circumstances of the incident to Members.



The report confirmed that the percentage of Environmental Information Regulations responses within the required timeframe had a red RAG rating and a Member requested clarification as to why this was. It was confirmed that this was due to the complexity of the cases which therefore required additional time to process.

It was noted that the average time taken to determine all planning applications in days, year to date, had a red RAG rating and an explanation of this was requested. The Officer confirmed that the figure had been skewed to a degree as there had been a number of complex applications that had required section 106 agreements which then distorted the average figure.

One Member highlighted that it would be helpful to have a longer-term analysis of trends, for example in respect of the tree planting scheme to help understand the impact on carbon sequestration and the roll out of electric vehicle charging points to understand the financial benefits of greater usage of the charging points. It was added that this data would assist in understanding how the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park compared to other National Parks on matters such as this. The Officer acknowledged the importance of long-term analysis and confirmed that the Authority was looking into key indicators and models of data that could be used for analysis of this nature.

Noted.

