

# Operational Review Committee

27 September 2023

Present: Councillor SL Hancock, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor PJ Morgan, Dr RM Plummer, Councillor M Wiggins, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor C Williams.

Also in attendance: Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), James Parkin (Director of Nature Recovery & Tourism), Sara Morris (Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement), Graham Peake (Learning & Inclusion Team Leader), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager) Mair Thomas (Performance and Compliance Officer), Libby Taylor (Head of Engagement & Inclusion), Rebecca Evans (Volunteering Development Officer) and Bryony Rees (Outdoor Schools Coordinator).

[Councillor P Morgan joined the meeting during consideration of the Outdoor Schools presentation.]

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 12.30pm)

## 1. Election of Chair

It was reported that only one nomination had been received for the office of Chair; Dr R Plummer.

On the proposal of Councillor S Hancock, seconded by Councillor C Williams, it was **RESOLVED** that Dr R Plummer be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

## 2. Election of Deputy Chair

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor C Williams, it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor R Jordan be elected Deputy Chair for the ensuing year.

## 3. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Mrs Julie James; Councillor P Morgan had advised that he would be late.

## 4. 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. Councillor M Wiggins declared an interest in item 7, the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools.



## 5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 June 2023 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor M Wiggins, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 be confirmed and authenticated.

## 6. Action Log

The Chair acknowledged the completed actions and thanked Officers involved.

**Noted.**

## 7. Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools (PODS)

The Chair welcomed Graham Peake, Learning & Inclusion Team Leader, and Bryony Rees, Outdoor Schools Coordinator, who presented a report that featured a review of the work of the PODS Partnership and how present and planned activities were being developed in response to the challenges of a new Curriculum for Wales. The Officers presented Members with a variety of information related to the scheme including background information, a summary of current activities, achievements, challenges, opportunities, and future ambitions.

The Members commended Officers for their achievements and exemplary model that they had developed which had the potential to inspire many others. The Chair acknowledged the high level of collaboration with other organisations and commented that this could positively influence the potential for future funding. The Chair requested that the presentation be distributed to Members and this was noted.

One Member, who also sat on the Schools and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC), highlighted that the level of work carried out by the Officers at the Authority had not been fully portrayed in a report presented to the PCC Committee. The Chief Executive expressed concern regarding the report as it had failed to highlight that the Authority was instrumental to the delivery of PODS and no support was provided by the local Education Authority. It was proposed by a Member that the Officers deliver the PODS presentation to a future Members Seminar at PCC and all were in agreement.

It was reported that PODS had received external funding from a range of sources in recent years, however no support had been received from the Local Authority since the partnership was established in 2010. A Member noted that in future, Officers may need to actively seek new funding streams such as charging for the training provided to teachers and



schools and he expressed concern regarding this due to limited school budgets. Reassurance was provided that there were no immediate plans to charge for the training. The Member asked for clarification regarding the current funding arrangements, and it was confirmed that funding had been secured until March 2024 and 25% of the funding package had been secured for the following year. In a bid to secure additional funding, Officers were working closely with the Authority Grants Officer and also, they aimed to approach both the local Authority and the Director for Children and Schools to request their support.

The Officers acknowledged that some schools faced more challenges in accessing the National Park than others and in those cases, the Officers focused on enriching the school grounds or an area in the school's locality for the purposes of outdoor learning. The Officer added that the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's Education Team were working in partnership with the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park to support schools in experiencing the outdoors and National Park.

A Member noted that 55% of schools within Pembrokeshire had been engaged through PODS and he asked if the aim was to engage with more in future. The Officer clarified that the 55% figure referred to the schools engaged in the year to date however the overall figure for the total schools engaged in PODS would be included in future reports. It was added that Officers aimed to engage with as many schools as possible.

**Noted.**

## **8. Volunteer Safety Management**

The Chair welcomed the Head of Engagement and Inclusion, Libby Taylor, and the Volunteering Development Officer, Rebecca Evans, who presented a report that provided Members with an update of the processes and procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of volunteers working for the Authority. The report outlined details of volunteer activities, the Authority's obligations to volunteers, details of volunteering processes and a summary of recent reported incidents. Following concern expressed by Members, the Officer provided further details of a RIDDOR incident that involved a volunteer, and she provided reassurances that the Authority had fulfilled its obligations to that volunteer on the day in question and extenuating circumstances had led to it being a unique case. Following a query raised by a Member, the Officer confirmed that the Authority had full public liability insurance that covered all volunteers and the actions of volunteers under supervision.

For the purposes of inclusivity, a Member asked how many of the Authority volunteers had a disability. The Officer confirmed that not all individuals chose to disclose the information on their registration forms



however for those who required additional support, volunteering opportunities were available with the Pathways and Roots to Recovery teams as they had additional volunteers who could offer the support required. The Officers provided reassurance that the percentage of volunteers with a disability had increased as the Authority had recruited several volunteer mentors and leaders and had therefore been able to provide the additional support required. It was added that in the bid to engage with more individuals with a disability, the Authority had worked with organisations such as 'Value Independence', to train a number of their clients as Volunteer Walk Leaders. In recognition of the increased number of Authority volunteers who had additional needs, the Officer explained that volunteer training had been adapted to reflect this.

In response to a query raised by a Member, the Officer confirmed that 2,847 volunteer days had been recorded in the current financial year and the increase in this trend would depend on staff capacity to supervise volunteers. Officers confirmed that the quality of volunteering experiences was their priority rather than the quantity.

**Noted.**

*[The meeting was adjourned between 11:42 – 11:55]*

## **9. Performance Report for the Period ending 31 July 2023**

The report followed the structure of the Corporate and Resources Plan for 2022/23 and presented the performance to date up to 31 July 2023. It included Quarter 1 statistics for some measures and 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 Delivery Plans, Conservation, Climate, Connection, Communities, Planning Performance and Corporate Areas of Change. The Officer highlighted that the LIDAR project work had been completed and no longer had a red RAG and additionally, the Amber actions under Connection would shortly be progressed as the new Health & Wellbeing Officer responsible for these was now in post. It was added that one complaint had been made to the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding Coast to Coast not being a bilingual publication and as it was upheld, future publications would be fully bilingual.

A Member asked what financial implications Coast to Coast being bilingual would have and the Chief Executive responded that it was uncertain at this stage however due to the limited capacity of the publication, the change would subsequently reduce the overall space for content and advertisements. It was noted that this would have an impact on the amount of income generated by the publication.



It was reported that a complaint against the Authority regarding a data protection breach had been received by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) however it was not upheld. In light of this, a Member asked what Data Protection Training Staff were required to complete. The Officer confirmed that a programme of data protection training was in place for staff to complete and 98% of staff who were required to complete the training had done so (the remaining 2% were new starters). It was added that for staff who were not required to complete the full data protection training due to the nature of their work, other training had been developed with the Authority's Data Protection Officer for them to complete. The Officer confirmed that in response to the alleged data breach reported to the ICO, the Privacy Planning Notice was being updated to further strengthen the position of the Authority and a Record Management Group had been established to review all internal documents to strengthen the Authority's record management approaches.

With regards to Planning performance, it was reported that the percentage of all planning applications determined within the time periods required and the average time taken to determine all planning applications had a red RAG rating due to the backlog that had been caused by covid and a period where the team were short staffed. In response to a query raised by a Member, the Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement explained that an action plan was in place to address the backlog of applications and two new members of staff had been recruited to support the team in this however it was predicted that the statistics would likely worsen in the next quarter with an upward trend expected by Spring 2024. It was added that the staff structure and processes within the department were also being reviewed to increase efficiency and subsequently help the team reach their targets.

**Noted.**

#### **10. Multi Agency Response to Bird Flu**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Nature Recovery and Tourism, James Parkin, who gave a presentation regarding the multi-agency response to the devastating impact that bird flu was having on sea birds. The presentation provided a background of the disease, details of the multi-agency response including key actions to minimise the impact, and details of the impact seen on seabirds.

**Noted.**

