

## Report of the Chief Executive

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### **Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide Members with an opportunity to guide the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24.

#### **Introduction**

The Authority produces an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which is presented as an Annex to the Annual Accounts and which are audited by Audit Wales. The AGS outlines the governance and internal control arrangements of the Authority. In addition, the AGS highlights how the Authority meets specific governance challenges.

#### **Guidance**

There is no specific guidance on how a Welsh National Park Authority should prepare an AGS, however, the Welsh Government's Statutory and Non-Statutory guidance on democracy within principal councils (2023) [Statutory and non-statutory guidance on democracy within principal councils: governance and scrutiny \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#), states the following:

“An Annual Governance Statement is a document which sets out a council's arrangements for decision-making and governance. The AGS is the product of a review of council governance carried out by senior officers. There is no obligation on Welsh councils to prepare an Annual Governance Statement. As there is no legal obligation to produce an Annual Governance Statement, Welsh Government is not providing statutory guidance on this matter. However, councils will note the presence of the local government accounting standards. Councils could consider how the AGS can be used as a tool for broader corporate improvement; it can be used to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the governance framework and, as part of an annual action plan, take forward agreed changes accordingly.”

The Welsh Government notes that CIPFA's “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework” is considered to best represent proper practices in relation to the statement of internal control which requires an annual governance statement to be produced.

This guidance states:

“In addition to the organisation acknowledging its responsibility for ensuring governance is effective, the AGS should:

- focus on outcomes and value for money;
- evaluate against the local code and principles;
- be in an open and readable style;
- include an opinion on whether arrangements are fit for purpose;
- include identification of significant governance issues and an action plan to address them explain action taken in the year to address the significant governance issues identified in the previous year's statement;
- be signed by the chief executive and leading member in a council.”

There is no guidance on how an AGS should be produced or presented and at no point in over a decade have Audit Wales raised concerns regarding the AGS produced by the Authority. The structure the Authority bases its AGS is linked to the Code of Corporate Governance, with sections explaining how the Authority meets the requirements of the code.

The AGS is reviewed and updated every year to reflect current issues, however, a significant element of the AGS does not change. During 2023-24 the Authority revised its Code of Corporate Governance and therefore the statement was revised to reflect this change.

### **AGS 2023 – 2024.**

During the later discussions on the 2022-23 AGS some Members expressed the view that they would like to see a more significant revision of the AGS. In view of this Annex A provides the 2022-23 version and Members are invited to indicate what changes they wish to make to the format and content of the AGS.

To assist the discussion the following provides examples of AGS produced by other bodies. However, it should be noted that with the exception of the other to Welsh NPAs there may be some different requirements on other bodies.

- Eryri NPA: [AGS-2022-23-2.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)
- Bannau Brycheiniog NPA : [6 Appendix One - BBNPA 2022 23 Audited Statement-of-Accounts.pdf](#) (Pages 70 to 83)
- Pembrokeshire County Council: [Appendix Atodiad A.pdf \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
- Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority: [Word Template \(mawwfire.gov.uk\)](#)

Any changes will be incorporated before a draft is presented to the Authority to enable all Members to comment.

**Recommendation: Members are asked to COMMENT on this report**

*(For further information, please contact Tegryn Jones (tegrynj@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)*

## 2022/2023 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

### Introduction and acknowledgement of Responsibility

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 wellbeing 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”. In preparation of the Annual Governance Statement the Authority reviews and adopts any additional guidance as issued, this includes CIPFA’s Financial Management Code (2019) and the Financial Management Standards in the code. The Authority has decided to adopt the CIPFA framework and Annual Governance Statement approach.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters identified in this statement 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 \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

DATED \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Executive

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## The purpose of the Governance framework

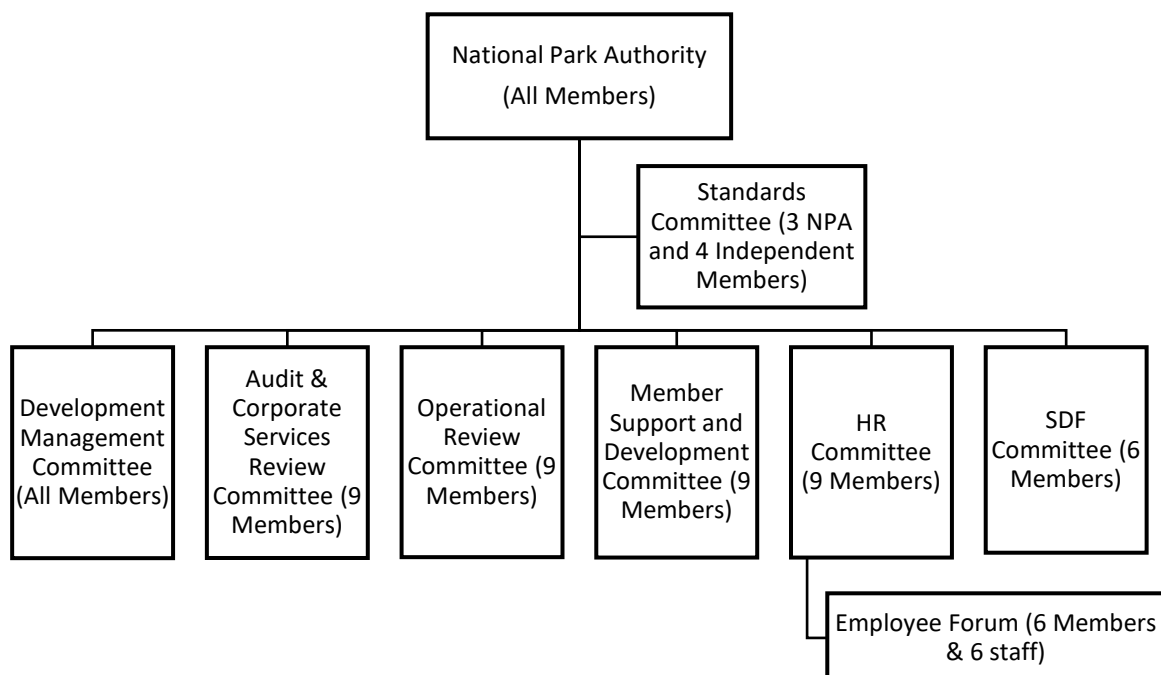
The governance framework comprises the committees, systems and processes, cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic 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. The Authority's processes, committee's and staff act three discreet lines of defence. Although mitigation 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.

1. Internal Controls	2. Scrutiny	3. External
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Staff Training</li> <li>• Internal Monitoring Structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committees</li> <li>• Internal Audit</li> <li>• Data Protection Officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Audit</li> <li>• Regulators</li> </ul>

## 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, either virtually or in person, 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 Groups to investigate and advise on specific matters.
- To determine all Service Standards and the Authority's Statutory Duties.
- To manage 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 and 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 Welsh Government's Term of 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 and monitor the Authority's Risk Register and make any recommendations to the National Park Authority.
  - 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 consists of nine members 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.

#### 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 and Greening Agriculture grants. The Committee's aim is to help reduce local carbon emissions in our environment and to respond to the climate emergency.

#### Continuous Improvement Group

The Continuous Improvement Group consists of four Members of the Authority plus the Chief Executive. The membership includes the Chairs 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.

#### National Park Officer

The Authority appoints a National Park Officer in accordance with the requirements of the Environment Act (1995) Schedule 7 clause 14 [Environment Act 1995 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

#### Section 151 Officer

Within the Authority the Finance Manager also acts as the Section 151 Officer. The role and responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer are detailed

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/151>.

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.

#### Monitoring Officer

The Authority has appointed an independent Monitoring Officer under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to report on the Authority's conduct and standards function.

#### Data Protection Officer

The Authority has appointed a Data Protection Officer a requirement for Public Bodies under the UK GDPR. The Data Protection Officer assist the Authority to monitor internal compliance, inform and advice on data protection obligations, support completion of Data

Protection Impact Assessment and act as a contact point for data subjects and the Information Commissioner's Office.

### 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.

### External Auditors and Regulators

In addition the Authority is subject to external audits and regulators:

- Audit Wales act as the Authority's external audit and make comment following their financial accounts and performance work and in the annual audit letter. The Auditor General for Wales carries out examinations to assess the extent to which a public body has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, have legal powers to look into complaints about public services in Wales and to investigate complaints that local government councillors have breached their authority's code of conduct.
- Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner may conduct a review into the extent to which a public body is safeguarding the ability of future generations taking account of the long-term impact of the things a body does under section 3 of the Act (well-being duty). Public bodies must respond to recommendations.
- Welsh Language Commissioner, sets and enforces Welsh Language standards and determines complaints and investigations. Following an investigation, the Commissioner may impose enforcement action where necessary.
- Information Commissioner's Office, is the UK independent body set up to uphold information rights, including data protection and Freedom of Information.
- The Health and Safety Executive is the national regulator for workplace health and safety. They carry out targeted inspections and investigations and can take enforcement action.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission is the regulatory body responsible for enforcing the Equality Act and have a range of enforcement powers.

### Principles of Governance

The review of the effectiveness of the Authority systems of governance is undertaken in accordance with the following 7 CIPFA principles:

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

### **ctions 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

<b>Governance Issues / Risks Identified</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
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	Report went to 14/12/22 NPA on PCNPA response to Audit Wales – Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 calls for action. The report set out the Authority’s progress to date against these calls for action and future activities that will support it to further deliver against them. Small World Consulting workshop for Members in March 2023.
Successful implementation of Microsoft 365 across the organisation.	Complete the full implementation of Office 365 across the Authority	System in use, however further work is needed to fully explore functionality potential and move to Sharepoint.
Managing change across the organisation and successfully in order to consolidate delivery of new Authority priorities and Well-being Objectives.	The Authority will initiate a corporate review of its structure.	Consultation process completed on reorganisation. Key heads of appointed. Budgets being realigned to new structure for 2023/24.
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	Continued engagement with PSB during year as it developed Well-being Plan for Pembrokeshire.
Implement the recommendations of the audit of Risk Management	Working TIAA, the Authority’s internal auditors, to develop risk management arrangements and reporting.	Work in progress. Meeting held with Members. Revised risk register in place. Further work being carried out on risk appetite.

## **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 Authority's Code of Corporate Governance which is based on the seven principles of the CIPFA Code of Corporate Governance.

### **Principle 1: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law**

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. No cases were brought to the Committee during the year.

#### 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. The Monitoring Officer provides an annual code of conduct training session and advice when required to Members.

#### 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 jointly with Pembrokeshire County Council. The Authority meets the standards for the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development. The Authority has delivered a comprehensive induction training programme for new Members, to which all existing Members were invited as a refresher.

#### 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”.

#### 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.

#### Safeguarding Policy

The Authority has in place a safeguarding policy and staff participate in required training. The policy takes 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 policy includes 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.

#### Financial Standards

The Authority regularly reviews and updates 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.

#### 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. They have 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.

## **Principle 2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.**

During the past year the Authority has sought to engage with local people and stakeholders through a range of consultations.

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.

### 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 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 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.
- Visit Pembrokeshire
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Charitable Trust.
- Joint Planning Ecologist with Pembrokeshire County Council.
- Joint Tree Officer with Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority.
- Local Access Forum, sharing secretariat with Pembrokeshire County Council. The Pembrokeshire Local Access Forum is a statutory body established jointly by Pembrokeshire County Council and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, following legislation and regulations introduced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The statutory function of the Forum is to advise the County Council, National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government as to the improvement of public access to the countryside of Pembrokeshire for the purposes of open air recreation and enjoyment. The Forum's membership is balanced to reflect the concerns of local farmers and land managers, as well as the interests of recreational users of the countryside such as walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Local Access Forum meetings are held in public on a quarterly basis. Local Access Forum members are appointed for a term of three years. The secretariat of the Local Access Forum rotates between the National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire County Council. in the current term, 2022-24, the Access & Rights of Way Manager of the National Park Authority is the Forum secretary.
- Landscape Wales a partnership of the 8 Welsh Designated Landscapes.
- South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

### Community, Project and Service User 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. This year the group has explored how the Authority can support wider activities being carried out in Pembrokeshire on Tackling Poverty.

The Authority's Youth Committee continued to meet, with Member representation. 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 have been engaging with Community, Town and City Councils as part of a tree planting scheme to commemorate 70 years of National Park Designation.

The Authority has continued with a 'people led approach' for its Roots to Recovery and Pathways projects, capturing and collating participant and volunteer feedback for both projects. The Authority has continued to engage with stakeholder groups and organisations as part of its regional West Wales Walking for Well-being project.

#### 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. Assessment and during the year has been consulting on new Well-being Goals and the draft Well-being Plan. The Authority is represented on PSB tackling poverty working group.

#### Webcasting Authority and Committee Meetings

The Authority continued to webcast its Committee meetings.

#### Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic Lead

During the year the Authority with the two other National Park Authority's appointed an Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic Lead. The lead has developed an action plan to inform the approach of the three Welsh National Park Authorities on reaching wider audiences.

#### Public participation in planning matters at Development Management Committees

All planning applications are subject to public consultation, as well as consultation with Statutory Consultees such as Town and Community Councils. For applications that are considered by Members at the Development Management Committee there is an opportunity for members of the public to address the committee for up to 5 minutes.

#### 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.

### **Principle 3. Defining outcomes in terms, of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.**

The Authority has been focusing on developing work to ensure that it is ‘fit for purpose’ to meet the challenges of the future. In particular the 30 by 30 commitment for Nature Recovery and Net Zero and decarbonisation targets.

#### Welsh Government – Term of Government Remit Letter

The Welsh Government has issued the Authority with a Term of Government Remit letter which outlines its expectations on the Authority until 2026. However, the budget settlement is for only one year, with an indicative budget for the following year.

#### National Park Management Plan

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. Work has commenced on planning a new Management Plan to be agreed by the end of 2024.

#### Local Development Plan 2, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Annual Report

#### Corporate and Resources Plan and Annual Report

The Corporate and Resources Plan document sets out the Authority’s Well-being statement, 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.

#### High Level Strategy

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.

#### 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. Work has been undertaken to develop a new strategy for the next five years. During the year the Authority has had one complaint made against it to the Welsh Language Commissioner, however the Commissioner decided not to investigate this.

### Equality Plan and Objectives

In line with requirements of the Welsh specific equality duties the Authority has in place an equality plan. The plan sets out the Authority's Equality Objectives and what the Authority will do across 2020-2021 to achieve these objectives and promote equality and diversity.

### Socio-economic duty

The Socio-Economic Duty (under the Equality Act 2010) commenced in March 2021. The Authority considers Socio Economic Disadvantage as part of its integrated assessments.

### Section 6 – Signposting Document and Reporting

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Section 6 (Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty) requires that public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, and in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems. The Authority has in place a signposting document that sets out the approach taken by PCNPA to embed the duty within its corporate planning framework. The Authority submitted reports on what it has done to comply with the Section 6 Duty to Welsh Government in 2022 in line with the Authority's Signposting Document.

### Integrated Assessments

The Authority uses integrated assessments, a multi-purpose tool to ensure the appropriate steps are taken in our plan, policy and decisions making processes to:

- Comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (we are required to assess equality impacts under the Welsh Specific duties.)
- Demonstrate that we have shown due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage when taking strategic decisions under the Socio-economic Duty.
- Ensure we are considering impact on Health and Well-being.
- Ensure we are considering the Welsh Language Standards.
- Ensure we are considering the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty and wider carbon emission and carbon storage considerations in our plans and decision-making processes.
- Ensure we are considering the Well-being Goals for Wales, 5 Ways of Working under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and any relevant future trends/ horizon scanning information.

The Authority continued to complete integrated assessments during 2022/23 with summary information from assessments included in relevant Committee Papers to inform Members when making decisions.

### Communication and Publicising Impact

Annual reports are published on the Authority's website. Authority includes impact case

studies submitted by staff in its performance reports that go to Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee and Operational Review Committee. These case studies have been shared with the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner Office. The Authority also submitted information to Welsh Government to inform the Welsh Ministers Report on Equality 2022. The Authority issues regular press releases raising awareness of activities it undertakes and their impact, with information shared across social media. The impact of the Authority's work is also highlighted in Coast 2 Coast.

#### Pembrokeshire Public Services Board

The Authority is an invited member of the Pembrokeshire Public Services Board (PSB). The PSB agreed the Pembrokeshire Well-being Assessment and during the year has been consulting on new Well-being Goals and the draft Well-being Plan. The Authority is represented on PSB tackling poverty working group.

#### Consultations

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

- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development, flooding and coastal erosion
- Independent Remuneration Panel For Wales

### **Principle 4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.**

#### National Park Grant and Levy

The NPG / Levy for 2022/23 remained unchanged from the 2021/22. The Authority was in receipt of a number of Welsh Government grants which were used to offset the additional Covid related operating costs.

#### 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.

#### Committees

Individual service team leaders update Members of the relevant 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.

#### 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. Staff update the Performance reporting management system directly with information to update performance reporting on a regular basis. Performance reports are presented to Operational Review

Committee and Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee for Member scrutiny and comment.

#### Financial Monitoring

There were two budget workshops held with Members to discuss the medium-term financial plan. The Authority reports its financial performance regularly to the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.

#### Integrated Assessments

The Authority continued to complete integrated assessments during 2022/23 with summary information from assessments included in relevant Committee Papers to inform Members when making decisions.

#### Delivery Plan Development

The Authority initiated a process in 2022/23 to develop Delivery Plans that will set out priority actions and deliverables to support Authority delivering on its high level strategy and new Well-being Objectives.

#### Leadership Team

Leadership Team provides governance, strategic management and decision-making on relevant issues and within delegated powers. It receives minutes and decides upon recommendations/ issues referred to it by Health and Safety Group, Asset Management Group, Staff Representative Group, Commercial Group and Engagement Action Plan Group.

#### Risk Register

The Risk Register is presented to each meeting of the Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee. It is regularly reviewed by the Leadership Team when current risks are reviewed and new risks evaluated. During the year the Authority significantly amended its Risk Register to focus on key strategic risks, to allocate risks to officers and to identify risk tolerance.

#### Data Protection Impact Assessments

Authority continued to complete Data Protection Impact Assessments to help identify and minimise the data protection risks of projects and activities.

#### Planning Delegation

A report went to the December NPA on amendments to the Authority's Scheme of Delegation. Temporary amendments to the Authority's Scheme of Delegation in relation to Development Management were first agreed on 6th May 2020 and extended a number of times, most recently in December 2021. These amendments had been introduced to assist the Authority in delivering the continuity of the Development Management service during the Covid -19 period. Some elements of the temporary amendments would now cease at the end of December 2022, but it was proposed that some were retained as permanent amendments. Some additional amendments were also proposed to improve the clarity of the Scheme and ensure any new powers which were introduced were captured immediately by the wording of the scheme.

## **Principle 5. Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.**

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

### Member induction

Due to Local Government Elections, seven new Members were appointed to the Authority in 2022. They received a full programme of induction, including sessions to help them understand the context and remit of National Park Authorities and how they operate within the governance of Wales. The Authority’s Monitoring Officer participated in the session on the Code of Conduct organised by Pembrokeshire County Council. All returning Members were invited to the induction sessions, and most were recorded to allow any Members not able to attend to view the sessions at their convenience.

### Member Support and Development Committee

The Member Support and Development Committee meets on a quarterly basis and, over the last year, has reviewed the induction process and buddying scheme in advance of the appointment of new Members, agreed the policy on contributions towards the costs of care allowance, and reviewed progress against the training plan agreed previously.

### 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.

### Member and officer Joint Training & Development

The Authority actively promotes joint training sessions between Members & officers. During the year there were 3 workshops, one of which was held jointly with Pembrokeshire County Council.

### Restructure and Appointment of Heads of

During the year the Authority undertook a process of restructuring its work in order to better align it to its high level strategy and revised Well-being Objectives. This included an extensive process of consultation and responding to counter proposals. A key element was to increase leadership capacity and identify clearly lines of accountability.

### 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.

### Health and Safety

Significant change has been undertaken in relation to Health and Safety across the Authority. This was in part a response to the recommendations following a review of the Authority's approach to managing Hand and Arms Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) by the Health and Safety Executive. An action plan to change our work has been developed.

The terms of reference of the internal Health and Safety Group has been amended to make it more accountable and it now includes the managers for all relevant functions. A Project Officer has been recruited to undertake a review of Health and Safety across the Authority and any recommendations will be taken forward during 2023-24.

### 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 as outlined under Principle 2.

Members agreed the appointment of Members to the following external organisations at the National Park Authority AGM in June 2022:

- National Parks UK Executive Committee
- National Parks Wales
- Welsh Local Government Association (Council, Executive Board, Joint Council for Wales)
- WG Partnership Council for Wales
- Campaign for National Parks
- Alliance for National Parks
- National Coastal Forum
- Port of Milford Haven Advisory Committee
- Pembrokeshire Local Access Forum
- Pembrokeshire College Advisory Forum
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust
- Skomer Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group
- Visit Pembrokeshire

## **Principle 6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.**

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 the Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee. It is regularly reviewed by the Leadership Team when current risks

are reviewed and new risks evaluated. During the year the Authority significantly amended its Risk Register to focus on key strategic risks, to allocate risks to officers and to identify risk tolerance.

#### Upgrading systems infrastructure

During 2022/23 the Authority undertook work on the following IT systems:

- The deployment and integration of the 3CX VOIP platform to visitor centres. Integrated calling between sites helps remove barriers to communication.
- Upgraded and secured the public Wi-Fi offering at the visitor centres.
- Moved the PCNPA committee meetings to a hybrid environment using Microsoft Teams and live streaming to YouTube. Remote attendance and public participation now possible, reducing the threat of disruption in the event of future pandemics.
- Replaced on-premises, end user security platform (ESET) with Microsoft 365 integrated Windows Defender. Benefiting in cost savings as well as tighter integration and improved reporting.
- Migrated Apple Macintosh from Intel to Apple Silicon, allowing updated software to be utilised for the Graphics team.
- Canon printer contract renegotiated, renewed, and extended to cover all main remote centres for the first time. Cloud-enabled print solution gives more print options and possibility for improvement over the course of the contract
- EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) system including hardware, software and payment terminals replaced. New hardware is faster, secure, and has greater functionality than previous system.

#### Cyber Security and Data Protection

The Authority has in place an external DPO who provided advice and guidance to staff during 2022/23, including supporting the completion of Data Protection Impact Assessments. Mandatory online training was provided to staff on data protection and cyber security.

Members of Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee received two reports from Audit Wales on Cyber Security at the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee 9 November 2022. Following this a Cyber Security Member Champion was appointed at the December 2022 NPA. The Authority has identified training for Members on Cyber Security. The creation of this training was sponsored by Welsh Government and designed specifically for Councillors. Multi Factor Authentication has been introduced to increase cybersecurity for those logging in to Authority systems. The Authority has signed up to additional NCSC services.

#### Internal Audit 2022/23

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 2022/23 by the Authority's internal auditors Gateway Assure. The focus of the Audit was on the following areas:

- Visitor Centre & Café Castell Henllys
- Payroll & Expenses
- Conservation Management
- Performance Management

- ICT Disaster Recovery

#### Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion

*At the Authority's Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022 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"

#### Audit Wales Financial 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 Performance Reports and Fieldwork

During 2022/23 the Audit Wales carried out:

- field work which focused on: "Has the Authority established effective systems to consider and approve whether and how it should pursue new opportunities to optimise income?" They reviewed documentation, carried out an online survey with Members and held focus groups and interviews with Members and staff to inform this work.
- governance review which focused on: "Do National Park Authorities in Wales have effective governance arrangements that support good outcomes for citizens?" They reviewed documentation, carried out an online survey with Members and held focus groups and interviews with Members and staff to inform this work.

#### Annual Report on meeting the Well-being Objectives

In 2022/23 the Authority published its Annual Report on meeting the Well-being Objectives. This report sets out our performance on delivery in 2021/22 against the Authority's Well-being Objectives.

#### Local Development Plan 2 Annual Report

##### 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 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 and updated for 2021/22 reporting. A group of staff from across the Authority worked together to complete submission of 2021/22 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.

#### Responding to Regulators

The Authority responds to requests, recommendations and good practice identified by regulators.

### **Principle 7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.**

#### Committees

Individual service team leaders update Members of their relevant 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.

#### Publishing Authority/Committee Papers on Website and Webcasting

Authority/Committee agendas and reports are normally published on the Authority's website 5 clear working days prior to the meeting in accordance with Standing Orders, although in exceptional circumstances some reports may not be available until later. Meetings of the Authority and its Committees are webcast to the Authority's YouTube Channel, with a link to this provided on the Authority's website, and retained thereafter in accordance with its data retention policy.

#### 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. Staff update the Performance reporting management system directly with information to update performance reporting on a regular basis

#### Employee Forum and Staff Reps

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. The Authority had a staff forum to create an inclusive culture built on trust, fairness, respect and team work.

#### Maintaining Procedures for public participation in Development Management Committees

The right to speak at meetings of the Authority's Development Management Committee has



been in place since 2002 and this arrangement was confirmed, and the procedures reviewed most recently in June and July 2021.

Leadership Team – Agendas and Minutes

Leadership Team Agendas and Minutes are available for all staff to view.

Terms of References and Standing Orders

Terms and References and Standing Orders for Committees are available on our website and reviewed when required.

Internal Audit and Audit Wales

As referenced above TIAA have continued to undertake the Internal Audit functions for the Authority which has included work on area detailed above. A tender was issued to appoint Internal Auditors for the period 2023 – 2026, which was awarded to Astari Ltd.

Audit Wales performance reports for the Authority are published on Audit Wales website and Audit Wales attend Committees to report findings of their reports.

Audit Wales have attended Authority Committees for observation activities as part of Governance Review.

Finance and Performance – Providing Information

Finance and Performance information is reported regularly to relevant Committees.

Responding to Regulators

The Authority responds to requests, recommendations and good practice identified by regulators.

<b>Governance Issues / Risks Identified</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>
Health and Safety	Undertake a review of management of health and safety
Continue implementation of Microsoft 365 across the organisation, including exploring functionality opportunities for Sharepoint alongside implementing improved record management processes and practices.	Undertake activities to support improved record management across the Authority, incorporating activities to support the move to Sharepoint.
Mid term financial planning and cost pressures	Continue to work with Members and Welsh Government to manage mid term financial challenges and pressures.
Review of Corporate Policies	Undertake activities to support delivery of Corporate Improvement Project on management and communication of Corporate Policies and Standards
Complete Pay and Grading review	Complete and review outcome of Pay and Grading Review
Welsh Language Strategy	Completion and publication of Welsh Language Strategy.

Implement recommendations from Audit Wales review of Governance	Implement agreed recommendations from Audit Wales review of Governance
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