Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

22 July 2026

Present
Councillor C George, Dr M Havard, Mr H Hogg and Councillor V Thomas.

Councillor M James was having technical difficulties and joined the meeting prior to consideration of the report of the Employee Forum (minute 7 refers)

Officers in attendance
Ceri Kwiecinski, Astari (Internal Audit), Chief Executive, Performance and Compliance Officer, Head of People Services, Head of Finance and Fundraising and Democratic Services Manager.

(Online Meeting: 10.00am -11.50am)

1. Appointment of Chair

The Chair of the Authority, Dr M Havard opened the meeting and reported that only one nomination had been received for the office of Chair of the Committee: Councillor C George

On the proposal of Dr Havard, seconded by Councillor Thomas, it was **resolved** that Councillor C George be appointed as Chair for the ensuing year.

Councillor George then took the Chair.

2. Election of Deputy Chair

It was reported that only one nomination had been received for the position of Deputy Chair: Mr J Hogg.

As proposed by Councillor George, Seconded by Dr Havard it was **resolved** that Mr J Hogg be elected Deputy Chair for the ensuing year.

3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Ms H Gwenllian, Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall, Councillor B Price and Councillor M Williams.

4. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13 May 2026 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

On the proposal of Councillor George seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2026 be confirmed and authenticated.

6. Action Log

The Chief Executive noted that Traeth Mawr (action 1114) was partially open, and it was hoped that the toilets would open in the next week or so. The intention was for an official opening to take place at the end of September.

The remaining updates provided in the Action Log were **noted**.

7. Employee Forum

The minutes of the Employee Forum held on 15 April 2026 were presented for information.

The Chair of the Authority noted that she had attended the meeting as an observer. In response to a question regarding Living Wage Accreditation, noted in the Action Log (minute 6 refers), the Chief Executive replied that the Authority met the Standard and it was hoped to progress this before the end of the year.

Noted.

8. Health and Safety Group

The minutes of the Health and Safety Group meeting held on 14 April 2026 were presented for information.

One Member commented that the minutes recorded a large amount of work in this area, but noted that the key question he was interested in was whether staff felt safe working for the Authority. The Chief Executive replied that he believed this to be the case and that staff had many avenues to express their concerns. However he suggested that this could be a question to ask the staff through the Employee Forum.

Another Member asked about a sub-group that had been established to monitor incidents within the National Park (Minute 6 refers). The Chief Executive replied that this task and finish group had focussed on a fatality that had occurred on land outside of the Authority's ownership and had looked at whether any lessons could be learned, concluding that the Authority's processes were adequate. He added that officers had for many years been actively involved with the national Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group.

Noted.

9. Internal Audit Report

The Chair welcomed Ceri Kwiecinski from Astari, the Authority's internal auditors, who presented the Internal Audit Annual Report 2025/26. This presented the results of their internal audit work for the Authority's system of governance, risk management and control and formed part of the framework designed to inform the Statement on Internal Control. It was therefore a key part of the Authority's assurance cycle and used to inform and update the organisation's risk profile.

Astari had completed seven reviews during the year, five of which had provided substantial assurance and two reasonable assurance; one of the latter was the Follow Up review in respect of implementing recommendations made in the previous year.

The annual Head of Internal Audit opinion had concluded that, for the 12 months ended 31 March 2026, based on the work they had undertaken and subject to the areas for improvement identified in their internal audit reports, the organisation had adequate and effective governance, risk management and control arrangements.

Members congratulated staff on a good report and for the improvements that had been put in place and asked that this be communicated to staff. The Chief Executive replied that he would do so, and wished to particularly thank the Performance and Compliance Officer who assisted greatly in the process. In response to a question regarding benchmarking of performance with other National Parks, he noted that this took place where possible.

Noted.

10. Action Log for External Performance Audit and Internal Audit (Ending 30 May 2026)

Members were reminded that following a request from the Committee, an Action Log for External Performance Audit and Internal Audit had been created to assist with monitoring of actions agreed from Audit reviews. The report provided an update on each of the actions.

It was noted that following discussions at the previous meeting when revised implementation dates had been agreed, internal priority levels for Audit Wales actions had now been approved by the Authority's Management Team.

The Committee was asked to approve closure of an internal audit action relating to training completion follow-ups as a result of Phishing simulation failures; alternative ways of addressing the recommendation which were acceptable to the Auditors were set out in the report.

Members were also asked to approve a revised implementation date for the action on review of fleet use across the Authority to allow 12 months of telematic data to be used to inform the review.

In response to a question from a Member regarding identification of lifts falling within LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1988) testing requirements, the officer advised that assessment had been carried out as part of the annual testing regime and lifts that fell within the requirements would be added to relevant maintenance programmes.

In response to the action on training following Phishing simulations, a Member asked whether such simulations were also sent to Members. The officer replied that they had been included in the past and highlighted the importance of Members using Authority rather than personal emails for correspondence and of cyber security training for both Members and staff. The Chair noted that the importance of undertaking such training had been highlighted at PDR discussions, and it was suggested that further training for Members on this important area should be scheduled.

Members also asked for the response rate for the survey of project and volunteer participants which was undertaken by the Engagement and Inclusion team referenced on page 27 of the report and officers agreed to find out.

On the proposal of Dr Havard, seconded by Mr Hogg, it was **resolved** that the following recommendations be approved:

a) Closure of Internal Audit Action - 2025/26 - IT Continuity and Disaster Recovery R3 (Astari 3190] [PS Ref: 3935]; and
b) revised implementation date of 31/03/27 for Internal Audit Action on review of fleet use 2024/25 - Climate Change and Decarbonisation R2 (Astari 2490) [PS Ref: 3661]

11. Welsh Government Strategic Grant Letter Performance Report 2025-26

It was reported that under new reporting requirements the Authority was required to provide performance information against Welsh Government Strategic Priorities set out in the annual Strategic Grant Letter it received from Welsh Government. The report to the Committee was the submission made in May 2026 for the full year report for 2025/26 and summarised progress on the key priority areas of environment, people and places and governance and collaboration.

Members were pleased to see that the report highlighted the Authority's key role in delivering against a number of Welsh Government priorities. It was also noted that the baseline data collected would be helpful going forward.

Suggestions were made regarding inclusion of information about a project carried out with South Hook LNG and also referencing positive internal audit reports. Officers replied that consideration could be given to their inclusion in the next report.

Noted.

[Dr Havard tendered her apologies and left the meeting during the course of the following item, as she had to attend another meeting]

12. People Services Report

The report of the Head of People Services updated the Committee on Health and Safety including accidents and incidents between April and June 2026, policy updates, including those resulting from implementation of the Employment Rights Act 2025, staff sickness absence, training and development, volunteering and Member development matters.

In response to questions, the officer advised that the Authority had a 6-month probation period which was rigorously managed to ensure that staff are a good fit for the organisation. It was also noted that an employee assistance programme, which included access to counselling, was in place to support staff who were suffering from stress. For those who were long-term sick, Managers maintained contact with them and they were able to return on a phased basis.

Noted.

13. Draft Statement of Accounts 2025-26

It was reported that the draft statement of accounts was provided to the Committee for information only and would be subject to further review, including amendments and narrative corrections where necessary, before submission to Audit Wales. It was hoped that this would take place before 31 July 2026.

It was noted that the Authority was reporting a net surplus of £380k, against a budgeted deficit of £567k. Whilst net service costs was £557k above budget, principally caused by an impairment property charge of £785k, this was more than offset by higher-than anticipated income, including additional Welsh Government revenue and capital funding and strong performance from income generating activities.

The report also noted that the Capital Programme had not been fully delivered during the year due to a combination of resource and delivery challenges. Consequently, several projects had been re-profiled and would be carried forward for completion as part of the Authority's future

capital programme. It was hoped that going forward a clearer view of priorities would be reached which would be aligned with the resources available.

Thanks were given to the Head of Finance and Fundraising for her hard work in producing the accounts

Noted.

14. Budget Performance for the Q1

The Head of Finance and Fundraising reported that overall, performance for 2026/27 was on target. Income was currently under budget, due to the timing of grant receipts not being as expected, a forecast increase in planning fees not having materialised and car park income not meeting budget expectations. However officers were not concerned and the figures were within overall expectations.

Noted.

15. Exclusion of the Public

On the proposal of Councillor George, seconded by Councillor Thomas it was **RESOLVED** that 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, would be disclosed.

16. Risk Management Policy – Risk Register and Risk Management Statement

The report provided Members with an opportunity to comment and discuss an updated version of the Risk Register, 2nd Line Assurance Report and the Risk Appetite Statement. Future Actions to Manage Risk were also provided.

Noted.

17. Delegation of any issues for consideration by the Continuous Improvement Group

It was **resolved** that there were no issues of concern that the Committee wished to delegate to the Continuous Improvement Group for consideration.