

AUDIT AND CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

25 November 2015

Present: Mr A Archer, Mr D Ellis, Mrs G Hayward, Councillor M James,
Councillors L Jenkins, DWM Rees and M Williams.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12.05pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor RM Lewis and Councillor R Owens.

2. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25 July 2015 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2015 be confirmed and signed.

4. Matters Arising

a) Risk Register: Enforcement (Item 7)

One Member questioned when the Committee was to expect the report on planning enforcement, and another Member replied that he believed such a report had been presented to a recent meeting of the Development Management Committee. The Chief Executive agreed to ascertain whether another report was proposed.

NOTED.

b) Document Management System (Item 12)

In response to a request from one Member for an update, the Chief Executive reported that this was a major project that was being progressed and a sum had been allocated in the budget to assist with implementation.

NOTED.

5. Health and Safety Group: report of meeting

Members considered the reports of the meetings of the Health and Safety Group held on 2 July and 8 October 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the meetings of the Health and Safety Group held on 2 July and 8 October 2015 be received.



6. Gateway: Internal Audit “Block 1” Report

The Finance Manager reported that this was the first of two reports that were to be received from the Authority’s new internal auditors Gateway. This first report presented the findings and conclusions on their review of risk management, key financial controls and health and safety. The second block, covering corporate governance and departmental/operational review had recently been received and would be reported to the Committee in the new year.

Having explained the key to the findings, the officer referred to the scope of the investigations and recommendations set out in the report.

Members felt that the report was clear but asked whether there was a difference of opinion between the Auditors and officers with regard to the Risk Register and whether this had been resolved. The Chief Executive replied that a degree of difference was always to be expected when a new approach to audit was taken. Several of the recommendations had already been implemented and work would be undertaken on the issues raised to ensure that they were taken forward in a way that was suitable for the organisation. Officers had also asked that the audit approach to comparison and benchmarking with Brecon Beacons NPA be included as an integral part of the process for the “Block 2” report.

It was anticipated that a report on Blocks 1 and 2 would be presented to the Authority in March.

NOTED.

7. Health and Safety Annual Report 2014-15

The Personnel Manager, on behalf of the Health and Safety Group, introduced the report, which was divided into two sections. The first of these reported on the issues and activities relating to health and safety management and practice across the Authority, while section 2 provided performance reporting for 2014-15 and set out risk priorities and plans for 2015-16. She also introduced Mr Brian Pratt, a fellow member of the Group to assist in answering any questions.

The officer reported that the Authority placed great emphasis on the reporting of incidents and ‘near misses’; this was not a priority for other Authorities which meant that it was difficult to obtain benchmarking data. It was confirmed that the increasing trend in the number of incidents was therefore to be welcomed, although these were being monitored as regards trends in injury rates.

Thanking officers for a comprehensive report, Members asked what the number of ‘callouts’ referred to. The Personnel Manager replied that these were out-of-hours calls to alarmed buildings which were recorded



as part of the incident reporting scheme. With regard to sickness absence, one Member asked whether there was an explanation for the rates being higher than the private sector. The officer replied that this had always been the case in the public sector and probably reflected the inclusion of sectors such as health and those with high proportion of manual workforce as well as differences in sick pay arrangements. However looking at the figures across all National Park Authorities there were a number with lower rates and there were plans to investigate this to see what could be learnt/shared.

Finally Members were pleased that sickness absence due to stress/depression/anxiety was much lower than the previous year, but emphasised that the Authority needed to be mindful of the impact of budget cuts on staff. Officers added that team leaders had recently attended a session on mental health to help them support their staff which would be a useful tool moving forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Health and Safety Annual Report 2014-15 be endorsed.

[Councillor M James tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture in order to attend another meeting on behalf of the Authority.]

8. Risk Register

In the absence of the Business and Performance Manager, the Chief Executive explained that the report was in two parts. The first part reported on and responded to the internal audit report into the risk register. This then led on to the risk register itself, which had been revised in line with the audit recommendations.

Members asked questions regarding some of the risks, with some discussion taking place regarding decisions made contrary to officer recommendations in relation to number 14 (the risk of a flawed decision on planning matters) and concerns regarding enforcement when considering risk number 25 (failure to maintain performance of DM service). With regard to risk 24 (Risk of failing to deliver approved LDP) it was questioned why there was no trend symbol in the report, but officers explained that this was because the Authority already had an approved LDP.

NOTED.

9. Sustainable Development Fund Annual Report 2014-15

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Annual Report provided information on the progress of the SDF, including provision of small grants via the "Little Green Grant" which was administered by Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services on the Authority's



behalf. In total £97,832 had been paid out to support 17 projects. 14 projects had been completed and 14 out of 16 new applications approved. The SDF levered in £62,023 of other cash funding and an equivalent of £55,773 of in kind or voluntary contributions from the public, private and voluntary sector. £35,186 had been carried forward into the 2015-16 financial year.

Members were pleased to learn what had been achieved and commended the Fund, particularly its ability to support projects that were innovative and therefore took a risk. However they sought some assurance that, as this was public funding, projects approved in the past were still operational. Officers replied that there was no requirement to report on the project once the funding had ended, however they agreed to investigate whether an evaluation project looking at previously funded projects was feasible.

NOTED.

10. Budget Performance for the Six Months to September 2015

The report of the Finance Manager set out the revenue budget for the six months to the end of September 2015, when expenditure was £2,639k, £401k under the profiled budget. The main reasons for the variance of actual expenditure against budget for each service department was set out in the report, but was largely due to timing issues and the receipt of additional grant. Also income at the centres and car parks was up on budget. Within the Estates service a question was asked with regard to the valuation of historical assets, and officers agreed that it might be helpful if a report on this be brought to a future meeting of the Committee to explain the process. Looking at the revenue forecast, savings had been made and this, coupled with additional income had led to a forecast underspend of £96,000, although some of this might need to be transferred to the 'Staff Restructuring' earmarked reserve.

It was reported that the capital programme had increased from the original budget of £275.9k to a revised budget of £343.3k, due to the inclusion of the purchase of a tractor at Cilrhedyn and the replacement roof for the Mill at Carew Castle.

It was **RESOLVED** that the budgetary performance for the six months ended 30 September 2015 as set out in the report, be endorsed.

11. Performance Report for the Period Ending 31 October 2015

In the absence of the Business and Performance Manager, the Chief Executive presented the performance for the Authority's Corporate Services for the financial year to date. Appended to the report, and also presented at the meeting, were the key actions and measures within Corporate Services, and these showed that good progress had been



made on almost all the measures and actions, with none showing 'red' although those actions shown as 'amber' were either limited due to other priorities or dependant on actions outside the Authority. Two actions had improved from amber to green – the EPOS system was being installed and had in fact gone live since the report had been written, and an action plan was being developed to implement the recommendations of the scrutiny committee.

The measures relating to Development Management were also reported to the Committee, and these showed a slight decrease into the number of applications determined within 8 weeks; the reasons behind this were being investigated.

It was **RESOLVED** that the performance report be received.

12. 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.

