

AUDIT AND CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

9 November 2016

Present: Councillor M Williams (Chair)
Mr A Archer, Mr D Ellis, Councillor M James, Councillor L Jenkins
and Councillor R Owens.

[Councillor DWM Rees arrived prior to consideration of item 5, the Budget Performance Report]

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 11.00am)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs G Hayward and Councillor RM Lewis.

2. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27 July 2016 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2016 be confirmed and signed.

4. Health and Safety Group: report of meeting

Members considered the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 14 July 2016.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 14 July 2016 be received.

5. Budget Performance Report 6 Months to September 2016

In the absence of the Finance Manager, the Chief Executive presented the report, beginning with the net revenue budget. As at 30th September 2016 the Authority's net revenue expenditure was £2,629k, £242k under the profiled budget of £2,871k for the 6 month period. The main reasons for the variance of actual expenditure against budget for each Service department were set out in the report, however these mainly related to timing issues, staff savings and higher than expected admission and car park income. These were also reflected in the 2016/17 Revenue Forecast.

Looking at the figures for merchandise sales Members noted that the picture was mixed but on a downward trend overall which was worrying; it



was questioned whether the right products were for sale. However it was also acknowledged that merchandising was a difficult area and tourism spend in the County overall was also down this year, and Easter had fallen in the previous financial year. The Chief Executive said that further work would be done to understand the reasons for the variations across the sites.

It was reported that the capital programme had increased from the original budget of £150.9k to a revised £313.1k. This was due to the inclusion of a major car park refurbishment programme, predominantly funded by a Welsh Government grant, and the deferment of the Car Park Integration project. The fleet replacement expenditure had increased from £10k to £18.1k and the programme also now included work at the Gabion Walls in Angle and Carew Castle car park.

General reserves stood at £702k as at 31 March 2016 and this was expected to increase to £799k at the end of the financial year due to the forecasted revenue surplus. Earmarked reserves were expected to fall by £90k to £1699k at the year-end due to expenditure on various capital and revenue projects. The Authority had also approved the creation of three further reserves for the Stitch in Time, Pathways and Skills in Action II projects.

NOTED.

6. Performance Report for the Year Ending 30 September 2016

The Performance and Compliance Coordinator reminded Members that the structure of the Authority's Corporate Plan for 2016/17 reflected that of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, with seven well-being objectives. The performance report had also been modified to follow these objectives, with an additional section providing general governance information.

The report presented the performance to date for the first two quarters of the financial year. It was noted that a number of data sets had been disaggregated to provide a more accurate reflection in these areas. This included website hits data with information provided on performance across the three separate sites. Health and Safety incident categories had also been separated to reflect the different sorts of incidents recorded.

Members noted that the percentage of planning applications determined within 8 weeks was down against target. The Chief Executive responded to say that he was not unduly worried as the Authority had been without a Head of Development Management until August of this year and the figures had therefore held up well in the circumstances, however they would be monitored. They also asked how well the Authority's



performance compared to that of other Authorities in this respect and officers agreed to find out and report this at the next meeting. Figures were also requested for numbers of people using the coast path and other footpaths annually. The Chief Executive explained that the results of a country path user survey would be presented to the meeting of the National Park Authority in November, when that information would be provided.

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

7. Risk Register

The Chief Executive presented the latest risk register which had recently been reviewed by both the Authority's Management and Leadership Teams when progress and changes had been noted. The only amendment had been the inclusion of the risks associated with the reaction to the consultation on the Provision of Information.

NOTED.

8. Changes to the Audit Process

It was reported that for a number of years, Members and officers of the Authority had argued that the Audit requirements imposed on the Authority as a result of the Local Government Measure, were not fit for purpose, resulting in an excessively bureaucratic system that placed a disproportionate cost on the Authority. This situation was likely to get worse with the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, with a move away from an Annual Improvement Plan to a Well-being Plan.

The introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act had, however, provided an opportunity to develop a new approach, and this was appended to the report. A four year programme had therefore been developed during which the Wales Audit Office would undertake a series of governance reviews which moved away from an audit system based on plans to one more focused on culture and arrangements. This would involve a confidential survey of Members, staff and stakeholders with questions covering the seven areas of the CIPFA Code of Good Practice. There would also be focus groups with Members and staff and a small number of structured interviews.

The process would commence in November 2016 and would look to report around April 2017. This timescale was a significant improvement on the current model and would enable the Authority to respond far more quickly to recommendations.

NOTED.



9. 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.

