

AUDIT AND CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

24 February 2016

Present: Mr A Archer (Deputy Chair in the Chair), Councillor M James,
Councillor L Jenkins, Councillor RM Lewis and Councillor R Owens.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12.20pm)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed Mrs E Williams, one of the Authority's mentees, to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Ellis, Mrs G Hayward, Councillor DWM Rees and Councillor M Williams

3. Disclosures

A personal but not prejudicial disclosure of interest was received from Mr A Archer regarding the Draft Annual Governance Statement.

4. Minutes

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

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

5. Health and Safety Group: report of meeting

Members considered the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 21 January 2016.

Concern was expressed that staff were experiencing aggression during the course of their work and Members noted that they also experienced verbal aggression by members of the public. The Chief Executive said that he felt there was a great deal of under-reporting of such incidents, and encouraged Members to report these also. Training in managing conflict and health and safety aspects had been offered in the past, and if there was a need, more could be provided.

The issue of budget cutbacks leading to increased workplace stress was also raised, and the Chief Executive explained that processes were in place to manage sickness and that the situation was being monitored.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 21 January 2016 be received.



6. Gateway: Internal Audit “Block 2” Report

The Finance Manager reminded the Committee that this was the second report from the Authority’s Internal Auditors and presented the findings and conclusions of their review of corporate governance and income generation, together with a follow up of previously accepted recommendations to assess the level of implementation.

Having explained the key to the findings, the officer referred to the scope of the investigations and recommendations set out in the report. With regard to the recommendation to undertake a Members skills audit under the corporate governance objective, Members acknowledged that their participation in the Authority’s Member Development process was not always enthusiastic and suggestions for how this could be improved were discussed.

Turning to the recommendations under the heading of income generation, Members asked that these be considered by the ‘Provision of Information to Visitors’ task and finish group, and this was agreed.

NOTED.

7. Budget Performance for the Nine Months to December 2015

The report of the Finance Manager set out the revenue budget for the nine months to the end of December 2015, when expenditure was £3977k, £549k 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 income at the centres and car parks being higher than expected. The exception was a reduction in sales when compared to the previous year at Oriel y Parc; on further investigation, this had proved to be due to higher than usual sales associated with the Peter Blake exhibition in 2014/15. There followed some discussion regarding marketing of the forthcoming Constable exhibition and officers replied that it was hoped this would have a positive impact on visitor numbers, and thus income and merchandising.

Looking at the revenue forecast, savings had been made and this, coupled with additional income suggested a budget surplus of approximately £116k. It was noted that the Authority had submitted bids to a Welsh Government Access capital grant for projects to the value of c£180k; if some or all of the bids were successful, this could result in a substitution of some proposed expenditure and therefore add to the anticipated surplus.

It was reported that the capital programme had been reduced from the original budget of £275.9k to a revised budget of £128.2k due to the



deferment of certain projects to 2016/17. Details were set out in the report

It was **RESOLVED** that the budgetary performance for the nine months ended 31 December 2015 as set out in the report, be endorsed.

8. Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2015/16

It was reported that the Annual Governance Statement provided the vehicle for demonstrating the Authority's success in delivering continuous improvement in performance, identified control systems and processes and highlighted governance issues to be addressed. The preparation of the draft statement involved consideration of information from a number of sources as set out in the report and Members were invited to discuss the content of the draft statement and make suggestions for additional issues to be included.

Members of the Committee considered the draft Statement and suggested that reference could be made within the document to electronic agendas/paperless meetings through the use of tablets and laptops in meetings. It was noted that Pembrokeshire County Council would be introducing such a system shortly and it was suggested that the Authority review their experience and report back to Members later in the year with regard to its own proposals. Reference also needed to be made in the statement to the impact of the Welsh Language Standards and the Authority's ability to comply with them. The Chief Executive replied that it was not anticipated that compliance would be an issue although there were a few areas where additional work was needed. The final point made was regarding the role of Scrutiny Committees as part of the Authority's Governance arrangements. The Chief Executive replied that it might be timely to undertake a review of the scrutiny process in light of the studies undertaken to date and a report on this would be brought to a future meeting of the Authority; in the meantime Members had set up a number of task and finish groups to look at aspects of the Authority's operations and these fulfilled a similar role.

Officers agreed to incorporate the above points within the Statement, however Members were encouraged to forward any additional comments they might have. The Statement would come back to the Committee before being reported to a future meeting of the Authority for approval.

NOTED.

9. Performance Report for the Period Ending 31 December 2015

The Business and Performance Manager 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 only one showing 'red'. This related to an increase in Health and Safety incidents due to encouragement of greater levels of reporting. Those few actions shown as 'amber' were either limited due to other priorities or dependant on actions outside the Authority. One action had improved from amber to green as the remaining SDF funding for 2015/16 had been fully allocated at the January SDF Committee.

A question was asked regarding attendance at the Royal Welsh Show and the Chief Executive confirmed that while the Welsh National Park Authorities no longer had a stand at the show, they would have a presence by holding an event, similar to the launch of the Mentoring Scheme which took place in 2015.

The measures relating to Development Management were also reported to the Committee, and these showed a slight decrease in the number of applications determined within 8 weeks during December, however they had recovered during January when over 80% had been determined within 8 weeks. While the Authority had slipped down to the middle of the 'league table' of Welsh planning authorities, this was due to improvements in other Authorities' performance. The Chief Executive added that the maintenance of the Authority's performance in this area had taken place despite the loss of its Head of Development Management and failure to re-appoint a replacement, and noted that interviews for a re-advertised post would be undertaken shortly

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

10. Risk Register

The Business and Performance Manager presented the latest risk register which had recently been reviewed by both the Authority's Management and Leadership Teams when recent progress and changes had been noted.

No new risks had been added and none removed since the Register had last been considered by the Committee, however one risk – the impact of Welsh Language Standards had been reduced from medium (amber) to low (green). The officer highlighted three which risks had increased slightly, indicated by an 'up arrow' and two which had reduced slightly, indicated by a 'down arrow' but noted that these changes had not been sufficient to modify the coloured risk level.

NOTED.



11. Classification of the Authority's Assets and the Valuation Methods applied to those different classifications

At the request of Members of the Committee on a previous occasion, the Finance Manager and Estates Officer gave a presentation covering the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) guidance on the classification of the Authority's assets and the valuation methods to be applied to those different classifications as stipulated by RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) and CIPFA. It was agreed that the slides would be circulated to those Members of the Committee who were not present.

The presentation outlined the different sorts of assets that the Authority held, and how these were shown on the balance sheet in line with CIPFA guidance. Officers then showed examples of three different assets and the considerations and processes leading to their disposal. Members were reassured that every asset was subject to a periodic formal revaluation, with those assets of significant value being reviewed more regularly.

NOTED.

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.

