

AUDIT AND CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

10 May 2017

Present: Councillor M Williams (Chair)
Mr A Archer, Mrs G Hayward, Councillor M James, Councillor Mrs L Jenkins, Councillor RM Lewis, Councillor R Owens, and Mr AE Sangster.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 12.30pm – 1.55pm)

1. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Councillor DWM Rees.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15 February 2017 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2017 be confirmed and signed.

3. Health and Safety Group: report of meeting

Members considered the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 19 January 2017.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 19 January 2017 be received.

4. Annual Audit Report 2016/17

The Finance Manager explained that the Internal Auditor, Robin Pritchard, had sent his apologies, and in his absence, he presented the report, which summarised the outcome of the work Gateway Assure had undertaken against the 2016/17 operational Audit Plan approved by the Committee in May 2016.

During the year, the Internal Audit service had reviewed a number of areas, namely an information governance health check; key financial controls – procurement and creditors; a departmental review covering support costs; business continuity; performance management and planning fees. Reports on these areas of work had been presented to previous meetings of the Committee and the Annual report was a consolidation of them. From the examinations, taking into account the relative risk of the business areas, the internal audit service formed generally very positive conclusions regarding the policies, procedures and operations in place, with the summary of audit outcomes and the main findings appended to the report. The opinion provided was that the Authority had adequate and effective risk management, governance and control processes. Five significant findings had been identified and management had responded to these previously.

Members questioned the meaning of some of the findings, and officers responded with their understanding of the recommendations.



NOTED.

5. Performance Report for the Period Ending 31 March 2017

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 the objectives, with an additional section providing general governance information.

The report presented the performance to date up to 31 March 2017 and was therefore the data for the full financial year. Where targets had not been met, some comment was provided where the reasons for this were known.

There was some discussion regarding the increased number of days lost through sickness absence and the potential reasons for this. Officers replied that the situation was being monitored. They also explained the management changes that had taken place at Carew, Castell Henllys and Oriel y Parc which, together with improved marketing, would hopefully increase income from the centres.

NOTED.

6. Risk Register

The Finance Manager 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. There were two risks which had increased during the quarter – a report from the Reservoirs Inspector on the state of the Carew Mill Causeway walls had suggested major repairs were due within the next 12 months; and Coed Cymru had notified the Authority of their decision to withdraw from negotiations on the Cilrhedyn site. No risks had been removed. With regard to Cilrhedyn, officers added that the site was currently financially manageable, and that a report on its future would be presented to the Authority in due course.

The Chief Executive added that the report on the Review of Designated Landscapes had been published the previous day and a report on this would be presented to the Authority in June. No details of the new Welsh Government appointed Members was yet available and it was hoped that the appointments would be made before the end of the month. Finally one Member highlighted the need to create a financial reserve to mitigate the risk of flawed decision on planning matters (Risk 14), this having been discussed at a previous meeting.

NOTED.

7. Country Path User Survey 2015-16

Members were reminded that this item had been referred to the Committee by the National Park Authority meeting in November 2016.



The Access and Rights of Way Manager explained to the Committee that, in addition to the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, there was a network of public rights of way in the National Park which was maintained by the Authority. This network was the prime means by which visitors could explore and enjoy the coast and countryside of the National Park and accounted for a significant annual expenditure in terms of its upkeep. Periodically therefore there was a need to determine the views of the many residents and visitors who walked public rights of way in the National Park, who were effectively the service users. The main purpose of the 2015-16 survey was therefore to determine who walked in the National Park and how often; why they used public rights of way; how they rated the general condition of the path network and what could be done to improve the walking experience and encourage more people to gain access to the coast and countryside.

The survey had run continuously from August 2015 to July 2016 with a self-completion survey conducted at twelve locations – seven of these on the Coast Path and five on the inland network of public rights of way. The survey stations were selected to ensure that they were close to a concealed digital path user counter which enabled a sample of respondents relative to total footfall to be recorded. 2,959 completed questionnaires were returned.

A summary of the results was set out in the report with the headlines that unsurprisingly 72% of walkers used the paths between May and September with the average distance walked being 7.3 miles. With regard to the condition of the paths, there were very high levels of satisfaction in terms of surface, verges, signage, gates and stiles with 95% of respondents rating the condition as excellent and good. Motivation for walking was to enjoy the natural landscape and in terms of what could be done to encourage people to walk more often, the majority of respondents felt that more distance and destination signage should be provided, as well as more printed walks guides and more publicity of the existing access opportunities. Officers therefore felt that the feedback had been good and a credit to the Wardens who maintained the paths.

NOTED.

[Councillor L Jenkins tendered her apologies and left the meeting at this juncture]

8. Budget Performance Report for the Final Quarter 2016/17

The Finance Officer reported that the revised revenue forecast surplus as at March 2017 was £203,000. This was due to a number of factors, including savings in the staff budget due to posts remaining unfilled and part-time working, reductions in mileage travelled and savings in advertising. There had also been additional income from car parks, admissions and other events. Earmarked reserves had been created for the Stitch in Time, Pathways and Skills in Action projects as previously reported.

Members thanked officers for navigating the Authority so well though what had been a difficult year.



NOTED.

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

Members asked whether consideration could be given to looking at leases and disposal of property, to clarify Members' responsibilities. The Chief Executive explained that there was little delegation to officers regarding disposal of property and suggested that in the first instance the Estates Officer be asked to give a presentation to the Committee. Recommendations could then be taken to the Authority on how estate management issues should be taken forward.

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

