

# AUDIT AND CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

19 July 2017

Present: Mr A Archer, Councillor P Baker, Councillor D Clements, Mrs G Hayward, Dr R Heath Davies, Councillor M James and Councillor R Owens.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 11.45am – 1.50pm)

## 1. Appointment of Chair

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that Councillor M Williams be appointed Chair for the ensuing year.

## 2. Appointment of Deputy Chair

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that Mr A Archer be appointed Deputy Chair for the ensuing year. In the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair chaired the meeting.

## 3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Kidney and Councillor M Williams.

## 4. Disclosures

Mr A Archer disclosed a personal but not prejudicial interest in report 15/17 Improvement Plan Certificate but remained in the room and took full part in the discussion thereon.

## 5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10 May 2017 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2017 be confirmed and signed.

## 6. Health and Safety Group: report of meeting

Members considered the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 27 April 2017.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the meeting of the Health and Safety Group held on 27 April 2017 be received.

## 7. Internal Audit Report 2017/18

The Chair welcomed Mr David Long from the Authority's Internal Auditors, Gateway Assure. Mr Long explained that the report before Members was the outcome of work completed against Block 1 of the 2017/18 Operational Audit Plan previously approved by the Committee and this



covered safeguarding, key financial controls – payroll and expenses, human resources and grant income. A substantial assurance had been provided in all areas, with the findings, conclusions and any recommendations set out in the report.

With regard to Safeguarding, one Member was of the opinion that all staff employed by the Authority should have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check, however officers clarified that the Authority only had the legal right to check staff whose jobs required such a check. It was noted that the Safeguarding Policy had been agreed by the Authority and it was suggested that a copy be circulated to all Members, and that training on this be included as part of their induction.

Turning to the recommendation in the Human Resources section of the report that changes to job descriptions should be sent to the Personnel Manager, some Members thought that this might provide consistency at a corporate level. Officers pointed out that most updates to job descriptions were discussed and/or passed to the Personnel department.

#### **NOTED.**

#### **8. Draft Statement of Accounts 2016/17**

The Finance Manager reported that the Draft Statement of Accounts had been presented to the Wales Audit Office. The accounts were before the Committee for information only and would be presented to the National Park Authority on 9<sup>th</sup> August for approval; they were currently available for public inspection and notices to advertise this had been placed in the press.

While the accounts were a lengthy document, the key information could be found in the narrative report and summarised accounts. The Finance Manager took Members through this report, noting under “Where the money came from” that the overall revenue funding had increased by 5.3% due to an additional £750k of National Park Grant released by Welsh Government to fund specific projects, although this additional funding did not attract the usual Levy contribution. Locally generated income was down slightly overall due to a decrease in income from investment properties resulting from the re-gearing of a lease, but it was hoped that this was a temporary drop. There had also been a decrease in merchandise sales as there had been no Easter in the 2016/17 financial year. Planning fee income had increased as a result of the introduction of charging for Pre-Applications.

Turning to “What the money was spent on”, there was a net surplus in the revenue account and an explanation for the major variances within each service was provided in the report. Details of the capital programme were also provided.



Having answered various of their questions, Members thanked the Finance Manager for a comprehensive report.

**NOTED.**

**9. Improvement Plan Certificate**

It was reported that the Authority had received the Improvement Plan Certificate from the Wales Audit Office, and this was appended to the report. The Certificate confirmed that the Authority had discharged its duties in accordance with the requirements of section 15(6) to (9) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

**NOTED.**

**10. Health and Safety Annual Report 2016-17**

The Personnel Manager presented the report as Chair of the Health and Safety Group. It was noted that the Health and Safety Executive expected health and safety to be considered as a key business risk in 'board' decisions, and the report therefore drew to Members' attention the work of the Authority in this area.

The report was divided into in two sections – Section 1 provided an annual report on 2016-17 in terms of issues and activities relating to health and safety management and practice across the Authority, while Section 2 provided performance reporting for 2016-17 and set out risk priorities and plans for 2017-18.

Included were the actions undertaken with regard to the risk priorities for 2016-17, accident and incident data and sickness absence levels. Some of the trends identified in these would be monitored over the coming year in terms of lessons learned and to gather background information to see if there were any areas of health where support could be focused.

Members were interested to see the reasons for sickness absence given their concerns that reductions in staff numbers would cause an increase in levels of stress, however it was also noted that higher levels of stress and greater mental health issues were a general trend in society.

The Personnel manager stated that great emphasis was placed on the reporting of incidents and 'near misses' in order to prevent future accidents. Members, as well as staff, were encouraged to report 'hostile' incidents. However not all Authorities' reporting arrangements were undertaken on the same basis and thus benchmarking was difficult.

Looking ahead to the risk priorities for 2017-18, work would again focus on exposure to noise, sedentary behaviour, fitness for lifetime working



and ensuring employees took personal responsibility and had individual awareness of risk. The indicators against which performance would be measured over the coming year were also set out.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be endorsed.

#### **11. Review of the Authority's Property Portfolio Asset Management Policy**

It was reported that the Authority's existing Asset Management Policy had been adopted in April 2013 with a requirement that it should be reviewed within 5 years. The Authority's property portfolio was under constant review through the work of the Property & Projects Group and at its June 2017 meeting the Group were of the opinion that the existing adopted Portfolio Asset Management Policy document remained fit for purpose beyond its planned April 2018 review date without the need for alteration.

One Member asked if there were any implications for Welsh speaking communities of the disposal of the Authority's property and was advised that the estate was fairly small in scale and this was unlikely to be an issue.

It was **RESOLVED** that the continuing use of the existing Asset Management Policy document beyond April 2018 be endorsed, with its next scheduled review to fall due in April 2023.

#### **12. Performance Report for the Year Ending 31 May 2017**

The Performance and Compliance Coordinator reminded Members that the structure of the Authority's Corporate and Resources Plan for 2017/18 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. A number of new measures had been introduced to reflect actions within the Corporate and Resources Plan 2017/18.

The report presented the performance to 31 May, and work had commenced on the majority of actions. However where data was collected quarterly, statistics would not be available until the end of July and would therefore be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

Additional information had been included at the end of the report clarifying planning enforcement statistics for 2016/17 following a question raised at the Previous meeting of the Committee. Officers had now reviewed the data and how it was presented and it would in future be collated and presented in line with the statutory indicators for enforcement cases investigated and enforcement action taken. Some Members expressed concern about the enforcement of planning conditions and the resultant



numbers of retrospective planning applications considered by the Authority. The Chief Executive replied that enforcement was a complex issue and suggested that a workshop on this topic might prove helpful.

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

### **13. 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. No risks had been removed.

In response to a question about the risk of significant reduction in funding, officers replied that it was hoped that the Authority would receive an indication of the 18/19 budget in the autumn. A budget workshop would be arranged for Members in December prior to approval of the budget and levy on Pembrokeshire County Council by the Authority in February 2018.

**NOTED.**

### **14. Budget Performance**

The Finance Manager explained that due to his work in closing the Authority's accounts, he had not produced a budget performance report for the first quarter of the year. However he circulated a table showing first quarter income versus budget and prior years for merchandise sales, admission fees and car park income. This showed that sales, admission fees and car park income were up against budget, Members asked what the heading car park operations related to and were advised that this covered season tickets; income under this budget heading had increased as a result of the changes to car park management policies agreed by the Authority in November 2016. A review of these would be undertaken at the end of the season.

**NOTED.**

### **15. 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.

