

AUDIT AND CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

27th February 2013

Present: Councillor M Williams (Chairman)
Mr A Archer, Councillor JA Brinsden, Mrs G Hayward and Councillor DWM Rees.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12noon.)

1. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Councillor RM Lewis.

2. Disclosure of interest

Mr A Archer disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in Report Number 04/13 on the Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2012/13 (*Minute 8 below refers*).

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7th November 2012 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2012 be confirmed and signed.

4. Health and Safety Group: reports of meetings

The reports of the meetings of the Health and Safety Group held on the 11th October 2012 and the 17th January 2013 were presented to the Committee

(a) Warwick Castle Court Case – Minute 5 (11th October 2012)

The Chief Executive reported that the findings of the above-mentioned case highlighted the need to react appropriately when incidents occurred. In response to a question from Members, the Chief Executive stated that the Authority had in place a regular monitoring and maintenance programme for all its sites, and considered carefully whether any action was necessary as a result of any incidents brought to the Authority's attention.

(b) New Personnel System (update) – Minute 7 (17th January 2013)

Mr A Archer stated that a lot of personal data would be entered into the new system and asked whether the Authority had introduced a policy to ensure that every member of staff would have access to their own details, while managers would have access to their team's details. Only authorised personnel would have access to the whole system.



It was **RESOLVED** that, subject to the above-mentioned matters, the reports of the meetings of the Health and Safety Group held on the 11th October 2012 and the 17th January 2013 be received.

5. Performance Report for the Period to January 2013

The report of the Business and Performance Manager presented Members with progress made to date in respect of the relevant actions and measures feeding into Corporate Outcome 8 and parts of Outcomes 3 and 5 for the period to the end of January 2013. Each of the actions reported on were shown as red, amber or green, depending on the level of progress that had been made.

Outcome 1 (Action e – Implement Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations) was referred to, and Members were informed that work was continuing on this issue despite the fact that the Welsh Government guidance was still awaited.

Moving to Outcome 8 (Action c – Continue to implement efficiency savings, joint working, benchmarking and sharing experiences) it was reported that the Authority had recently signed off the joint procurement exercise with Snowdonia National Park Authority for a replacement finance system, and a three-Park joint insurance broking procurement was also being prepared. In addition, a Tourism Plan for Pembrokeshire had recently been signed off which could lead to more joint working opportunities; Pembrokeshire County Council would shortly be providing a new Information Centre in Tenby and the Authority's officers were exploring the possibility of a joint venture.

With regard to Outcome 8 (Action g – Introduce a formal scrutiny process) Members commented on the newly established Scrutiny Committee and how it had proved to be a positive and useful process so far. They welcomed the value that had been gained from gathering external evidence as a part of that process.

Turning to the Measures detailed at Appendix 2 to the report, it was reported that, traditionally, the Authority's percentage for officer sick leave was very low compared to other public sector organisations. However, there had been a number of long-term sicknesses during the current year, although it was stressed that these instances had nothing to do with work. It was added that monitoring sick leave would be easier with the introduction of the new Personnel computer system.

It was also reported that a drive had been undertaken over the last few years to encourage all staff to report any incidents that had occurred, particularly 'near misses'. However, this had resulted in a higher number of incidents being recorded compared with the other two Welsh National Park Authorities.



Members were informed that 98% of the Authority's media coverage was positive or neutral, and that a presentation would be made to a future Committee meeting on media monitoring.

One Member raised the concern that there was a constant emphasis on the Authority to improve and that it was impossible to continue to do so year after year. The Chief Executive replied that, under the Local Government Measure, National Park Authorities were treated in the same way as Local Authorities. The regulatory regime was, therefore, the same as for Local Authorities and, whilst a "lighter touch" was applied in some cases it sometimes meant that things could be misconstrued and officers could spend an inordinate amount of time providing evidence to prove otherwise.

Finally, Members considered the risk register when the Chief Executive stated that officers were currently trying to formalise an internal process to ensure that those officers responsible for managing the risks ensured that Members were kept informed of the situation.

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

6. Budget performance report – 9 months to December 2012

The Finance Manager presented the net revenue budget for the nine months leading up to the 31st December 2012. The budget was £266,000 under the profiled budget of £3,893,000 and the main reasons for the variance were detailed in the report before Members that day.

Turning to the income section in his report, he stated that overall merchandise sales were up £9,000 on the profiled budget and up £8,000 over the previous financial year. This was, however, largely down to Oriely Parc and Tenby as the other Centres struggled to meet sales targets. Admission fees at Carew and Castell Henllys were also down by nearly £16,000 on the profiled budget and £17,000 down on the previous financial year. The overall car park income was also down on budget and prior actuals by more than £12,000 and £30,000 respectively. Members commented that the recent years of bad weather had not encouraged visitors to the area.

The Finance Manager then took Members through the revenue forecast for the remainder of 2012/13. He reminded Members that, at the last meeting, he had reported a forecasted underspend of approximately £226,000 but that this surplus would be re-allocated to other projects. The table set out in the report reflected where the money would now be spent, some of which would be allocated to earmarked reserves for a Pembrokeshire Digital Tourism bid to develop a mobile App for the county, a contingency for repair works to the Carew Mill Pond walls and for the purchase of new premises for the South Ranger Team.



Consequently, the latest revenue forecasted position would be a surplus of £2,000 which was in line with the budget.

He then turned to the 2012/13 capital programme, which had been reduced from an original budget of £1,840,900 to £1,262,529. This was largely due to the partial or complete deferment of a number of projects to the following financial year, and also reflected the additional allocation of funds to others. The Chief Executive praised officers for their work on the Carew Castle project. He added that the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, Huw Lewis, had been invited to view the works undertaken on the Castle on the 18th April. The Chief Executive went on to inform Members that Mrs Teresa Hogsflesh, the Manager at Carew, would be retiring in May and would be sorely missed.

The Finance Manager then presented to the Committee details of the Authority's useable, general and earmarked reserves, and reminded Members that the Authority started the year with a capital receipts balance of £249,000. It had previously been reported that funds for the purchase of premises for the South Ranger Team would be sourced from this reserve; however, with the additional projected revenue underspends referred to earlier in his report, he stated that an earmarked reserve had been allocated to cover the purchase cost.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Finance Manager's report on the Authority's budgetary performance for the nine months leading up to the 31st December 2012 be endorsed.

7. Internal Audit report for 2012/13

As part of the Authority's Corporate Governance Programme, an audit of all services was carried out on a five-year rolling programme by Pembrokeshire County Council's Internal Audit Service. During 2012/13, the audit concentrated on a review of the previous year's agreed Action Plan, the Authority's Delivery department, Oriel y Parc, Car Park Management, Planning Income, Payroll and Purchase Cards.

A draft report had been received for comment, and the final document would be published in March 2013. Prior to taking Members through the report in detail, the Finance Manager circulated an amendment to the report, namely the summary of recommendations for the audit of car park management.

No significant failings had been identified in the latest internal audit programme, although a number of minor improvements had been suggested. The report detailed the comments and recommendations of the Internal Audit Service, together with officers' responses thereto.



The Finance Manager concluded by saying that the process was a very useful steer for the Authority with regard to corporate governance and had been carried out in a very cordial manner.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Internal Audit Report for 2012/13 be noted.

8. Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2012/13

The Chief Financial Officer reported that the Annual Governance Statement provided the vehicle for demonstrating the Authority's success in delivering continuous improvement in performance. It also identified control systems and processes, and highlighted significant governance issues to be addressed. The preparation of the document involved consideration of information from a number of sources, including the Authority's risk register, the Internal Audit Report from Pembrokeshire County Council, the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report and Financial Audit Report and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) assessment framework.

The document set out the actions taken with regard to issues that had been raised in the previous Annual Governance Statement, reviewed the current effectiveness of the Authority's governance framework and identified any significant governance issues arising from that review process. Subject to any comments by Members, the draft document would be brought back to the next Audit and Corporate Services Committee on the 15th May before being presented for approval to the Ordinary Meeting of the National Park Authority on the 26th June 2013.

The Chief Financial Officer went on to say that training sessions were available through CIPFA on the subject of governance and Members asked him to investigate a training day for all three Welsh National Park Authorities.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (a) that the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2012/13 be noted, and
- (b) that a three-Park training day be arranged with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy on the subject of governance.

9. Sustainable Development Fund

The Committee received a detailed report on the Authority's management of the Sustainable Development Fund on behalf of the Welsh Government. The report set out the financial position as at the end of January 2013, together with details of the fourteen projects that had been grant aided during 2012/13. Five further application bids were in the pipeline.



It was **RESOLVED** that the report on the management of the Sustainable Development Fund be received.

10. Continuous Improvement Group

The Chief Executive reminded Members that any issues of concern which arose should be automatically reported to the Continuous Improvement Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that there were no issues of concern at the present time.

