

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Friday 3 November 2017**

**Present:** Members:  
K Ball (Chairman), A Cooper, G Gribble, S Hill, J McInnes, C Pannell,  
M Retallick, P Sanders, D Webber, P Woods.

Officers:

Kevin Bishop (Chief Executive (National Park Officer))  
Alison Kohler (Director of Conservation and Communities)  
Donna Healy (Head of Business Support)  
Christopher Walledge (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

**Apologies:** None

**458 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2017**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2017 were signed as a correct record.

**459 Declarations of Interest**

None

**460 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

None.

**461 Public Participation**

None.

**462 Financial Management 1 April to 30 September 2017 and Forecast of Financial Outturn 2017/18**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/AG/17/003).

The Head of Business Support presented the Financial Management and Forecast Outturn report for the first six months of the year. She reported that overall budget spend is on track, with no major surprises or significant variations occurring or giving rise for concern.

At the current time, if programme spend continues on this basis it is likely that there could be a year-end surplus of £49,540 which represents a minus 1.24%

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variance against the budget. Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 2 and Section 2.3 of the report for detailed analysis.

The project fund is almost 70% allocated and the remaining balance will be used by year-end.

A detailed breakdown of Earmarked Reserve balances was also provided; which are currently forecast to reduce by circa £336k at year-end. Further long-term forecasts will be presented to the Authority in early 2018 when the new Medium Term Financial Plan is presented for review and approval.

The report also contains a mid-year update regarding investment income; which continues to yield low returns due to low interest rates available.

Income and expenditure will be robustly managed and controlled over the remaining six months and will be next reported to A&G Committee in February.

A Member asked about Planning income forecast, unlikely to meet budget target as the number of applications has fallen. It was confirmed this will be reviewed and built into the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2018/19.

Members were informed that provision is made in reserves for Appeal costs and that costs last year were not significant.

Members congratulated The Head of Communications, Economy and Fundraising and all the staff that assisted with the Moor Otters project. All agreed it was an amazing project and a real success for the National Park. A full report will be presented to Authority in December.

A Member enquired whether any provision is being made to increase reserves next year as projection shows £300,000 down in reserves by the end of the year. The Head of Business Support confirmed these will be formulated through the Medium Term Financial Planning and would depend on the level of National Park Grant.

**RESOLVED:** Members NOTED the content of the report

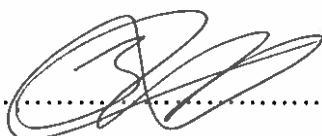
**463 Business Plan Monitoring 2017/18 (April – September 2017)**

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/17/004) presented by the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) in their absence.

The Business Plan 2017/18 identifies 33 key actions against six agreed priorities informing Members of the Authority's performance at Quarter 2.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) highlighted to Members that good progress has been made in delivering the Business Plan 2017/18. He

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confirmed four key actions unlikely to be completed. A bid to Heritage Lottery Fund as part of a joint 'Kick the Dust' application with SW Lakes Trust to develop the Youth Ranger Programme was unsuccessful. The 'Miles without Stiles' funding bid by all National Parks was unsuccessful. It may be possible to submit smaller bids to certain elements including Youth Rangers separately. The Rural Productivity Network has not yet secured external funding but Mel Stride MP has agreed to discuss this with DEFRA on the Authority's behalf. Good links have now been made with Exeter University as part of the SWEEP (South West Partnership for Environment and Economic Prosperity) programme.

Members were informed that 65% of key actions are on target and 26% delayed or behind schedule.

A Member asked the Authority to consider the Mayflower celebrations when developing events to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of National Parks (key action number 34).

The Director of Conservation and Communities confirmed that the Authority, (through the Dartmoor Peatlands Project), is working with Bodmin and Exmoor to develop a funding bid to DEFRA for peatland restoration. The bid has to be submitted by 20 November 2017 but a full report will be presented to Committee in December for future capital works.

**RESOLVED:** Members NOTED the content of the report

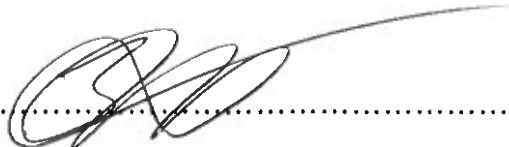
#### **464 Performance Indicators Monitoring 2017/18**

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/17/005) presented by the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) in their absence.

The report set out the Authority's performance at Quarter 2 for 2017/18 against 40 indicators. It was highlighted that these include 'state of the park' indicators that the Authority has little direct influence over as well as more specific indicators about performance.

Members' attention was drawn to the drop in the percentage of Member attendance at Authority Meetings during Quarter 2 to 78% against a target of 85%. Staff sickness absence was also highlighted as a concern and is being closely monitored with Quarter 2 showing levels, particularly short term absences, in excess of the target. During September and October the Authority provided mental health awareness training for staff and managers and further wellbeing training and events are planned in the coming months.

Human Resources are undertaking further analysis of sickness absence which will be reported back at the next Audit and Governance Meeting. Members agreed the report should include benchmark data for other smaller organisations.

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Members questioned the rise in cost of litter disposal. The Director of Conservation and Communities indicated this was due to the cost of extra skips being required in the Dart Valley.

Attendance at Parish Meetings by Rangers was raised by Members and The Director of Conservation and Communities confirmed that Rangers are encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting.

Some Members stated that they do not complete the appropriate form to register their attendance at Parish Meetings but will do so in the future.

**RESOLVED:** Members NOTED the content of the report

**465 2017/18 Strategic Risk Register**

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/17/006) presented by the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) in their absence.

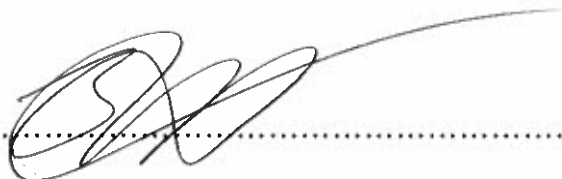
The updated Strategic Risk Register for 2017/18 in Appendix 1 forms part of the Authority's overall risk management strategy which is presented to Audit and Governance Committee twice a year. Leadership Team monitor and review the Register on a quarterly basis and recently updated the Register in light of changing circumstances to be clear about potential risks and how these are mitigated.

Drones were raised as a concern by Members in terms of liability and the Director of Conservation and Communities suggested to Members that this should be discussed at the Park Management Working Panel.

The Head of Legal Services confirmed he would provide Members with a briefing note setting out the current legal position of the Authority regarding drones, to be followed up with a discussion at Park Management Working Panel.

**RESOLVED:** Members APPROVED the content of the report.

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