

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Friday 6 May 2016

Present: Members:
P W Hitchins (Chairman), D Lloyd, J McInnes, D Webber, M Retallick,
J Kidner, P Sanders

Officers:
Alison Kohler (Director of Conservation and Communities)
Donna Healy (Head of Business Support)
Stephen Belli (Head of Planning)
Neil White (Head of Organisational Development)
Sam Hill (Head of Communications, Economy and Fundraising)
Christopher Walledge (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)
Ali Bright (Head of IT and Premises) – Part
Mark Allott (MTMTE Scheme Manager) – Part
Jon Stones (Assistant Head Ranger (Works))

Geraldine Daly – Grant Thornton

Apologies: K Bishop, P Harper, S Hill, C Pannell

426 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2016 were signed as a correct record.

427 Declarations of Interest

None

428 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

None.

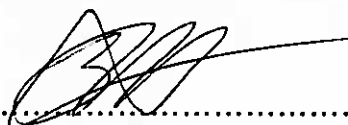
429 Public Participation

None.

430 The Audit Plan for Dartmoor National Park Authority

The Chairman welcomed Geraldine Daly, Engagement Lead, Grant Thornton and invited her to present the Audit Plan. She advised Members that the aim of the Audit Plan was to set out the planned scope and timing of the audit and that they focus on areas of significant risk and value for money. She also

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explained the concept of materiality and highlighted the materiality levels set for the Authority's audit.

The recently undertaken interim audit work has revealed no issues. The annual fee of £11,807 has been confirmed and has remained unaltered from 2015/16.

431 Draft Financial Outturn 2015/16

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/AG/16/008).

The Forecast outturn was reported as being £158k after transfers to and from Reserves and has occurred as a result of efficiency savings made, unused Project Fund monies, additional income including planning fees, retail sales and savings in operational running costs etc. This represents a -4% variation against budget.

With regard to Reserves used in 2015/16, these amount to £406,812. Members were asked to recommend that we carry a sum of £241,568 to Earmarked Reserves for projects including public rights of way work, website redesign, Mires PR14 and evaluation, works to Higher Uppacott, Farming Futures, to name but a few and also transfer the outturn surplus of £158,018 into reserves, so that it can be reallocated in 2016/17.

In response to a Member query regarding the underspend of the staff training budget, the Head of Organisational Development confirmed that staff training requirements are identified through the appraisal process. In addition, he confirmed that all training requests have been approved during the year.

The Head of Business Support advised that the production of the statement of accounts was on track for delivery by May 2016.

The Authority has once again managed to maintain a healthy and robust financial position. The outcome from the 2015 spending review means that the Authority can now plan ahead for the remaining term of the current government.

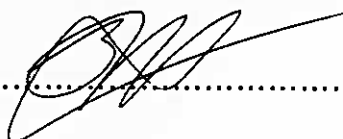
Members commended the Head of Business Support and her team for their hard work.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Retallick.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Noted the content of the report;
- (ii) recommended the transfer of the 2015/16 revenue surplus of £158,018 into Reserves;
- (iii) recommended the approval of the transfer of grants and contributions received with specific conditions or restrictions any monies set aside for

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- contractual commitments into earmarked reserves; as set out in section 3.5 of the report, and
- (iv) agreed that it is unnecessary to include a note in the Statement of Liability, as set out in section 6 of the report.

432 Annual Governance Statement 2015/16

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/AG/16/009).

The Head of Business Support advised Members that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is prepared each year and must accompany the annual Statement of Accounts. It is the culmination of a year-long review process of systems and internal controls.

RESOLVED: Members recommended the 2015/16 Annual Governance Statement to Authority for approval

433 Moor than meets the eye (MTMTE) Landscape Partnership Scheme

Members received the report of the Moor than meets the eye Scheme Manager (NPA/AG/16/015). He advised Members that recommendation 2 was not required.

The Scheme is now 18 months into the Delivery stage. With 13 partners and 34 projects, (the Authority leads on half of them), the Scheme is gathering momentum. There has been excellent input from volunteers – 1400 volunteer days across the scheme.

Overall expenditure as at 29 February 2016 was £965k which is £1,177m behind the £2.141m originally planned at the bid stage. However, the scheme has a five year delivery window and projects are forecast to complete on time. Consideration is currently being given to the reactivation of the Local Steering Group which came to an end when the development stage was completed.

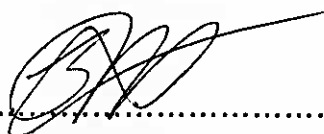
In order for the scheme manager to accurately forecast spend and delivery it is essential that project leads provide honest and thorough reports at each quarter. This can be variable.

With regard to the financial risks involved regarding the funding of the scheme, the Head of Business Support assured Members that she and the Scheme Manager were meeting on a monthly basis to monitor the situation.

It was noted that Members expressed their concerns regarding the level of risk and, with regard to some projects, the lack of communication with the Scheme Manager.

RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report.

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434 Business Plan Monitoring 2015/16

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/16/010).

A review of progress to date has been undertaken by the Authority's Leadership Team. 54% of the 57 actions have been completed, 32% are ongoing and 14% will not complete.

In response to a Member query, with regard to the Postbridge Visitor Centre, the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) is in discussion with the Duchy of Cornwall and a further meeting is set for 17 May 2016.

The Head of Organisational Development noted the comments made by some Members regarding the amount of process and officer time required for monitoring. He added that he shared their concerns and advised that it was his intention to make the process as lean as possible.

RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report.

435 Performance Indicators 2015/16

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/16/011).

Performance Indicators for 2015/16 were reviewed by the Authority's Leadership Team and discussions took place with a view to making recording and reporting in 2016/17 more efficient and effective. New targets for 2016/17 were also agreed and are proposed within the report.

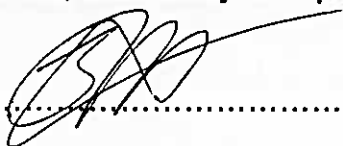
Two new performance indicators were proposed as follows:

- P2 (b) % of pre-applications which have been dealt with within 28 days;
- and
- P14 Donate for Dartmoor - £ for the Park.

The following comments from Members were noted:

- One Member suggested that the performance indicators should be reported to full Authority, not only to the Audit and Governance Committee, to help identify priorities, and that priorities and achievements should go before Authority annually. The Director of Conservation and Communities suggested that Leadership Team consider how Performance Indicators can be shared with all Members effectively, and also that the Annual Review may provide a good opportunity to report key achievements.
- With regard to Affordable Housing (paragraph 3.23 of the report), Members agreed that this was useful information which should be sent to the MPs for the area. The Head of Planning advised that this could be done, both easily and quickly, via letter.

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Mr Retallick left the meeting.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Noted the content of the report; and
- (ii) agreed the performance indicators and associated targets for 2016/17

436 Service Dashboards

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/16/012).

Members were reminded that this was the third dashboard report to come before Audit and Governance Committee and included information on Business Support, Human Resources, Legal & Democratic Services, Community and Economy and Conservation Works. It was stressed that Lead Officers use the Dashboard to review and manage their own service area; it is not just a reporting tool.

Members commented that the full time equivalent (FTE) of the Conservation Works team had reduced but a great job was being done with staff reacting well to the needs of the moor. It was also good to note the positive comments regarding the National Park boundary stones on the Park's borders had been cleaned and were looking good.

RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report.

437 2016/17 Strategic Risk Register

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/16/013). The Risk Register has been reviewed by the Authority's Leadership Team and updated. Members were requested to review the strategic risks and identify issues for further consideration and highlight possible areas of risk for deletion or addition.

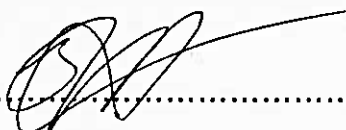
A Member commented that it was good to see most of the risk shaded green. Another added that the Authority was doing all it could to avoid the risk ratings going into the red and sought assurance that there was nothing else that could be done to improve things further. This assurance was given. Members agreed that S3 – Managing officer workload – should be colour coded amber rather than red in view of the measures put in place.

RESOLVED: Members approved the updated Strategic Risk Register for 2016/17.

438 ICT Service Efficiencies

Members received the report of the Head of ICT and Premises (NPA/AG/16/014). Hardware replacement costs have been reduced by over

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£25,000 through the introduction and roll out of 67 thin client computers; in addition, due to their introduction, the amount of energy required to run the computers has greatly reduced. Additional savings have been made through the introduction of QGIS for the Authority's digital mapping needs; a new contract for the provision of telephone calls, lines and broadband service has reduced costs by over 50%.

Mr Kidner left the meeting.

Members commended the significant savings made by the ICT Service over the past 12 months and were pleased to hear that the Service is always happy to work with other Local Authorities when the opportunity arises.

RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report.

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