

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**  
**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Friday 25 May 2018**

**Present:**     Members  
                  K Ball, A Cooper, J McInnes, C Pannell, M Retallick, D Webber,  
                  P Woods

Officers  
                  K Bishop, A Kohler, D Healy, N White, M Allott

**Apologies:** G Gribble, S Hill, B Hitchins, P Sanders

The Chairman welcomed Claire Moore and Dominic Measures from Devon Audit Partnership to the meeting.

**474 Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 2 February 2018**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2018 were signed as a correct record.

**475 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**476 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

None.


**477 Public Participation**

None.

**478 Reports from Devon Audit Partnership : the Authority's Internal Audit Service**

Mr Measures advised Members that he would report on the three items from Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) in the following order:

- (i) Internal Audit Charter (March 2018)
- (ii) Internal Audit Strategy (March 2018)
- (iii) Annual Internal Audit Report 2017/18 and Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2018/19

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Internal Audit Charter - The Charter explains how Devon Audit Partnership will provide its services, with a view to assisting the Authority to achieve its objectives. It remains largely unchanged from the previous year, with the addition of the 'Mission' statement.

With regard to the Internal Audit Strategy, this document states how the internal audit service will be delivered and developed in accordance with the Charter; how significant local and national risks will be identified and addressed, as well as the resources and skills required in order to deliver the Strategy. The Strategy should be approved by the Audit & Governance Committee. DAP also liaises with the Authority's external auditors.

With regard to internal quality reviews, a Member sought clarification regarding the 2% (seven) of the checklist developed against the PSIAS, which DAP had concluded was not required to be done or met. Mr Measures advised that he would seek an explanation to provide to Members.

Annual Internal Audit Report 2017/18 and Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2018/19 – Mr Measures advised Members that the annual report sets out the background to the work required and how it was undertaken. Work essentially focuses on the Authority's key financial systems and a review was undertaken towards the end of 2017; the result of which was that the Authority's systems are of a high standard. The Head of Business Support and the Finance team were commended for their good work. Only two minor issues were raised, one relating to the stock control system at Princetown, and one relating to the recording of verbal quotations received when making purchases between £1,000 and £2,500. The recommendations have been implemented

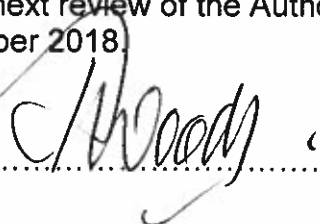
DAP is able to provide 'Full Assurance' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal control systems.

Members thanked the Head of Business Support, her team, and indeed the rest of 'Team Dartmoor' for their hard work.

With regard to the Internal Audit Plan for 2018/19 Mr Measures advised that DAP is contracted to provide, usually, 20 days of audit. However, for 2018/19 this has been increased to 22 days to include a health check, which was undertaken in April 2018, with regard to the new General Data Protection Regulations which comes into force today, 25 May 2018, and the work undertaken so far by the Authority. The Head of Business Support confirmed that the Authority is very much on track. Indeed, Mr Measures advised Members that the Authority was one of the best organisation they have so far come across in its preparation for the new regulation and commended Ali Bright, Head of IT and Premises who had led on this piece of work. Ali Bright is a member of the Devon Information Security Partnership who have also been working together on this issue. Further work is scheduled and outcomes will be reported back to Audit and Governance Committee in due course.

The next review of the Authority's key financial systems is scheduled for October 2018.

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**RESOLVED:** Members NOTED the contents of the Internal Audit Charter (March 2018); Internal Audit Strategy (March 2018) and the Annual Internal Audit Report 2017/18 and Proposed Internal Audit Plan 2018/19

**479 2017/18 Financial Outturn**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/AG/18/005).

This is the final report for the financial year 2017/18. In February 2018 a surplus of £93,457 was forecast. However, following the transfer of funds to and from reserves, and the purchase of IT server licences and upgrades of £14,000; the surplus is now £78,605.

The Authority has once again proved very successful in leveraging in additional income of around £300,000; the biggest success of the year being the Moor Otters project.

Staff vacancy savings in-year amounted to circa £63,000. The Head of Planning post was deliberately left unfilled, reflecting the need to consider a replacement and internal restructure. Other vacancies resulted in a delay or deferral of some work programmes. These situations are all carefully managed by the Authority's Leadership Team. All posts are either now filled or the work is being delivered by a different model. Temporary cover and extra capacity has also been brought in a various times of the year.

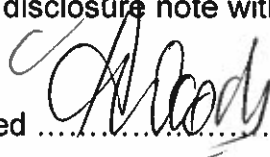
Operational and efficiency savings are made wherever possible. However, some expenses will inevitably rise; Members have been informed of variances throughout the year; the appendices to the report provide details for each individual service area.

The Project Fund for 2017/18 was set at £103,944. Almost all of this has been allocated with just £9,804 left. Some projects will run over more than one accounting period and in these circumstances carry forward requests have been made.

The Reserve balances have been re-profiled following Member agreement for officers to take forward the Postbridge Visitor Centre project (up to and including tender stage), at the Authority meeting on 4 May 2018, (NPA/18/017), Minute No. 3351. This may mean that the Authority is less able to match fund other projects in the future.

The level of reserves and balances held is regarded as sufficient to meet current needs and to provide some assurance that unforeseen risks and emergencies can be managed.

The Head of Business Support advised that the last recommendation within the report relates to the consideration of whether to include a contingent liability disclosure note within the Statement of Accounts, which relates to historical

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management agreement payments made between 2006-2012, that were identified as falling within the EU definition of State Aid. Members considered the issue and agreed that a contingent liability note was not required.

In response to a Member query, the Head of Business Support confirmed that the Local Plan is an expensive piece of work; costs are front-loaded and reduce in the first two years post adoption, but then increase again as the Plan ages. It was agreed that this was a very valuable piece of work for the Authority.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) confirmed that the Postbridge Visitor Centre project has been prioritised as an extremely important development for the National Park Authority. There is significant risk attached to the project eg, if the proposed design does not meet Duchy approval; full grant aid may not be approved; we may find, following the tender process, that costs exceed the budget. These risks could result in significant up-front costs, but no outcome. However, exit points have been built into the project, which means that the financial risk is controlled. The Chairman commented that this approach provides a safety net for the Authority and therefore had enabled him to support the project.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised Members that it had been the intention to run a 'Moor Otters 2' project next summer; however, it has been concluded that officers will not have the capacity to do this.

Mr Cooper proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mrs Pannell.

**RESOLVED:** Members:

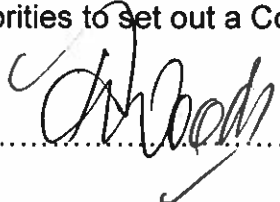
- (i) noted the content of the report;
- (ii) proposed that the Authority transfers the 2017/18 revenue surplus of £78,605 into Reserves;
- (iii) proposed that the Authority approved the transfer of grants and contributions received with specific conditions or restrictions and monies set aside for contractual commitments into earmarked reserves, as set out in section 34 (table 6) of the report; and
- (iv) proposed that it is unnecessary to include a note in the Statement of Accounts relating to the remote possibility of a contingent liability, as set out in section 5 of the report.

**480 The Local Code of Corporate Governance and the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/AG/18/006).

In 2008 the Authority adopted the Framework produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE); the Framework requires all Local Authorities to set out a Code of Corporate Governance and an Annual

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Governance Statement to accompany its Statement of Accounts. In response to a review undertaken by CIPFA and SOLACE in 2016 the Authority reviewed and updated the Authority's Local Code of Corporate Governance.

This year, there are no significant changes required by the CIPFA framework and both the Local Code of Corporate Governance and the Annual Governance Statement have been reviewed and updated by the Authority's Leadership Team.

Producing the Annual Governance Statement is the culmination of an on-going review programme to improve the effectiveness of the Authority's systems of internal control and governance arrangements.

The Annual Governance Statement includes a list of the most significant work and improvements undertaken in 2017/18. Continuous improvement is key and to that end a work programme is set out within the AGS for the forthcoming year which will further enhance our Governance arrangements.

In response to a Member query the Head of Organisational Development (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that with regard to the review of the complaints procedure and the Member Code of Conduct, this was part of the Monitoring Officer's role. He felt that it was important to obtain Member oversight in order that they have engagement with a process which could affect them.

Mrs Pannell proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Ball.

**RESOLVED:** Members:

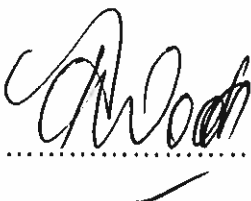
- (i) Approved the assessment of the Authority's governance arrangements as set out in the Local Code of Corporate Governance; and
- (ii) Approved the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement

#### **481 Business Plan Monitoring 2017/18**

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/18/007).

The report informs Members on the delivery of the 43 actions, 10 *Moor than meets the eye*, identified within the Business Plan. Members were reminded that the Business Plan also recognises the core business of the Authority which continues on a daily basis.

It was pleasing to note that 61% of the 2017/18 actions have been completed; 30% have been partially delivered and only 9% have not delivered as planned and been deferred to 2018/19. This is very good news for the Authority and reflects the combined efforts of all staff and 'Team Dartmoor'. Members agreed that this was indeed something that the Authority as a whole can be proud of.

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A Member commented that the Authority is tightly run and works extremely well with outside partners and organisations.

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

**482 Performance Indicators 2017/18**

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/18/008).

The report provides Members with details of the Authority's performance against agreed indicators for 2017/18, provides data from previous years for benchmarking purposes and also the proposed targets for 2018/19.

A summary table detailing those indicators where targets were not met is provided within the report. Members observed that in some of these instances, the targets had been missed by a tiny margin. Concern was expressed regarding Member attendance at Parish Council meetings (P11b). The Head of Organisational Development advised Members of the Parish Councils concerned. A Member commented that it was most important for Members to advise the Authority of their attendance in order that an accurate record may be kept. Mr Retallick advised that he would undertake a review of the Parish Link list; the Chairman suggested that Members' geographical areas could be considered.

With regard to the Planning service, Members were of the opinion that performance was excellent when the changes that have taken place over the past year are taken into account. The Head of Development Management had provided a commentary regarding targets missed as follows: with regard to P1, it is always difficult to rely on a percentage which does not give a clear picture; in fact, this related to two applications which, in a desire to ensure the correct outcome, had missed the 13 week deadline but extensions had been agreed in both cases. The Chairman suggested that this type of situation could be recorded in future so that Members are in possession of all the facts. The Head of Development Management acknowledged the situation regarding pre-applications was disappointing but wished to reassure Members that he aims to address this in the coming year. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) stated that it was important for the Authority and Members to see the whole picture – a survey is needed so that we can see what our customers think of the planning service.

There was discussion regarding Member attendance at Committee meetings. The reduction in numbers at Authority meetings was noted. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) commented that other authorities, including Devon County Council, published their Member attendance. Members considered this to be a good idea. Mr Ball proposed, and Mr Webber seconded, that this suggestion be recommended to full Authority.

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The Chairman of the Development Management Committee advised Members that he had carefully considered the running of the Development Management Committee and was proposing to do things slightly differently at the next meeting in June. A Member commented that a reminder had been sent to Members in recent years and that perhaps this could be the right time to do this again.

The Head of Organisational Development advised that, despite the discussions held, as detailed above, it was his belief that the results of 2017/18 were very good for the Authority and reflected the collective efforts of 'Team Dartmoor' – staff, Members and volunteers. Members agreed with his observation.

**RESOLVED: Members:**

- (i) resolved to recommend to full Authority that Member attendance at Committee meetings be published;
- (ii) offered assistance to officers should any be needed following review the of the pre-application process;
- (iii) noted the proposed performance indicator targets for 2018/19.

**483 Health and Safety Annual Report**

Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/18/009).

This is a new annual report to provide specific focus on Health and Safety management, and to support Members in discharging their duty to ensure that Health and Safety is effectively managed.

The Authority receives operational support through an agreement with Teignbridge District Council. Strategic Occupational Health and Safety advice is provided by the Peak District National Park Authority and is already proving helpful.

A review of the Health and Safety Policy has been undertaken with the help of the Peak District. The new policy is now consistent with other National Park Authorities. Good progress has been made already in the sharing of resources and having a direct line to a Health and Safety expert from within National Parks family.

The Authority's Leadership Team has agreed the new policy which is structured around key tenets: Awareness, Competence, Compliance, Excellence. It is intended that the annual report will develop in future years to include benchmark data with other National Parks regarding incidents and accidents. Focus may be placed on specific areas of work, for example lone working, driving at work, use of tools and/or machinery etc.

Members commented that the annual report was proportionate and sensible as well as well timed.

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**RESOLVED:** Members NOTED the introduction of the new Health and Safety Policy for the Authority and changes to the strategic and operational management of occupational safety and health.

**484 2018/19 Strategic Risk Register**

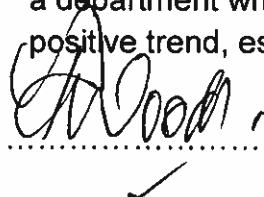
Members received the report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/AG/18/010).

The Strategic Risk Register forms part of the Authority's overall risk management strategy. It is important that Members regularly review the strategic risks for the Authority to raise issues for consideration and highlight areas of risk to be added or removed. The Authority's Leadership Team has recently reviewed and updated the register. Members' attention was drawn to the addition of S6 – Postbridge Visitor Centre; this following the decision made at the Authority meeting on 4 May 2018 to progress the project. The summary table, provided within the report, was welcomed by Members.

A discussion followed; the following queries and comments were noted:

- P2 – community engagement – is there scope to develop our engagement with communities - Members and the Authority's role in the promotion of economic development; duty to foster social and economic wellbeing. Rangers are welcomed at parish meetings; need to improve on Member attendance. The Director of Conservation and Communities advised that much has been learned through the *Moor than meets the eye* scheme, eg, Parishscapes – with an officer allocated to the project; the use of volunteers etc. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) suggested that community engagement and what it means to be an Authority Member could be an item for discussion at the forthcoming Member Workshop. This would also fit with the review of the Member Code of Conduct.
- A suggestion that, as this is the season for Annual General Meetings of Parish Councils, it could be helpful to Members to be given some bullet points to take to these meetings, including any issues affecting a particular parish; this could make a difference to our communities and would help the Authority to get its messages across. It would also be helpful as Members would be better prepared and informed, reducing the reputational risk to the Authority.  
Members offered to work with the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to take this forward to the Member Workshop. It was agreed that Ms Woods and Mrs Pannell would assist.
- A Member commented that S4 workforce planning and resilience – could not be ignored. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that the Authority has an ambitious work plan; Leadership Team is very conscious that the Authority is a small organisation and is keen to keep a close eye on staff morale. In many instances there is one specialist within a department which offers no resilience. The staff survey does indicate a positive trend, especially in terms of employee engagement. The Head of

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Organisational Development advised Members that the structural changes within the Planning Department were designed to provide greater flexibility and resilience.

- A Member advised that a close eye should be kept on the national agenda eg., Corporate Manslaughter, the Litigation society etc.

**RESOLVED:** Members APPROVED the updated Strategic Risk Register for 2018/19.

**485 Moor than meets the eye (MTMTE) Landscape Partnership Scheme**

Members received the report of the *Moor than meets the eye* Scheme Manager (NPA/AG/18/011). He reminded Members that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) granted up to £1.9million towards the Scheme's total budget of £3.8million; the remaining funding comes from the MTMTE Partners. £2.5million has been drawn down so far.

Six projects have been re-scoped and agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). All projects are now on target to deliver. Liaison with Devon County Council is continuing regarding its delivery plan for the Wray Valley Trail.

With regard to the Postbridge Visitor Centre, the interpretation is included in the MTMTE Scheme. The HLF has been kept informed and has given a clear steer.

A mid-term evaluation exercise was undertaken at the end of 2017 with the conclusion that the Scheme is heading in the right direction. There is currently good momentum and strong community engagement.

Given that we are entering the final year of the project Members requested that a status report on each project be provided for the next Audit and Governance Committee meeting to ensure confidence about delivery in the final year of the scheme

Members congratulated the Scheme Manager and everyone involved with the progress made to date.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the content of the report and the progress made to date.

Signed  Date 2 November 2018