

North York Moors National Park Authority Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on Monday 24 November.

Present:

David Jeffels, Caroline Patmore, Ted Sanderson, Andrew Scott, Bill Suthers, Richard Thompson, Jeremy Walker.

Apologies

Jim Bailey, Malcolm Bowes, Christopher Massey

Officers in Attendance:

Andy Wilson (Chief Executive), Irene Brannon (Director of Corporate Services), Catherine Raistrick (Finance and Performance Officer), David Renwick (Director of Conservation), Ian Nicholls (Assistant Director of Corporate Services), Richard Gunton (Director of Park Services), Chris France (Director of Planning), Vanessa Burgess (Committees Officer)

Copies of All Documents Considered Are In The Minute Book

51/14 Minutes

Resolved:

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2014, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

52/14 Members Interests

Members were reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interests relating to any agenda item prior to its consideration.

53/14 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of each of the items of business shown in column 1 of the following table on the grounds that each involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 specified in column 2:-

Item No on the Agenda	Paragraph No
16	1,2,3,4
17	1,2,3,4

54/14 External Funding

Jeremy Walker declared an interest as Chair of the Slowing the Flow Project. Caroline Patmore declared an interest as a Member of the Howardian Hills AONB – JAC.

Considered:

The report of the Director of Conservation.

David Renwick updated Members on work currently being undertaken to secure external funding.

Members asked about the following areas of work:

- Amount of money likely to be available for New LEADER programme
- Pearl Mussel Project (Biffa Award), significance of work in relation to costs associated with the project, Educational value and levels of publicity/promotion – unique resource for the County
- TEL and likelihood of securing stage 2 funding

David Renwick advised Members that:

- The budget allocated for new LEADER would be in the region of £2.5, and the Authority, as lead partner to the Local Action Group (LAG), would look to double the money via matched funding.
- Still awaiting confirmation from Biffa of £300K award, Pearl Mussels have European protection, they are a great measure of river health

Regarding other items mentioned on the External Funding report, David Renwick advised Members that:

- 2nd stage application had been submitted for the Sea Life; See Life project
- Protected Landscapes – both the Tourism and Farm Business Skills elements had been successful
- TEL project gaining momentum, two successful events held. Stage 2 of project due for submission by end of Oct 2015
- External Funding Officer post to be advertised within two weeks

The Chair of FRASC thanked David Renwick and his team for their excellent work.

Resolved: Members approved the report

55/14 Annual Audit Letter

Richard Thompson entered the meeting at 10.25am

Considered:

The report of the Director of Corporate Services

Irene Brannon advised Members that only one minor control observation had been noted in the Annual Audit letter concerning debtor management and the Authority had

already actioned their recommendation by undertaking regular reviews of the debtor situation.

Resolved: Members noted the report
--

56/14 **Mid – Year Treasury Management Review**

Considered:

The report of the Treasurer

In the absence of Peter Yates, Treasurer, The Director of Corporate Services, Irene Brannon gave the report, highlighting two main points:

- No borrowing had taken place
- Investment returns had been disappointingly low

Members asked about the following:

- How much of £1.7 million reserves are placed in overnight money markets and how much invested long term
- Are we disadvantaging ourselves by being tied to NYCC systems
- Need to investigate better rates/use of funds, possibility of lending money
- Contact CLA – offer good/free advice

Irene Brannon advised Members that although the Authority delegates investment work to NYCC, Members do have a say in how the Authority's money is invested. It is also about Members attitude to risk.

Actions: Irene Brannon to raise issue of investments and possibility of lending with Peter Yates. Irene Brannon to ask other NP's about their investment arrangements and provide a note to Members at the next meeting.

Resolved: Members noted/approved the report

57/14 **Finance Update**

Considered:

The report of the Finance and Performance Officer

Catherine Raistrick gave Members an update on financial performance for the first six months of the year. Members to note that the expenditure figure should read £290.9K and not £296.9K as indicated in 3.1 of the report.

Members commented on the following:

- Use of brackets in finance reports, misleading, however recent meeting to discuss presentation issues had been very useful/productive, and Members welcomed the examples shared as an additional appendix by Catherine Raistrick at the meeting. All agreed however that more work was needed re: presentation of financial information. Greater emphasis needed to be placed on the ability to generate income
- Coast Alive money, length of time the Authority had to wait for monies

- Concerns about fall in Planning income
- Costs being incurred by the Authority due to York Potash Planning application and the resources required to consider the application. Was it possible to vire money to help cover costs? It was essential that resources were found to permit a through and complete process.

Regarding the Coast Alive matter Irene Brannon advised Members that the lead partner had now received monies through from the EU, but were being slow in passing the funds on to others in the partnership. Irene also informed Members that a system was being devised to look at Visitor Centres as profit centres (stock system and finance), more work is still to be done.

Catherine Raistrick and Chris France, Director of Planning informed Members that fewer applications being received, plus the fact that people could now do some areas of work without the need for a planning application, were all restricting planning income.

Andy Wilson, Chief Executive informed Members that the Authority was expecting in, two large planning applications which would take the Authority over profile.

Bill Suthers left the meeting at 11.10am

On the subject of the York Potash Planning application, the Chief Executive reminded Members that the Chair of the Authority, Jim Bailey had previously written to Richard Benyon (Defra) about the impact on reserves of costs of the withdrawn Potash application and the scale of fees did not reflect the huge volume of work required to determine it. The Chief Executive considered there was good reason for the Authority to write again to Defra to seek support on this issue and he would be progressing this with the Chair of the Authority.

The Chief Executive advised Members that money could be vired by way of his delegated powers this year and this would be done as necessary. Funds were likely to be more of an issue next year, provision would need to be made in next year's budget as timing issues became clearer.

Members noted that the Chief Executive was ready to vire funds if needed to make sure the resourcing issue was settled.

The Chief Executive and the Director of Planning assured Members that they were taking steps to ensure that the planning application would receive the high degree of scrutiny required by Government Policy as set out in Circular 20/10.

<p>Resolved:</p>

<p>Members noted the report, the Chief Executives comments on virements and the amendments</p>
--

58/14 **Budget Estimate 2015/16**

Considered:

The report of the Director of Corporate Services

Irene Brannon advised Members that the pay award for most members of staff had now been approved and this would be reflected in the budget report to Full Authority in December. The Director also advised Members that some money would be transferred into reserves and the budget included an estimate of £80K in change

management costs. A £115K pump-priming fund (income generation and Trust) to take things forward in future years.

Members asked about the following:

- £60K underspend
- Authority requires contingency to help cope with possible additional Defra budget cuts next year
- Income generation, need to invest more in this. How can Members help?

The Chief Executive informed Members that as yet NP's hadn't been informed about Defra situation and possible further budget cuts, but a meeting with a senior civil servant to discuss funding is due to take place in January.

Resolved: Members noted the proposals, and the report

Richard Thompson left the meeting at midday

59/14 6 Monthly Performance Indicators Outturn

Considered:

The report of the Finance and Performance Officer

Resolved: Members noted the report
--

60/14 Risk Management Strategy Update

Considered:

The report of the Director of Corporate Services

Irene Brannon informed Members that Veritau had completed an audit of the Authority's Risk Management arrangements and had received high assurance, so no changes were required to processes.

Members asked that the Risk Register table (appendix 1) be changed in future. Remove the Risk Owner Column and include an Action column instead, so as to concentrate on forward actions.

Action: Irene Brannon to arrange for the columns on the table to be changed as requested.

Resolved: Members noted, approved the report
--

61/14 Leadership Development Programme

Considered:

The report of the Assistant Director of Corporate Services

Ian Nicholls, Assistant Director of Corporate Services updated Members on the Leadership Development Programme as follows:

- Formal part of the Programme now completed, Evaluation of Programme also completed
- Revised appraisal scheme etc due for roll out in 2015
- Approx £40K was spent on the Programme over 3 years

Members commented on the following:

- Number of participants who took part in the Programme
- Reason for lower numbers of participants (50) who took part in the evaluation survey

Ian Nicholls informed Members that approx. 100 employees had participated in the programme. Uptake of evaluation survey had been lower than previously, but was still statistically reliable, probably due to timing as the survey was issued to employees around the same time as information was given out about potential redundancies.

Members were impressed with the number of employees who had participated in the Programme and the quality of the quantified evidence achieved. Members considered the programme to have been a good investment. The Chair of FRASC thanked all staff for their contribution to the programme.

Resolved: Members noted the report
--

62/14 **Staffing Update**

Considered:

The report of the Assistant Director of Corporate Services

Ian Nicholls updated Members on the following:

- 15 posts made redundant
- 1 voluntary resignation, not replaced
- Low rates of staff absence, down to 1.2 days per person for the first 6 months of the year

Members asked about the following:

- Number of volunteers currently involved with the NYMNPA
- Office opening hours, UNISON concerns
- Apprentices

Ian Nicholls informed Members that Office opening hours were no longer an issue, staff were accepting of the changes. The Park has 10-12,000 volunteer days which equated to approx. 650 regular volunteers. The Park had three types of apprentices:

- Finance Apprentice – 3.5 year contract (covering levels 2, 3 and 4)
- Business Administration Apprentices – (covering level 2 and 3)

- Environmental Conservation - 15 month contract (level 2), then the best of these Apprentices is offered an additional 15 months contract (level 3)

Resolved: Members noted the report
--

63/14 **Health & Safety Incident 22 October 2014 – verbal report**

Considered:

The verbal report of the Assistant Director of Corporate Services

At the beginning of his verbal update, Ian Nicholls, Assistant Director of Corporate Services advised Members that a report due to go to December NPA would include an update on this particular issue.

Ian Nicholls updated Members on the following:

- The Member of staff concerned was expected to be absent from work for 7 weeks, post- accident, but was due to begin a phased return to work on 8 December 2014
- Injuries sustained although painful, weren't serious
- The incident doesn't require mandatory investigation, still waiting to hear if HSE wish to follow it up.
- Ian Nicholls to undertake a detailed investigation, including looking at wider management and Health & Safety issues. This will be reported back to Members at December NPA.

Members requested that their best wishes for a speedy recovery be conveyed to the staff member and asked a number of questions about the incident.

Ian Nicholls confirmed that;

- A risk assessment for use of ATVs was available together with operating guidance for safe loading
- Personal protective equipment had been provided
- Staff using ATVs had all been properly trained
- The access route had been safely used the day before by the ATV
- Trained staff are aware that alternative equipment is also available and of the need to match the task to whatever is being used.

Resolved: Members noted the verbal report

..... (Chair)
2 February 2015

**Public Summary of Items considered "in private"
at the meeting of the Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee
on 24 November 2014**

Private Minutes

Members agreed that the private minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2014, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Complaints and Compliments Update

Members considered the report of the Committees Officer which set out the details of the complaints and compliments received since the last report. Members noted the report.