Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Item 7

Audit & Review Committee

15 April 2025

External Audit Report 2023/24

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the External Auditor's Annual Report, summarising the auditor's opinion on the 2023/24 accounts and value for money opinion.

Recommendation

2. Members are asked to note the report.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework:

    - **Corporate Plan Objective 32:**
      Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report.

Background

4. A full audit was completed for the financial year 2023/24, which met the backstop deadline to publish the Statement of Final Accounts (SoFA) by 28th February 2025. Because the previous financial year 2022/23 had not been subject to a full audit - due to capacity issues at Ernst & Young LLP, the previous Auditors - the opening balances could not be confirmed. As a result, the opinion for 2023/24 is also a disclaimed opinion.

5. The Auditor's Annual Report can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Financial Implications

6. The audit scale fee for 2023/24 is £42,529. Forvis Mazars has also applied to PSAA for an additional fee of £4,710 to cover work that was not in the original tender contract. This additional fee is yet to be agreed. The fee quoted in the Auditor's

Annual Report (Appendix 1) was misstated. Please see the explanation from Forvis Mazars (**Appendix 2**).

Legal Implications

7. None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

8. None

Risk Management

9. Annual external audits form a major part of the Authority's governance framework, confirming the Authority represents Value for Money, and that the figures presented are a true and accurate representation of its financial affairs. Audit can also determine that there are no identified risks such as fraud, errors or omissions.

10. Full testing and verification has been performed on the financial transactions for 2023/24 and no issues have been noted.

11. Valuations have been sought from external experts on the two largest balances, the Pension Scheme and the Fixed Asset valuations.

Conclusion

12. The process of issuing this audit opinion and value for money opinion brings the financial year 2023/24 to a close. The signed SoFA was published by the deadline of 28th February 2025.

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