

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**ITEM 3**

Minutes of the meeting held remotely in the Lifesize virtual Committee Room on Tuesday 9 February 2021.

**Members Present:**

John Amsden, Nick Cotton, Richard Foster, Kevin Frea, Neil Heseltine, Julie Hutton, Carl Lis, Ian McPherson, Stuart Parsons, Gillian Quinn, Karin Sedgwick, Neil Swain (in the Chair) and Derek Twine.

***COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK***

*The Chair expressed sadness at the untimely death of Authority Member, Richard Welch, and advised that a tribute to Mr Welch would be made at the Planning Committee meeting in the afternoon.*

**01/21      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**02/21      MINUTES**

**RESOLVED –**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**03/21      PUBLIC QUESTIONS / STATEMENTS**

Bruce McLeod, Chair of Friends of the Dales, attended the meeting and read a statement urging the Authority to consider increasing its funding for the Dalesbus service.

The Chair replied that the Committee would consider this matter as part of item 6 of the agenda (draft budget).

**04/21      DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING**

There were no declarations of lobbying.

Ian McPherson made a declaration of personal interest as a member of Friends of the Dales, an organisation which had written to support the request for increased funding of the Dalesbus service. Mr McPherson advised that he would not speak or vote on that particular matter at the meeting.

**05/21      DRAFT BUDGET 2021/22**

The Committee CONSIDERED the report of the Head of Finance and Director of Corporate Services / Treasurer.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee of the general context in which the report had been prepared and, in particular, the postponement of the Government's planned Comprehensive Spending Review which would have set the level of the Authority's core grant for the next three years. Members noted the financial uncertainty this created for the budget projections for 2022/23 and beyond.

Discussion included the following:

- The draft budget for 2021/22 balances, with sufficient resources to deliver the Authority's agreed objectives over the coming financial year;
- The draft budget makes planned use of the majority of the Authority's general reserves, as well as ear-marked reserves;
- The draft budget for 2021/22 assumes a flat rate grant settlement from DEFRA. The report to the Authority meeting in March will reflect the latest news on this from DEFRA;
- The Authority's income generation strategy has been very successful over the past few years, particularly in terms of obtaining project grants. However, this cannot plug any of the gaps which would arise if core grant funding from DEFRA is reduced or is kept at a level without allowing for inflation, because the income is used to support additional activity, such as the new projects, rather than funding core services. Core grant funding is therefore vital to allow the Authority to function, including being able to apply for and match fund additional project grants;
- There was recognition of the potential importance of public transport in reducing carbon emissions and in increasing access for diverse visitors to the National Park. However, an increase in funding for the Dalesbus service (noting that, by statute, the responsibility for public transport sits with the relevant County Councils and not the National Park Authority), would require an equivalent sum to be cut from elsewhere in the budget. It was agreed that the issue of support for public transport should be considered as part of the Members' review of the Authority's priorities, which will take place in the Autumn.

The Committee thanked officers for their hard work in putting together the report and associated documents.

**RESOLVED –**

To approve the draft budget for 2021/22 and indicative budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24, the Reserves Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy, and to recommend that these be submitted to the full Authority for final approval.

**06/21**      **FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT 1 APRIL to 31 DECEMBER 2020**

The Committee CONSIDERED the report of the Head of Finance.

In response to questions from members, the Head of Finance provided the following information:

- The Rights of Way programme is currently behind budgeted expenditure. Covid restrictions, inclement weather and issues with contractors have contributed to delays in progressing the planned programme of works. The programme is largely on track for completion by the end of March, but some actions (e.g. some flood repair work), will be carried forward to the next financial year;
- Regarding the reported net overspend of £22k on Corporate Employment Costs, this a by-product of the way in which we account for any staff vacancies savings across the whole Authority, with a 'balancing figure' savings target included in Corporate Employment Costs, but the savings being made within whichever programme budget a temporary vacancy may arise. At year-end, the two positions typically balance out, and that is the current projection for 2020/21.

The Committee NOTED the report.

**07/21**      **INCOME GENERATION STRATEGY – PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Committee CONSIDERED the report of the Director of Conservation and Community.

There is a small typo in the report at para 7 (page 74) – the number of Commons in the National Park should read 3 and not 5.

The Director of Conservation and Community provided more detail regarding some of the projects in development which are currently awaiting DEFRA decisions (as the funder):

- a) "Farming in Protected Landscapes" – the aim of which is to support farmers and other land managers in protected landscapes to diversify their income streams and lay the ground work for the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). The project was announced by DEFRA in November 2021 and will involve National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in supporting farmers. It is expected to start in April 2021 - further details are awaited;
- b) The "Payment by Results / Payment for Outcomes" trial in Wensleydale (part of the national test and trial programme) – a decision on whether this scheme will be extended by a further two years is anticipated shortly;
- c) "Raydale Landscapes Recovery Project" –driven by farmers with support from the Authority – a decision is also anticipated shortly.

In reply to members' questions, officers advised:

- The "Farm Carbon Footprinting" project will work with a social enterprise company to carry out a carbon audit and develop action plans for reducing emissions and improving the viability of farm businesses;

- Many energy-saving measures have already been rolled out across the Authority's premises, and others are underway, under the "Decarbonising Authority Premises" project.

The Committee NOTED the report.

**08/21      EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

The Committee CONSIDERED and NOTED the report of the Solicitor / Monitoring Officer and the Head of Human Resources.

Members expressed their thanks for the recent corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training sessions, which members and staff had attended.

**09/21      STAFFING REPORT**

The Committee CONSIDERED and NOTED the report of the Head of Human Resources.

**10/21      SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT**

The Committee CONSIDERED and NOTED the report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 11:53.