YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY **ITEM 2**
AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at the YDNPA offices, Yoredale, Bainbridge, Leyburn DL8 3EL on Tuesday 8 November 2022 at 10:30am.

Members Present:

Mark Corner, Richard Good, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Allen Kirkbride, Jim Munday (in the chair) and Yvonne Peacock.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

20/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Lizzie Bushby, Liz Hall, Sandy Lancaster, Ian Mitchell and Andrew Murday.

21/22 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

22/22 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS

No notifications of public questions or of the intention to make a statement had been received.

23/22 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

No declarations of lobbying were made at the meeting.

24/22 PROGRESS ON CORPORATE ACTION PLAN 2022-23 – half year report and revision of actions

CONSIDERED – the report and presentation of the Deputy Chief Executive.

David Ireton declared an interest, namely his wife has received a tree-planting grant under the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme.
Yvonne Peacock declared an interest, namely her ownership of a private hire business.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Park Services confirmed that the target to engage 4000 people in objective 8 had not changed from previous years; figures from events such as the Dark Skies Festival were still to be added to the overall total; and that the Authority's resources to deliver this target had not been increased but instead were

being used differently, for example to run events which attract larger numbers rather than small groups.

Discussion included the following:

- A query was raised as to whether those objectives on which the Authority was very much dependent on others to achieve (for example objective 24 – increasing the proportion of woodland which is in active management), should be included in the corporate plan, or whether these should only appear in the National Park Management Plan;
- In certain areas, bed and breakfast establishments had closed and many cafes, pubs and restaurants were also closing or operating reduced hours due to inflation, energy price rises and staff shortages. The right infrastructure was needed to support a growth in overnight staying visitors;
- The designation of the Coast to Coast as a National Trail was expected to bring many benefits to boost the local economy.
- A reminder that Members would receive a briefing on the work being done to identify allocated housing sites at the Policy Development Forum on 29 November;
- The importance (from both sides) of fostering good relationships between the Authority and key partners such as the new unitary councils and the North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Infrastructure Board was acknowledged;
- Central government funding cuts were anticipated. It would be even more vital to secure external funding and private finance to ensure the Authority continues to deliver its objectives in the future. Members put forward suggestions about how best to lobby against cuts, noting the importance of national park authorities speaking as a collective voice and of close relationships with those in power.

Overall, members were pleased with the progress to date on delivering the corporate plan objectives, particularly given the great increase in the programme of work over the last couple of years.

RESOLVED – to NOTE the update on the Authority's performance in the first half of the year and the revisions to the annual Action Plan.

25/22 MAJOR PROJECT REVIEW: INCOME GENERATION STRATEGY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Director of Corporate Services.

Members commended staff on the achievements made in generating additional income to date.

Members discussed how the changing circumstances surrounding core grant may affect future financial planning, including the extent to which unknown / unconfirmed income such as "planned grant" should be included in budgeting for the medium term.

RESOLVED -

To NOTE the lessons learnt from the delivery of the Authority's current Income Generation Strategy and to AGREE that the recommendations in the report should be considered when preparing the next Income Generation Strategy.

26/22 PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Director of Conservation and Community.

The Committee noted the drop in the percentage of planning applications coming to committee for decision in 2021/22. It was suggested this was likely to be due to the changes to the operation of the Planning Committee that Members approved in December 2020. The Director of Conservation confirmed that further work would now be done as part of the review to identify whether this was the case.

RESOLVED -

To NOTE the work carried out to date by the Review Team, and the next steps and timetable for completing the review.

27/22 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT

CONSIDERED - the report of the Solicitor / Monitoring Officer, which members noted provided very detailed assurance on the governance of the Authority.

RESOLVED – to receive the Annual Governance Report and to approve the proposed minor changes to the Local Code of Corporate Governance as detailed in Appendix A of the report.

28/22 ANNUAL RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW

CONSIDERED – the report of the Director of Corporate Services.

In response to members' questions, the Chief Executive confirmed that:

- One of the highest strategic risks, namely failure of Defra grant, was a risk which National Parks England was both aware of and taking action on;
- It was unclear how many of the recommendations in the Landscapes Review the Government intended to proceed with, given the recent ministerial changes. It was confirmed that the reduction in the number of Members on the Authority would not proceed for at least a further year, as legislation was required. In the interim, the new unitary councils would be asked to appoint members to the Authority to fill those seats currently held by the relevant district councils.

RESOLVED – to agree that the Strategic Risk Register contains all the identifiable higher level risks which the Committee requires to be monitored.

29/22 MAJOR PROJECT REVIEW – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF BLENDED WORKING

CONSIDERED – the report of the Director of Corporate Services.

Members noted the overall success of the introduction of blended working. It was noted that in the current competitive job market, many employees were attracted by flexible working provisions.

Further development of blended working arrangements would be considered in the future, as part of a wider consideration of the use of office space and home working, and the effective delivery of the Authority's services.

The Committee NOTED the report.

30/22 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD

CONSIDERED and NOTED – the report of the Head of Human Resources.

Members complemented all staff on the achievement of this award.

31/22 MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

CONSIDERED and NOTED – the report of the Treasurer.

Members wished to put on record their thanks to Richard Burnett, Head of Corporate Services, shortly due to retire, for his quiet dedication and service and for managing committee business with expertise, charm and humour. Members wished him all the best in his retirement.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12:30pm