

DEVON AUDIT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

8 March 2022

Present:-

Councillors Mahony, Hackett, Loxton (Chair), Kennedy, Wyer, Ball, Spencer, Roome, Scott and Phillips

Apologies:-

Councillors Hall, Bingley, Davies and Austen

Members attending in accordance with Standing Orders 8 and 25

* 19

Decisions from the Previous Meeting Requiring Approval

The previous meeting of the Committee on 15 November 2021 was declared inquorate. Whilst Members had an informal discussion at the November meeting, the Committee needed to revisit those reports in order to make a decision by a quorate committee.

a) Updated Business Plan 2021-2026

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hackett, **SECONDED** by Councillor Roome and

RESOLVED

that the Committee notes the updated Business Plan covering the five-year period 2021 to 2026.

b) Staff Survey Results

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hackett, **SECONDED** by Councillor Roome and

RESOLVED

that the Committee notes the extract of staff survey results from 2021, and the comparison to the 2018 results.

c) Six Month Update Report 2021/2022

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Phillips, **SECONDED** by Councillor Roome and

RESOLVED

that the Committee notes the six month update report from the Head of Devon Audit Partnership.

d) Budget Monitoring 2021/22 - Month 6

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hackett, **SECONDED** by Councillor Roome and
RESOLVED

(a) the projected financial outturn position of DAP be noted.

(b) the variances and reasons be noted.

e) Updated Risk Register - November 2021

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hackett, **SECONDED** by Councillor Roome and
RESOLVED

(a) the updated Strategic and Operational risk register be noted.

(b) the actions in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level be noted.

f) Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hackett, **SECONDED** by Councillor Roome and
RESOLVED

(a) the current Quality Assurance & Improvement Plan Action Plan be noted.

(b) the challenges for the future, and the actions being taken by management to react to these challenges be noted.

* **20** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2021 and 15 November 2021 be signed as a correct record.

* **21** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **22** **Nine Month Update Report 2021/22**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Finance (DF/22/32) summarising the Partnership's activity in the first 9 months of 2021/22.

Members noted:

- New business to the Partnership providing support for Teignbridge District Council in completing their agreed internal audit plan.
- The appointment of new staff to meet the demands of partners and clients, and also to ensure there is a good level of continuity as staff look to retire.
- The work and culture with Partnership staff to ensure they “add value” at every step in the audit process.
- DAP holds the Customer Service Excellence award. The results of the surveys returned after every audit remain very positive with near 99% being "satisfied" or better across the Partnership's services.
- Internal audit performance is acceptable, but that there is room for improvement in a number of areas. Some of the indicators show a slight deteriorating in performance from the previous year, but this should be considered against the backdrop of the ongoing need to respond to the Covid pandemic, and also a relatively high level of staff turnover in the period.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Ball, **SECONDED** by Councillor Kennedy and

RESOLVED

that the Committee notes the nine month update report from the Head of Devon Audit Partnership.

* 23 **Budget Monitoring 2021/22 - Month 9**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Finance (DF/22/33) monitoring the Budget of the Partnership at month 9, indicating that DAP will generate a small surplus at the year end (circa £1k).

Members noted:

- further requests since 1 April 2021 asking for extra auditing and assurance work, which has increased the income to the Partnership and led to taking on more temporary staff.
- the impact of the pandemic on the Partnership's ways of working. The Head of Devon Audit Partnership noted the cost savings of remote working from a travel perspective and an increased flexibility now around the way in which an audit works.
- some concern from members about local government staff not having yet returned to being office based. The Head of Devon Audit Partnership

advised that from a Partnership perspective work has continued and carried on well. There are benefits and challenges of remote working; it is about maximising the benefits and ironing out those challenges.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Mahony, **SECONDED** by Councillor Hackett and

RESOLVED

that members:

(a) note the projected financial outturn position of DAP.

(b) note variances and reasons.

* **24** **Devon Audit Partnership Budget 2022/23**

The Committee received the budget for 2021/22 (DF/22/34) presented to them by the Head of Devon Audit Partnership.

Members noted:

- the continued impact of the Covid pandemic, and a level of uncertainty still remaining around the budget.
- the projected income for next year is just over £2 million with circa 90% of that then being deployed for staffing costs.
- EU grant funding continuing into 2022/23 but the amount reducing,
- the impact of National Insurance and pension increases from 1 April 2022.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Loxton, **SECONDED** by Councillor Mahony and

RESOLVED

that members:

(a) agree the proposed budget for 2022/23.

(b) note the areas of uncertainty within the budgeted income figures.

* **25** **Outcome of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards External Assessment**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Finance (DF/22/35) detailing the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) External Assessment which confirmed the Partnership had “passed” or “generally conform” to the Standards.

Members noted:

- the Partnership's working practices meet professional standards.
- the useful insight to compare DAP practices with other areas. It has enabled management to compare processes and arrangements with two other large audit partnerships. The Head of Devon Audit Partnership advised that it is a very positive report, but there always remain opportunities to improve the work the Partnership does.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Ball, **SECONDED** by Councillor Phillips and

RESOLVED

that members note the summary report setting out the findings from the recent Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) External Assessment.

* **26** **Outcome of Customer Service Excellence External Assessment**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Finance (DF/22/36) relating to the recent Customer Service Excellence (CES) External Assessment.

Members noted:

- another positive external assessment of DAP. The Head of Devon Audit Partnership advocated the relevance of such an assessment, and the wider importance of continuing to identify where a customer is unhappy and understand why a complaint has been made. It is important to get early warnings, establish any trends and find out what is going on to improve accordingly.
- Members felt it useful to be presented at the next Committee with a summarised action plan of what areas DAP is looking to improve on.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Phillips, **SECONDED** by Councillor Ball and

RESOLVED

- (a) a summarised action plan of improvement measures to be included on the agenda for the next Committee.
- (b) that members note the attached summary report setting out the findings from the recent Customer Service Excellence (CSE) External Assessment.

* **27** **Future Meetings**

The next meeting is scheduled for 12 July 2022.

NOTES:

1. *Minutes should always be read in association with any Reports for a complete record.*
2. *If the meeting has been webcast, it will be available to view on the [webcasting site](#) for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting*

* **DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.35 am and finished at 11.21 am