HULL AND GOOLE PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY

14th December 2022

(Council Chamber, the Guildhall, Kingston upon Hull)

PRESENT: -

Councillors Chambers, Collinson, Singh and Vickers.

IN ATTENDANCE: -

Laurence Dettman (Chief Port Health Inspector), Annmarie Hamil (Chief Administrative Officer), Alison Gill (Senior Finance Officer, Hull City Council) and Louise Hawkins (Democratic Services Officer, Hull City Council).

| Minute **No.** | Business |
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| 1817 | **APOLOGIES**  Apologies were received from Councillors Coultish, Fudge, Handley and Pantelakis. |
| 1818 | **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**  No declarations of interest were made in respect of the items that follow below. |
| 1819 | **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH JUNE 2022**  **Agreed -** That, the minutes of the meeting of this Authority, held on 8th June, 2022, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chair. |
| 1820 | **BUDGET MONITORING 2022-2023**  The Treasurer and the Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which informed members of the Authority’s spending to the end of July 2022 compared to the approved budget and highlights any anticipated variations to budget for the full year.  **Agreed –** that the report be noted. |
| 1821 | **EU IMPORTED FOOD CHECKS AT THE UK BORDER – UPDATE**  The Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which provided an update on the impact of the recent major Government policy-shift announced by the Minister for Brexit Opportunities in a Ministerial statement on 28 April 2022 and actions taken by the Chief Port Health Inspector since the last Board meeting.  **Agreed -** that the Board await further updates to future meetings. |
| 1822 | **QUARTERLY SUMMARY MAY 2022 TO JULY 2022**  The Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which detailed the quarterly summary of the Authority’s work in respect of inspections, notifications, and investigations undertaken during the period May to July 2022.  **Agreed –** that the report be noted. |
| 1823 | **REVENUE ESTIMATES 2023-24**  The Treasurer and the Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which detailed the proposed revenue estimates and planned use of reserves for the Hull and Goole Port Health Authority for 2023-24 and proposed levy requirement from the constituent authorities. The report also showed the revised position compared to the original estimate for the current financial year which ends on 31 March 2023.  The Board was informed that the financial circumstances were difficult as a result in the rise in inflation rates. The revenue estimates included the staff pay award and the impact of the staff that had been redeployed to Hull City Council as a result of the decision by the Government that the EU imported food checks would not be introduced.  It was acknowledged that the following year would more complicated as there was less clarity.  The Senior Finance Officer explained that the levy requirements for the constituent authorities needed to be set for 2023/24. The figures in the table were based on a 5% increase. The figures for increase of 7% had also been included.  The Board was informed that the Authority was fortunate in retaining a health levy rebate reserve balance. However, there was a risk that the authority would not generate any additional income until there was clarity regarding the future EU imported food checking regime, thus making the financial position very uncertain.  A member of the Board expressed concern in relation to rising the levies to 7% as local authorities were under extreme financial pressure and asked for clarification around the level of income that the Authority was expecting to receive in 2023/24. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that the Authority was receiving income from ship inspections and other duties and this had recovered to almost pre-Covid levels. Such regular income was steady but there is concern that the Authority had not been able to budget for the EU imported food checks without the necessary information being available from Government. If additional resources are required, the Government would once again have to finance this unless the authority can charge importers at a sustainable rate for the service.  A member of the Board asked whether it was possible to review the levies during the financial year. The Senior Finance Officer explained that the levies would be set for the year and cannot be increased.  The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that the Government had decided that the checks of foods imported from the EU would not be introduced from July 2022. The decision had left Port Health Authorities and Local Authorities in a difficult position as they had budgeted for the additional income that the checks would generate within the year 2022-23.  The Board discussed the following matters –   1. That Local Authorities were also experiencing difficulties in relation to funding and were having to manage the impacts going forward; 2. Whether the levies should be raised by 6%.   **Agreed –**   1. That the Board approved the revised estimates for 2022-23; 2. That the Board approves the budget for 2023-24 based on consideration of option C with an increase in the levies of 6%, and 3. That the levies required from the constituent authorities, with an increase of 6%, be approved.   Councillor Vickers asked for it to be recorded that he was not in support of the decision to increase the levies required by the constituent authorities, by more than 5%. |
| 1824 | **EU IMPORTED FOOD CHECKS AT THE UK BORDER – ADDITIONAL UPDATE**  The Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which provided an update on the impact of the short-notice major Government policy-shift announced by the Minister for Brexit Opportunities in a Ministerial statement on 28 April 2022 and actions taken by the Chief Port Health Inspector since the last Board meeting.  The Board was informed that –   1. the Authority was still facing a significant amount of uncertainty following the changes in the political environment. The Port Health Authorities had met with Baroness Vere of Norbiton, the new Minister. Previously it had been stated that a new target operating model would be announced by Autumn 2022 however no date had been given and it was not expected that the plans would be known by the end of the year; 2. It was expected that a proportionate risk-based approach was being considered rather than checking all imported food goods. There would more reliance on digitalisation. A trusted trader scheme could be introduced for organisations who imported the same low-risk products on a regular basis. The scheme would need to be developed properly and Port Health Authorities would be involved in the process; 3. Targeted spot checks could be more effective in preventing illegal imports; 4. The Border Post buildings at Hull and Killingholme remain mothballed; 5. The additional officers, that had been appointed in readiness for the introduction of food checks, had secured other employment or had been redeployed, and 6. The Authority had informed 20 new potential employees that their interviews had been cancelled as a result of the Government’s decision not to introduce the checks, and 7. An agreement with a veterinary employment agency had been withdrawn. There had been no negative financial impact to the Authority as the agreement had been at draft stage; 8. The impacts following Brexit were being worked through. There had been some positives and some negatives. The majority of trade through ports in the region was from the EU. There was a need to protect the biosecurity of the UK. The ongoing risk from a European epidemic of African Swine Fever highlighted the need for effective import controls and surveillance and joint working between local UK Border Force and the authority was working well. Any delays to traders caused by checks needed to be minimised but they were necessary, and 9. A draft letter to the local MPs, written in collaboration by the Association of Port Health Authorities, had been attached as an appendix.   **Agreed –**   1. That the report be noted, and 2. That the letter to local Members of Parliament be approved. |
| 1825 | **QUARTERLY SUMMARY AUGUST 2022 TO OCTOBER 2022**  The Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which provided an update on activity during the period August to October 2022.  The Board was informed that there had been some concerns in relation to unsatisfactory water samples on passenger ferries. The issues had now been resolved.  A member of the Board asked whether the recent outbreak of bird flu had impacted on imports. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that the outbreak had not had an impact on imported poultry goods however there had been an impact on the transport of live birds.  **Agreed –** that the report be noted. |
| 1826 | **FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2023**  The Chief Port Health Inspector submitted the Food Service Plan 2023 for approval.  It was confirmed that the Food Service Plan 2023, a requirement of the Food Standards Agency, had been prepared by the Deputy Chief Port Health Inspector.  **Agreed –** that the Food Service Plan 2023 be approved. |