HULL AND GOOLE PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY

8th June 2022

(Council Chamber, the Guildhall, Kingston upon Hull)

PRESENT: -

Councillors Brady (Chair), Briggs, Chambers, Collinson, Fudge, T. Neal, 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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| 1805 | **APOLOGIES**  Apologies were received from Councillors Coultish and Pantelakis. |
| 1806 | **ELECTION OF CHAIR**  **Moved by Councillor Briggs and seconded by Councillor Neal that**  Councillor Chambers be elected as the Chair for the ensuing year.  **Motion carried.** |
| 1807 | **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**  **Moved by Councillor Chambers and seconded by Councillor Briggs that**  Councillor Vickers be elected as the Deputy Chair for the ensuing year.  **Motion carried.** |
| 1808 | **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**  No declarations of interest were made in respect of the items that follow below. |
| 1809 | **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH MARCH 2022**  **Agreed -** That, the minutes of the meeting of this Authority, held on 16th, March 2022, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chair. |
| 1810 | **FUTURE MEETING DATES**  The Democratic Services Officer submitted a list of future meetings dates.  **Agreed –** that meetings of the Hull and Goole Port Health Authority take place on 14 September and 14 December 2022 and 15 March and 14 June 2023. |
| 1811 | **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**  **Agreed –** that the Chief Port Health Inspector and the Deputy Chief Port Health Inspector be appointed to the Local Resilience Forum; the Humber Authorities Chief Environmental Health Officers’ Group, and the Humber Port Welfare Committee. |
| 1812 | **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT 2021-22**  The Treasurer submitted a report which provided members with the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 and presented to members Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return – Annual Governance Statement 2021/22, for consideration and approval.  The Senior Finance Officer explained that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was a requirement of the External Auditor.  **Agreed –** That the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 be approved. |
| 1813 | **ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22**  The Treasurer submitted a report which provided members with the annual Statement of Accounts showing an analysis of the Authority’s financial activity for the year ended 31st March 2022 and also presented members with Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (Accounting Statements 2021/22), for consideration and approval.  The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that the Accounts for 2021/22 had audited by the Internal Team at Hull City Council. The underspend had slightly reduced and £50,000 would be carried forward. The income levels were as expected. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return had to be completed and submitted by the end of July 2022.  There were no issues to report and the financial position was currently fairly healthy.  The following matters were raised –   1. Whether the income from fees and charges was usual as it apparated to be lower than previously. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that the Authority had not been able to carry out as many chargeable inspections as a result of the covid pandemic. The additional expenses that the Authority had incurred had been covered by the grants that had been received from Defra. The Government’s intention in relation to border control checks was not yet known, and 2. Whether the members and staff were up to date with the statutory functions outlined at paragraph six of the Statement of Accounts. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that the Authority was up to date and there had been no real changes in recent times to the statutory functions, however it could be of use to the members to have an overview of the functions at a future meeting.   **Agreed –**   1. That the Accounting Statements for 2021/22 are considered and approved, subject to Internal Audit signing off the AGAR Internal Audit report prior to the meeting, and 2. That the Chief Port Health Inspector provides a short presentation of the role and responsibilities of the Hull and Goole Port Health Authority, to include an overview of its statutory functions, at the next Board meeting. |
| 1814 | **EU IMPORTED FOOD CHECKS AT THE UK BORDER – A LATE CHANGE OF POLICY AND DIRECTION**  The Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which provided an update on the impact of the recent major Government policy shift which was announced by the Minister for Brexit Opportunities in a Ministerial statement on 28th April 2022.  The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that –   1. It had been six years since the Referendum to leave the European Union had taken place. The past two years had seen much fluidity in relation to EU imported food checks at UK borders which had included three delays of their introduction; 2. The Port Health Authority was in the midst of recruiting additional staff when the Ministerial statement was announced on 28th April that there would be a rethink in relation to EU imported food checks and they would not be introduced in July 2022 as planned; 3. The feeling amongst Port Health Authorities was of huge disappointment and in the period since the announcement was made Port Authorities had tried to take stock of the situation; 4. Port Operators had mothballed the newly built Border Control Post buildings which were not being used for other purposes and they were in discussion with the Government as to how they could be brought into use; 5. The Hull and Goole Port Health Authority had not fully recruited however there were other Port Health Authorities which had recruited over 100 additional members of staff; 6. Port Health Authorities were waiting for the Government and Defra to inform them of what the future plans were. It had been suggested that a Target Operating Model would be announced by the Autumn. However, there was some scepticism around this as Authorities had lost their confidence following a huge amount of work that had been undertaken and were now not to be introduced. A paper was being submitted to Ministers with possible options and the Chief Port Health Inspector was in regular contact with Defra. It was acknowledged that there was much uncertainty about the situation and the plans for the future. There was also recognition that Port Health Authorities had different priorities, and 7. That although the recent events had been very challenging the Authority still had a significant amount of work to undertake and was looking to the future in a positive manner. The Authority was optimistic about its position and it was hoped that the situation would become clearer by the next Board meeting.   The Members raised the following matters –   1. Whether there was a plan for the newly recruited members of staff and whether they would be absorbed into the current work of the Authority. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that all posts had to be properly funded and the newly created posts had been covered by the Government funding. If that funding ceased the Authority would not be able to cover the costs of the additional posts; 2. That the Authority should write to the constituent MPs to express its concern and to suggest what the Authority would like to see happen in the future. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that the Association of Port Health Authorities was meeting that afternoon and the Ministers were aware of the feelings amongst Port Health Authorities. The Authorities had direct access to Ministers and Defra. It was not expected that any proposed plans for the future would come forward between now and September 2022. It was confirmed that the Authority was engaging with colleagues in Finance and Human Resources at Hull City Council to discuss the issues; 3. Whether there was any indication as to why the decision to introduce border checks on EU imported food had been reversed and whether any parts of the border control posts were being used. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that there had been no confirmation as to the reason for the decision to be reversed, however it was suspected that the conflict in Ukraine had impacted on imports and that the introduction of border checks would add to the pressures caused by the rises in the cost of living and inflation. The risk of products entering the UK was relatively low. The products from inside the European Union were generally safe however there were greater risks from food products that were being imported from elsewhere.   **Agreed –**   1. that the Board agrees that the Chief Port Health Inspector, in consultation with HR, Legal and Finance, takes the necessary action to secure the Authority’s financial position and protect its reputation, pending further clarity on the imported food checks now proposed for the end of 2023, and 2. That an extraordinary meeting is arranged if there are any changes to the current situation which need to be reported to the Board. |
| 1815 | **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY – ANNUAL STATEMENT**  The Chief Port Health Inspector submitted a report which presented the Health and Safety Policy and the Annual Statement for consideration and approval by the Board.  **Agreed –** that the Health and Safety Policy and the Annual Statement be approved. |
| 1816 | **QUARTERLY SUMMARY FEBRUARY TO APRIL 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 February to April 2022.  The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that a number of covid cases were still being reported. In the event that a ship’s crew were in isolation the vessel could not sail which had caused significant logistical issues.  A Member of the Board queried what role the Authority had in the detection and seizure of illegal drugs. The Chief Port Health Inspector explained that the Authority worked alongside the UK Border Force Agency and anything suspicious was reported to the Agency immediately. It was acknowledged that there were issues relating to drugs at all ports and a significant amount of intelligence-based work was undertaken by the Border Force Agency.  **Agreed –** that the update be noted. |