

Tyne Port Health Authority Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Joint Board

At the annual meeting of the Joint Board of the Tyne Port Health Authority duly convened at 10am on Tuesday 4 October 2016 at 10am, Quadrant (East), The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say:-

Present:

North Tyneside Council: Councillor B Burdis
 Councillor A Percy

Newcastle City Council: Councillor G Bell
 Councillor I Graham
 Councillor D Wood

South Tyneside Council: Councillor F Cunningham
 Councillor K Stephenson
 Councillor A Walsh

Officers in Attendance:

Frances McClen, Chief Port Health Officer
Paul Sanderson Read, Deputy Chief Port Health Officer
Colin MacDonald, Clerk to the Authority
Samantha Jobson, South Tyneside Council

JB01/10/2016 Apologies For Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor J Hunter from North Tyneside Council and Councillors K Dodds, T Graham and W Dick from Gateshead Council.

JB02/10/2016 Declarations Of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

JB03/10/2016 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting on the 7 June 2016 had been circulated.

RESOLVED that the minutes of 7 June 2016 to be taken as read and confirmed.

JB04/10/2016 Annual Report for the year Ended 31 March 2016

The Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2016 containing the external auditor's certificate and opinion following conclusion of audit was presented by the Clerk to the Joint Board. It was noted that the auditors had confirmed their opinion that; *"On the basis of our review of the annual return, in our opinion the information in the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and no matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met."*

It was explained that the auditors had issued a separate report outlining two matters that the Authority should address. The Clerk explained that following the introduction of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the Joint Board at its AGM should approve the Annual Governance Statement prior to approving the Accounting Statements. This will be rectified at the AGM in June 2017.

Also, the commencement of the inspection period of elector's rights had mistakenly commenced the day before approval of the Accounting Statements by the Joint Board. This has been address for 2016/17 following agreement of appropriate dates with the auditor.

RESOLVED that the Joint Board a). accept and approve the external auditor's certificate and opinion following submission of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2016 relating to the Authority as attached to the report, and b). to note the Issues Arising report issued and the remedial action taken.

JB05/10/2016 Item 5:Operational Summary 01/05/16 -31/08/2016

The Chief Port Health Officer presented the report to the Joint Board. It was highlighted that number of ship sanitation inspections was similar to the same period last year with a slight increase in boardings. Bacteriological water sampling was taken onboard 29 vessels with the majority found to be satisfactory. Any unsatisfactory samples were followed up with the vessels concerned. A similar number of imported food checks were carried out on tea consignments from China.

The income for ship sanitation inspections was slightly higher than the same period last year. Income generated from imported food official controls and water sampling requests were also highlighted.

The Joint Board were advised that a fatality onboard the MV Balmoral had occurred. The cause of death was a cardiac arrest and there was no causal link to the voyage. It was also reported that the same vessel had been involved in three low level gastro intestinal outbreaks. Members were assured that procedures for prevention of spread had been followed.

It was reported that Border Force had discovered an illegal shipment of cigarettes within a container of bread. The food was released following inspection.

Members asked questions about infectious disease control during outbreaks. During discussion, Officers advised of the procedures adopted and record keeping. Instances of reoccurring illness are thoroughly investigated by the Authority to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to reduce the initial outbreak and prevent further spread.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

JB06/10/2016 Corporate Risk Register

The report was presented by the Clerk and set out the Authority's obligations to have the necessary arrangements in place for the management of risk, and members were reminded that this is a statutory requirement under The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The Authority must not only make an assessment of the risks facing the body and take appropriate steps to manage those risks, but in addition, it must seek regular assurance regarding internal controls.

The Joint Board last reviewed and approved the corporate risk register at its meeting in October 2015. The Clerk presented the updated and revised draft risk register attached to the report.

Each risk has been reviewed and there were no proposals to change any of the risk scores. The changes were outlined.

- Risk TPHA2 – Strategically discharging statutory functions: The score had been increased from E2 to D2 (although retained as a Medium Risk) in October 2015 to reflect risk to the retention of suitably competent officers. Following review the risk score remained the same to reflect that the new officer structure, although working well, is bedding in.
- Risk TPHA3 – Compliance with the Audit and Accounts requirements: The score had remained unchanged and reflected that the issues raised by the external auditor in August 2016 had been addressed and did not affect the audit opinion.
- Risk TPHA6 – Emergency Preparedness: The score had been reduced to its target score in October 2015 to reflect the extent of the arrangements now in place. The arrangements were working well. Emergency Response Activation arrangements were currently being reviewed and a specific port-based training exercise is being planned for 2017.

- Risk TPHA10 – Responding to legislative change: The score remained at its target level. The Joint Board has been mindful of the impact of the Brexit vote on the Authority with details yet to emerge. Changes to official food controls are being monitored as outlined in the commentary against the risk.

A discussion took place surrounding the current Brexit position and Members noted that it was sensible to ensure that this was being monitored closely by the Authority.

RESOLVED that the Joint Board; a). note the requirements of The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and their application to the Tyne Port Health Authority as a “smaller relevant body”; and b). approve the draft revised corporate risk register for the Tyne Port Health Authority as presented in the report.

JB07/10/2016 Association of Port Health Authorities Update

Cllr Bell reported that he had attended the Executive Board meeting of the Association of Port Health Authorities (APHA) on 27 July 2016. Cllr Bell reported that he had tendered his resignation from the Association at the meeting. He outlined that it was his view that APHA was a very worthwhile organisation and it provided excellent opportunities for port health authorities to network with each other, share information, learn from case studies and generally promote training and good practice. Cllr Bell however had noted with concern that there are a number of port health authorities who had ceased to be part of the organisation which could only significantly weaken its professional standing and financial position. In addition Cllr Bell was generally concerned about the Association’s current approach to governance and the management of its affairs.

The Clerk confirmed that there were a number of port health authorities that had withdrawn from the Association including Hull & Goole, London, Felixstowe, Liverpool and Southampton. The Annual Conference planned for 2016 in Southampton had been cancelled and concerns had been raised by port health authorities that the Association now fails to achieve its stated purpose. The Clerk also highlighted that he had been unable to gain a more detailed understanding of the issues facing the Association that had been highlighted by Cllr Bell.

Members of the Joint Board debated whether the Authority should continue its membership of the Association when it was due for renewal in early 2017. Members agreed that continued membership did not represent best value for money for the Authority going forward and they were concerned about the issues raised by Cllr Bell and the additional information provided by the Clerk.

A query was raised about whether or not there was a notice period that had to be adhered to. The Clerk stated that he would need to review the terms.

RESOLVED that the Joint Board a). terminate its membership of the Association of Port Health Authorities, and b). delegate authority to the Clerk in consultation with the Chair to undertake this by following the appropriate process.

JB08/10/2016 – Any Other Business

Members of the Joint Board reflected on the recent visit to the port which took place on 13 September 2016. Members who attended reported that the visit had been a success and that the presentations given were very informative.

The Clerk noted that it would have been useful to incorporate a presentation from officers and Border Force since he was aware that this was an area that Members had expressed interest in. However no one from the organisation was available to attend on the day. It was agreed that officers would approach Border Force to invite them to attend the Joint Board meeting in February to provide a presentation.

Action: Officers to invite Boarder Force to the next meeting of the Joint Board.