



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR THE CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY held by remote video conferencing on Wednesday 4th November 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Andrea Baughan
Cllr Paul Duckett
Cllr Steve Jarvis
Cllr Lynn Lloyd
Cllr Peter Martin
Cllr Charles Mathew
Cllr Hugh McCarthy
Cllr Philip McDowell
Cllr Richard Newcombe
Cllr Ian Reay
Cllr Philip Williams

Appointing Body

Buckinghamshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Dacorum Borough Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Three Rivers District Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Colin Courtney
Alison Doggett
John Nicholls
Ray Payne
Ian Waller
Elizabeth Wilson

Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State
Secretary of State

Elected by Parish Councils

Cllr Susan Biggs
Cllr John Griffin
Cllr Charles Hussey

Oxfordshire
Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire

CCB Officers

Kath Daly
Graham Hurst
Elaine King
Donna Webb

Countryside Officer
Finance Officer
Chief Executive Officer
Administrative Officer

Other:

Deirdre Hansen
Dan Turner

Clerk to the Board
Trustee Chilterns Society

This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 no. 392

The Chairman welcomed all present.

19/20.33 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Alison Balfour-Lynn, Hertfordshire Parish Councils, Paul Mainds, Secretary of State appointee, Cllr Nick Rose, Buckinghamshire Council and John Shaw, Secretary of State appointee (he did attend part of the meeting).

The Chairman welcomed the new members to the board and invited them to introduce themselves, which they did.

The Chairman briefly went through the protocol for remote video conferencing meetings.

19/20.34 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

19/20.35 Minutes of the Board Meeting 26th February 2020.

The minutes of the Board Meeting of 26th February 2020 were approved as a true record after the date of the previous Board meeting in item 19/20/.23 was changed to 2019 and the word ordinary was removed.

19/20.36 Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

19/20.37 Statement of Accounts 2019-20

The Finance Officer presented the Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 31st March 2020. The overall surplus for the year was £2,495 which has added to reserves.

The AGAR is required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and once approved by the Board is subject to external audit. The AGAR contains the internal audit report, which shows as good, there were no recommendations and no management actions had been issued.

1. The Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 was approved and will be signed in the appropriate places by the Chairman and the Clerk.
2. The Accounting Statement 2019/20 was approved and will be signed in the appropriate places by the Chairman and the S151 Officer.

The Finance Officer gave a brief summary of the finances and made the following observations:

- a. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the notice of Public Rights and Publication of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return will be submitted late in breach of the public inspection time limits.
- b. A small surplus was made. The CCB ensures that income matches expenditure.
- c. Cash reserves are large and earmarked to be spend over the life time of the various projects/programs.
- d. The Pensions reserve is a statistical figure, provided by actuaries, not an actual one.

Cllr Richard Newcombe and Peter Martin, Buckinghamshire Councillors declared an interest as respective Chairman and member of the Buckinghamshire Audit and Governance Committee overseeing the Buckinghamshire Pension Fund of which the CCB is a member.

- e. Defra funding is no longer set in a 4- year funding arrangement, but applied annually, creating financial uncertainty. The cash reserves are earmarked and do not cover core expenditure.

Members had a discussion on finances. It was suggested that earmarked reserves should be clearly noted and identified in the accounts to clarify understanding of the financial position of the CCB.

The Finance Officer explained that he always supplies explanatory notes to the external auditors as the CCB's accounting model relevant to "not for profit" organisations is not compliant with the format used for the AGAR.

The Finance Officer was thanked for his hard work on the accounts.

- 1. The Board APPROVED the Annual Governance Statement included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20**
- 2. The Board APPROVED the Accounting Statement included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20**
- 3. The Board APPROVED the Statement of Accounts 2019/20**

19/20.38 Board Review including reports from the Executive and Planning Committees.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had provided a comprehensive review of the team's ongoing activities and achievements in recent months.

The Coronavirus outbreak began to impact day to day work in early March. In line with Government guidance staff worked and connected remotely. Project work, events and meetings were paused. Work continued on responding to request for information, exploring partnerships to best deliver the AONB Management Plan and on the easing of restrictions, guidance was provided for visitors, sign posting for businesses and working with partners continued.

The team have worked very hard in this challenging time, pulling out all the stops. A few highlights:

- A bid has been made, at short notice, for the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The bid for practical chalk streams work was made in partnership with non-governmental organisations. It was remarked that bidding for projects at short notice is not the most effective way of working.
- The team is still working on national level consultations,
- Supporting other AONB's,
- Meeting with MP's.
- Recruitment is continuing, with vacancies for a Chalkscapes Development Officer and a Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Project Manager advertised.
- The Government announcement on the financial settlement is expected later this month. It is expected to be a 1-year settlement.
- It was noted that the Planner has been extremely busy and will continue to be so with the Governments planning papers.

Members had the opportunity to ask questions and comment.

The Chairman noted and congratulated the big list of achievements by the team in the last six months. He was impressed with how rapidly they had picked up on new working arrangements and had managed to increase the CCB's profile in such challenging times.

1. The Board NOTED the review

19/20.39 Mend the Gap

The CEO presented an update on the developments with the Mend the Gap project.

The Board was presented with and asked to approve the Terms of Reference and the Memorandum of Agreement.

The documents have been revised and updated with feedback from the project partners.

The documents were approved at the Executive Committee meeting 23rd September 2020.

Members commented on the papers.

1. The Board NOTED the update

2. The Board APPROVED the Terms of Reference and the Memorandum of Agreement.

19/20.40 Future Establishment of the Board

The Deputy Chairman gave an introduction to the paper. Highlighting that it is commercial in confidence.

The paper is designed for the Board to deal specifically with the its statutory obligations, powers and rights.

The Executive Committee had agreed at its meeting 6th May 2020 to examine the Board's establishment arrangements and governance policy. Over time it had become clear that the financial model for the Board is unsustainable.

The Executive Committee on 26th September 2020 had discussed and accepted the paper.

The Vice- Chairman gave an introduction to the review explaining that it would have been carried out regardless of the Glover Review. The review does refer to the Glover Report.

Phase 1 report states the facts:

- a. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 from part IV paragraph 8
- b. Statutory Instrument 2004 No 1778 Countryside England
- c. The Board's Code of Governance V3A

Phase 2 is the Issues Paper

This paper summarises phase1. Both presented to the meeting.

Phase 3 is New Ways of Working.

- a. To comply with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 from Part IV paragraph 8.
- b. Revised Statutory Instrument.
- c. Revised Code of Governance to suit new ways of working.

The Board has to set out its position to move forward. This is still work in progress due to be presented at the January 2021 Executive Committee before coming to the Board.

Phase 2 the Issues paper will go to Defra after the Board meeting.

He thanked the Chairman for providing him with the bandwidth to carry out this review and a CEO who understands the need.

Members asked questions and made comments. The Deputy Chairman will check the paper through and make the suggested change before submitting to Defra.

The Deputy Chairman was commended on his thorough piece of excellent work. He thanked his co-respondents.

- 1. **The Board NOTED the progress made and the programme for delivering the review.**

11.37 John Shaw joined the meeting
11.40 Cllr Paul Duckett left the meeting

19/20.41 Any Other Business

- 1. The Deputy Chairman reported that the first two sections of the HR Policy Review have been completed.
- 2. The CEO highlighted the amount of time the team is spending on HS2 work. It is the intention to make strategic interventions in future. Holding HS2 to account.
- 3. The Chairman mentioned that he had been invited to a meeting with Defra concerning its stand on Diversity.

Future Meeting Dates

Full Board:

Wednesday 24th February 2021
 Wednesday 21st April 2021 AGM only
 Wednesday 23rd June 2021
 Wednesday 20th October 2021

Executive Committee

Wednesday 27th January 2021
 Wednesday 28th April 2021
 Wednesday 15th September 2021

Planning Committee:

Wednesday 18th November 2020
 Wednesday 3rd March 2021
 Wednesday 14th July 2021
 Wednesday 17th November 2021.

The Chairman.....date.....