



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON Thursday 12th December 2013 at THE LODGE, 90 STATION ROAD, CHINNOR OXON. OX39 4HA COMMENCING AT 10.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.35PM

Present:

Dr.Heather Barrett-Mold	Board Member
Mike Fox	Board Member, Chairman of the meeting
Cllr.John Griffin	Board member
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Board Member
Cllr.David Nimmo-Smith	Board Member
Ray Payne	Board Member
Cllr. Ian Reay	Board Member
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Board Member
Helen Tuffs	Board Member
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer

In attendance
Deirdre Hansen Clerk to the Board

13/14-94 Item 1- Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Shirley Judges and Cllr Alan Walters

13/14-95. Item 2- Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

12/13-96. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 19th September 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman after the following amendment was made;
Minute 12/13-80; Heather Barrett-Mold was added to apologies received.

13/14-97. Item 4- to minute the decision on the Report on HS2 External Benefits

The meeting formalised the decision taken by email between meetings to publish the report on the non-market benefits of a longer bored tunnel through the Chilterns as completed by Peter Brett Associates under the supervision of Ray Payne with funding from the Conserve the Chilterns and the Countryside group.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the decision to publish the report entitled ‘HighSpeed Rail in the Chilterns- Little Missenden to Wendover: An assessment of the non-market effects of the Proposed Scheme compared to the Alternative Proposal’ the report had been circulated by email between meetings. 8 Members had of the Committee had responded, all of whom gave their approval for publication**

13/14-98 item 5-Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 19th September 2013

There were no matters arising.

13/14-99. Item 6- Public Question time

No members of the public were present.

13/14-100. Item 7- Finance Report (April-November 2013)

The Finance Officer advised members of the Board’s financial position to the end of November and the likely position at the end of the financial year.

The current financial position is satisfactory with no significant problems to report. The report presented separated core activity, ongoing activity, project activity and small grants funded by the Development Reserve as first reported at the previous meeting. To the end of November expenditure against the core budget was £7,975 below profile, ongoing activity was £6,545 over profile, reflecting the success of the Countryside Festival and it was matched by additional income. Project expenditure was £ 17,588 below profile and small grants payments still to be allocated.

Income was in line with expectations.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the current financial position.**

13/14-101. Item 8- Medium Term Financial Forecast 2014-16

The Finance Officer advised the Committee of the latest forecast of income and expenditure over the medium term to 2016. The Committee was asked to consider and approve the principles and assumptions used to prepare the provisional budgets for 2014-15 and 2015-16. Provisional budget had been presented to the Committee.

The sub group had met twice to consider the options to address the forecast deficits for 2014-15 and 2015-16. A series of options were presented which reduced the operating deficit and only required limited use of reserves whilst increasing income. It was proposed to reduce the size of the Core Operating Budget to a level that the cost can be met from Core Income in 2014-15 and in 2015-16 will require a contribution of £40,000 from Reserves.

The Committee considered the following assumptions used to prepare the budget:

1. Expenditure to be included in the Core Operating budget: only essential expenditure to be included in the core budget, for which there is little scope of attracting external funding.
2. Re-allocate events, publication and most activity expenditure from Core Budget to the Ongoing Activity Budget.
3. Include the cost of employing the Chalk Streams Officer in the core budget. This position has been in place for 12 of the last 13 years and unlike other Project Officer posts is not a fixed term contract and not directly linked to Heritage Lottery Fund grants.
4. Contribution to the Chilterns Woodlands Project: the Board provides financial support (approx. £7,000) and office space to the Chiltern Woodlands Project, for which rent is charged, all direct costs are reimbursed by the Project. Due to the existence of the Project the Board has never felt the need to employ its own Woodland Officer. The value the Board receives from this arrangement is in excess of the alternatives. It is proposed to make a provision for the net costs in the Core Operating Budget.
5. Employers Pension Contributions: it is assumed that the Employers pension contributions will increase from April 2014.
6. Pay increases:
 - It is assumed that only a small number of staff will be able to achieve performance related salary increments.
 - A cost of living award @ 2% is being considered for 2014, but if that cannot be afforded the aim should be to make an offer within 1% of the Consumer Price Index, on which the cost of living award is based.
 - No change in the level of car user allowance or travel expenses was proposed.
7. Use of Reserves: It had been agreed at previous meetings to use the Reserves in the order of £30,000-£50,000 per annum.
 - The sub group had suggested that a costing exercise is undertaken to calculate the actual cost of winding up. This would give a more accurate assessment of the amount which would need to be kept in the General Reserve.
8. DEFRA and Local Authority Funding: all funding by DEFRA and Local Authorities should automatically be allocated to the core budget. The level of Local Authority funding is unlikely to be confirmed until late in the financial year. The DEFRA grant is believed to be declining, confirmation expected shortly.
9. Inflation is expected to be absorbed other than the inflationary element for employment costs.
10. The Board is unable to reclaim Vat.

11. Treasury Income: all Treasury income should be allocated to the core budget automatically. Modest returns are expected.
12. Earned income: unless needed to meet core operating costs, all earned income other than Treasury income will be allocated to the Ongoing Activity budget. From 2014-15 onwards it is hoped that the Special Events programme will be the primary source of increased income.
13. Reducing Core Operating costs: a schedule of savings providing a £33,000 reduction in core operating costs was discussed.
14. Members Allowances: not all members claim their allowances. This could be shown in budget presentations. It was proposed to continue adjusting the allowances in line with the cost of living award offered to staff. The possibility of a cap in line with adjusting the annual percentage change in value of the DEFRA grant was discussed.
15. The Core Budget Deficit:
 - Based on the figures presented; 2014-15 would present a deficit of £935, this to be covered by the Budget Equalisation Reserve.
 - 2015-16 would present a deficit of £51,214. To cover this £40,000 from the Budget Equalisation Reserve to be used and the balance from earned income.

The Board praised and thanked the Chief Officer in not only maintaining this high level of activity in difficult times, but increasing the level of activities and keeping up the morale of the staff and the members.

16. Ongoing Activity:
 - it was proposed in 2014-15 to have a similar level of ongoing activity as in 2013-14. Generally these activities are self-financing.
 - A major change will be the development of the Special Events programme with a target of a 50% return on expenditure.
17. Projects: these are to be funded from external grants, but often small amounts of match funding are required.
18. Small Grants Fund: this £20,000 current fund needs to be reassessed to allow for the support of projects that the Board will either develop itself or becomes aware of during the year. It is not intended to be a formal grant scheme any longer. The Chief Officer will look at this.
19. Conclusions:
 - The existing model continues for 2014/15 and 2015/16
 - Increase earned income
 - Modest use of reserves
 - If cuts and reductions in support continue beyond 2015-16 then a fundamental re-appraisal will be needed.

1. The Committee **SUPPORTED** the assumptions used to prepare the provisional budgets for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
2. The Committee **AGREED** that there should be a provision to offer staff and members a cost of living award at the rate of CPI, subject to a maximum of 2%.
3. The Committee **AGREED** that the Members Allowances should be adjusted by the annual percentage change in the value of the DEFRA grant (excl. inflation).
4. The Committee **AGREED** that the current Small Grants Scheme shall no longer be promoted, but provision shall be made for up to £20,000 for work that the Board agrees to support during the financial year.

11.55 John Griffin left the meeting.

13/14-102. Item 9- Proposal to create Bursaries.

The Chief Officer sought approval to create a fund of £1,000 per annum to offer 4 bursaries of £250 each to be available to anybody wishing to undertake a study or research project of a subject of relevance to the Board's aims and which would benefit the AONB. It was suggested that the bursaries be offered on the basis that the applications must fit with one of the four themes in context with the Chilterns:

- Water Environment and Wildlife
- Historic and Cultural Environment
- Landscape and Land Use
- Enjoyment of the Countryside

It was proposed that a panel of three members be appointed to consider and award the applications for bursaries.

1. The Committee **SUPPORTED** the creation of a bursary fund of £1,000 per annum to be included in the provisional budget for 2014-15 and 2015-16.
2. The Committee **APPROVED** the proposal to offer four bursaries of up to £250 each for study in the fields of: Water Environment and Wildlife; Historic and Cultural Environment; the Landscape and Land use and the Enjoyment of the Countryside.
3. The Committee **AGREED** to appoint a panel of three members to award the bursaries.

13/14-103. Item 10 Review of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-19

The Chief Officer advised members that the draft plan (with an accompanying SEA) has been out for consultation since 27th September, the deadline for comments is 13th December.

The Board will be presented with a summary of all comments on 22nd January and with a proposed final draft for approval on 25th March.

1. The Committee NOTED the report.

13/14-104. Item 11 Constituting the Chilterns Tourism Network (CTN)

The Chief Officer provided the Committee with an update on the development of the CTN and sought approval from the Committee for the proposed constitution of the CTN. The Committee was provided with a schedule of the CTN's achievements.

1. The CTN was established in 2011 as an informal group of Chiltern based businesses and organisations with an interest in working together to develop the tourism economy of the Chilterns.
2. With substantial input from the Board an EU LEADER programme grant was secured. The £30,000 LEADER funded project ran from June 2012-September 2013 and achieved a great deal in a short time.
3. With the end of the LEADER funded programme, the CTN needs to be formally constituted to act independently and raise its own funds. A business plan and a work programme have been developed. The unincorporated body needs to become constituted. The preferred option is for the CTN to be listed as a "Not for profit Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG)". Limited by guarantee means the Directors and Members have limited liability. This organisational model is preferred as it is simple to set up, offers more operational flexibility and provides options for change at a later date.
4. It is proposed that the CTN appoint a minimum of 5 directors. It was agreed that the CCB Access Officer be nominated as a director for an initial period of one year. She is currently a member of the steering group.
5. The Board has provided substantial support to the CTN with help to deliver the LEADER tourism programme and financial and staff contributions towards the Visit the Chilterns web site. Future involvement will continue and expand the benefits to the CCB of its involvement with this organisation at numerous levels.
6. The web site is hosted with the AONB website. The Conservation Board owns the domain name. It is similar to the Board's own web site and there are many links between them. The new company would need a licence to continue the use of the CCB web site.

1. **The Committee APPROVED the proposal that the Chilterns Tourism Network should be constituted as a not-for Profit Company limited by guarantee.**
2. **The Committee RECOMMENDED that the newly constituted company should have a minimum of 5 directors.**

3. **The Committee APPROVED the nomination of Annette Venters as a Director of the CTN for an initial 1-year period.**
4. **The Committee AGREED to licence the CTN to manage the Visit the Chilterns web site for an initial period of two years once the CTN has been formally constituted.**

AOB: David Nimmo-Smith informed the Committee that a stage of the “Tour of Britain” will take place in Oxfordshire in 2014, passing through the Chilterns.

12.10 David Nimmo-Smith left the meeting.

13/14-105. Item 12 Report on HS2

Chief Officer reported that the Hybrid Bill was lodged and the accompanying Environmental statement was published on 25th November. The deadline for comments on the ES is 24th January 2014.

1. The ES runs to 55,000 pages. The 56 day consulting period only includes 44 working days. The Board has lobbied local MP’s directly to seek an extension to 12 weeks and joined others in their criticism.
2. Among the surprises is the proposal to dump 12 million tonnes of spoil, arising from the “green tunnels”, in the AONB. This feature of the design, amongst many others, shows that the Government has failed to comply with the duty in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
3. Due to the size of the document it is proposed to concentrate on those issues on which the Board might decide to petition, including:
 - The case for a longer bored tunnel
 - The dumping of spoil in the AONB
 - The impact on the Rights of Way network
 - The impact on the wider historic landscape.
 - The impact on the aquifer and hydrology.

Board members and staff have attended many briefing sessions led by parliamentary agents and planning lawyers, which have been useful.

The committee discussed the most effective way to progress.

1. **The Committee AGREED that the Board’s responses to the Environmental statement should concentrate on those issues identified above in paragraph 3.**
2. **The Committee AGREED that those same issues should be those for which a petition should be prepared.**

13/14-105. Any other business:

There was no other business.

13/14-106. Future meeting dates: Tuesday 4th March 2014, Thursday 22nd May 2014, Thursday 18th September 2014 and Wednesday 10th December 2014 at 10.30am at the offices in Chinnor.

The meeting closed at 12.35m

The Chairman.....

Date.....