



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12th DECEMBER 2012 at THE LODGE, 90 STATION ROAD, CHINNOR OXON. OX39 4HA COMMENCING AT 10.30 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 13.10 PM

Present:

Mike Fox	Board Member, Chairman of the meeting
Dr. Heather Barrett-Mold	Board Member
Cllr John Griffin	Board member
Cllr Shirley Judges	Board member
Cllr Ray Payne	Board member
Cllr Richard Pushman	Board member
Cllr. Ian Reay	Board Member
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Board Member
Cllr Bill Storey	Board Member
Cllr Alan Walters	Board Member
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer
In attendance	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board

12/13-33 Item 1- Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from: Cllr Marion Mustoe

12/13-34. Item 2- Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

12/13-35. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments were made; minute 12/13-23 item 9 last sentence first paragraph the word "certain" was replaced by "higher". Minute 12/13-27 item 12 recommendation 2 last sentence "the potential value of impact" was amended to read "the value of the potential impact".

10.34 Shirley Judges arrived

10.35 Jeremy Ryman arrived.

12/13-36. Item 4- Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 20th September 2012

- a. Re item 12/13-19 item 4. The independent report on the future of forestry in England has now been published. The Government response is expected in Spring before the next Executive Committee meeting.
- b. Insurance cover: the new broker has been able to ensure that the Board has the correct cover in place and has been able to reduce the premium by 45%.
- c. Applications for the Secretary of State appointment to the Board have now been closed.

12/13-37. Item 5- Public Question time

No members of the public were present.

12/13-38. Item 6- Finance Report:

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.

To the end of November the expenditure against the core budget was 2.5% below profile and income 4.2% above profile. Including projects total expenditure is 7.3% below profile and income 3.2% below profile.

The end of year core surplus is currently forecast to be £ 22,365 largely due to higher than anticipated local authority grants, a reduction in insurance premium, and improved earned income performance. In accordance with Board policy core surpluses are added to the Development Reserve.

The current financial position is satisfactory. The committee had been provided with a detailed sheet of "other income" in view of the importance of income generated. The Countryside festival, Getting Close to Nature, the Planning Conference and interest on investments all showed an improved performance.

A detailed review of financial activity is undertaken at the end of each quarter. These reviews have resulted in some changes to the anticipated final outturn as shown in the distributed reports and include the higher than anticipated local authority grants.

1. The Committee NOTED the current financial position.

12/13-39. Item 7- Report on the Presentation of the budget:

The Chief Officer outlined a proposed change to the format of the budget.

The committee was shown a slide presentation of the proposed change to the format of the budget that will show more clearly what should be regarded as the core budget, which includes only the expenditure on the highest priority items. It will also help to identify how the Board can achieve a balanced core budget over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2011-2015.

Core income has declined and is projected to decline further. If the core budget is pared back to include only essential and committed expenditure, the core income is more likely to be sufficient to allow a balanced core budget to be achieved for the remainder of the medium term plan (2011-15). Modest sums may be required from the Budget Equalisation Reserve.

Project work will be a combination of self-funded or financed from external sources projects and those which require a contribution from the Board's own resources.

It is proposed that the core budget is restricted to:

- Employment costs
- Essential expenditure on offices and administration.
- Members allowances
- Essential services incl. Finance, personnel, legal and clerk to the Board.
- A small working budget for each department.

Early indication of tightening the definition of core expenditure is to reduce the amount allocated to this budget for 2013-14 from £577,815 to £526,251. These costs would be covered by core income of £529,386. Leaving £3,000 for project work.

The Budget Equalisation Reserve, in the order of £140,000, will not be needed to balance the core budget and can be used to support the work programme and the SDF.

The Committee will need to decide how to allocate the Board's own resources from both the Budget Equalisation and Development Reserves.

The following criteria are to be used to allocate the Conservation Board's funding:

1. Fit with the AONB Management Plan
2. Fit with the Business Plan priorities
3. On-going commitments i.e. to match fund HLF grant
4. Deemed to be a high short term priority e.g. HS2, Ash Dieback
5. High likelihood of generating additional income
6. Represents an unusual or rare opportunity.

11.00 Sally Charman, HR advisor to the Board, joined the meeting.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the proposed format for the annual budget.**
- 2. The Committee APPROVED the proposed criteria for assessing the allocation of the Conservation Board funds to projects.**

12/13-40. Item 8- Review of Financial Regulations:

The Finance Officer advised the members that, as is good practice, he had conducted a review of the Board's Financial Regulations and Financial Instructions, which had been adopted in September 2007.

Amendments to the Financial Regulations and Financial Instructions are required to reflect the new requirements contained in the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.

A revised set of Financial Regulations and Financial Instructions had been presented to the Committee for consideration. They are largely unchanged with the exception of the addition of a new section 14, Payments and Authorisation Procedures.

Standing Orders as to Contracts was also reviewed and no amendments were needed.

- 1. The Committee ADOPTED the updated set of Financial Regulations.**
- 2. The Committee NOTED that the existing set of Standing Orders as to Contracts remains unchanged.**

12/13-41. Item 9- Changing the date of the AGM and Review of Members' allowances.

The Chief Officer reported that at the AGM in October 2012 the Board had instructed the Executive Committee to consider the case for moving the AGM from October to June. He presented a report that concluded that there is a case for such a change.

The merits for changing the AGM to June are as follows:

1. Members appointed by Councils will join the Board in May/June following May elections.
2. Members appointed by the Secretary of State in April can seek election to committees without having to wait until October.
3. A problem with the AGM in October is that those members subject to appointment in April/May/June cannot, with confidence seek election to a committee for a full year.
4. An AGM in late June will still allow the Accounts to be approved by the full Board and submitted to the auditors by the end of June.
5. There is no obvious impediment to changing the AGM to June other than having a short year (Oct 2012 to June 2013). The Board will need to decide if it is acceptable for a chairman or a committee member to only serve for a maximum of 9 months.

The Committee discussed the proposal at length.

Members' Allowances:

The proposed review of allowances was postponed earlier in the year. It was proposed that such a review take place in early 2013 and a report presented to the meetings in March 2013 of the Executive Committee and the full Board, to take effect at the AGM if it is decided to hold it in June 2013.

The terms of reference for the review were agreed to be:

1. Allowances for membership of the full Board should continued to be paid. But at what rate?
2. Whether it is appropriate to pay allowances for membership of the Executive and Planning Committee? And at what rate.
3. To consider if allowances should be dependent upon attendance or a performance measure.

It is proposed that the review panel consists of the Finance Officer, the HR advisor to the Board and an independent member. The cost is estimated at £2,000

1.The Committee AGREED to advise the Board to change the AGM from October to June with effect from June 2013.

2.The Committee APPROVED the proposal to review members' allowances and a draft report submitted to the Executive Committee in March 2013.

3.The Committee APPROVED the composition of the Review Panel.

12/13-42. Item 10- Report on Home Working Policy:

The Chief Officer reported to the Committee that as a consequence of changing business requirements a need had arisen to amend the Board's „Home Working“ Policy.

Sally Charman guided the Committee through the Home Working guidelines and circumstances where it would be operationally beneficial and cost effective to employ staff to be based at home.

If the Board were to determine for business reasons that a role is to be designated as home based, then the employee should be appointed on a home worker's agreement. The appropriate authorisation and relevant contractual documents must be in place before home-working arrangements commence.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the amendments to the Homeworking Policy.**
- 2. The Committee NOTED that a formal Home Workers Agreement would need to be signed by both the CCB and the employee where home working is a requirement of the post.**

12/13-43 item 11- Appointment of Box Woodland Project Officer

The Chief Officer brought to the Committee's attention that Sarah Wright has been appointed to the post of Box Woodland Project Officer for a period of two and half years on a part time basis with effect from 7th January 2013.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the appointment of Sarah Wright to the post of Box Woodland Project Officer.**

12/13-44 item 12- Proposal for Special Project Study Leave

Sally Charman brought to the Committee a proposal to introduce a new initiative which would promote and support the Board's Training and Development policy by offering up to 10 days paid study leave and a training budget of £500 for a special project.

12.00 John Griffin left the meeting.

The Committee discussed the proposal.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the introduction of Special Project Study Leave with effect from April 2013.**
- 2. The Committee NOTED that proposals can be submitted from 1st January 2013.**

12/13-45 item 13. Report on HS2

The Chief Officer gave a report on the latest activities relating to HS2, which include:

1. A recent round of community forum meetings
2. Special bilateral meetings
3. Government Announcement on safeguarding land
4. Consultation on compensation
5. The start of the Judicial Review Proceedings

The Chilterns Conservation Board remains opposed to the construction of HS2, but in the case of mitigation, the Board will have to decide whether or not it wishes to support an option for a longer bored tunnel with a gap of 500 metres to satisfy EU safety guidance.

The Committee discussed the various activities and further requirements. The tunnel option was discussed in great detail with the Chief Officer and Ray Payne providing detail on the design options.

12.45 Mike Fox left the meeting and Ian Reay took the Chair.

1. The Board does not believe that the current proposed design or that for a discontinuous tunnel represents the best option for the Chilterns AONB or the best possible engineering design for the construction of a high speed railway through the Chilterns.
2. The Board would prefer a longer, discontinuous tunnel to the current proposed design.

3. The Board is of the view that the pressure to accept the current design or possible option of a tunnel based on the same alignment with a so called gap, is being dictated by the Government's ambitious timetable and budget cap.
 4. The Board is concerned that groups, based on their acceptance of these constraints, will select a design preference which would be a sub optimal solution which does not minimise impacts on the Chilterns communities, environment and economy.
 5. The Board believes that the Government should commission a safety report, as per EU guidance, to ascertain the need for, or nature of, an intervention facility.
 6. If a discontinuous tunnel option is selected the location of any intervention facility must be sited to minimise environmental impacts. For this reason it is unlikely the Board would support a location which involves the destruction of ancient woodland or other nationally protected heritage.
 7. The Board also believes that the Government should consider a design based on a lower line speed which would provide flexibility over alignment which would reduce a range of environmental impacts without incurring unacceptable cost or time delays.
 8. The Board accepts that unless the Government timetable changes or its approach to the construction of HS2, there is only a minimal chance that a continuous tunnel under the Chilterns would be constructed. In which case the Board would accept a discontinuous tunnel with an intervention facility on the site with the least damaging environmental impact.
 9. The Board intends to retain its preference for a continuous tunnel at least until the Judicial Reviews and possible appeals have been completed. There is a real prospect that the timetable may change by months, even years, in which case there will be time to commission a safety report, and consider adjusted alignments and line speeds which would result in significant improvements over the current proposal.
- 1. The Committee AGREED that if it is not possible to secure a continuously bored tunnel, the Board is willing to support the option of a discontinuous tunnel with an intervention facility, with appropriate design and landscaping to minimise the environmental impacts.**

12/13-46. Item 14- Update on Ash Die-back:

The Chief Officer provided the Committee with the latest information on the outbreak of Ash dieback.

The most recent survey has shown Ash dieback has now been found at over 250 sites throughout the UK. To date there are no confirmed outbreaks in the Chilterns, but there is one near Marlow and can be expected to occur in the Chilterns in 2013. The challenge is to develop a strategy to;

1. Encourage monitoring and reporting of outbreaks.
2. Record Ash as it is found now and identify important individual ash trees
3. To record the heritage of ash
4. Develop woodland regeneration initiatives
5. Identify disease resistant stock to be used for future regeneration programmes.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the latest information showing the spread of ash.**
- 2. The Committee ADVISED the Board to take a lead in developing a strategy for the Chilterns**
- 3. The Committee AGREED that in principle the Board should contribute staff time and funding to local, regional and national initiatives to record the heritage of ash.**

12/13-47. Item 15- Any other business:

There was no other business

12/13-48. Future meeting dates: Friday 5th March 2013, Thursday 23rd May 2013, Wednesday 19th September 2013 and Wednesday 12th December 2013 at 10.30am at the offices in Chinnor.

The meeting closed at 13.10pm

The Chairman..... Dates.....