



MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON Wednesday 23th September 2020 by remote video conferencing commencing at 9.30 am

Present:

Cllr John Griffin	Board Member
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member
Cllr Lynn Lloyd	Board Member
John Nicholls	Board Member
Paul Mains	Board Member
Prof. Ray Payne	Board Member
Cllr Ian Reay	Board Member, Chairman

In attendance:

Graham Hurst	CCB Finance Officer
Dr Elaine King	CCB Chief Executive Officer

Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
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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

19/20.35 Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Paul Mains who had advised in advance of the meeting that he would be late.

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Doggett.

19/20.36 Declarations of interest

None.

19/20.37 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 15th January 2020 were approved as a true record.

19/20.38 Matters arising

None

19/20.39 Finance Report

The Finance Officer had circulated the financial report to the Committee on the financial position to the end of July 2020

There is a core surplus of £17,027 due to increased external income. This surplus will be used during the year due to commitments to projects. When the budgets were set, income from local authorities had not yet been agreed and the Finance Officer had set the budgets cautiously.

An unexpected £10,000 Covid grant had been received from South Oxfordshire District Council. The Finance Officer is investigating the CCB's entitlement to this grant.

There is a significant amount of money due from HS2 for the salary costs of the HS2 AONB Review Group Programme Manager. Advertising monies are also due for the "Outstanding Chilterns" magazine.

Planning consultancy costs were higher than usual as the Planning Advisor had carried out more work in the months between the Planning Officer leaving and the new Planner starting.

The Committee discussed the financial report.

1. The Committee NOTED the financial results for the four months to July 2020.

19/20.40 Treasury Management Review

The Finance Officer reported that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy deem it good practice to annually review Treasury Management Strategy. This is done in September.

The Finance Officer gave details on the CCB's holding of funds, ensuring the best rates of return with the lowest risk. The Executive Committee agreed to maintain its strategy of using UK deposit accounts, maximising return with a low risk approach.

The Finance Officer will maintain his approach to search for higher returns without risking capital.

It was noted that interest rates are exceptionally low at present.

Treasury Management was discussed.

1. The Committee AGREED to continue to maximise interest received from deposit accounts where the risk of losing capital is reduced.

19/20.41 Annual Accounts

The Finance Officer advised members of the CCB's financial position to the end of 2019-20 as presented in the Annual Accounts prior to Full Board approval at the next Board meeting.

1. The increased total income of £1,186,214 is almost entirely due to the project income increase of £300,000.
2. The increase in expenditure to £1,183,719 is also almost entirely due to increased project expenditure just over £300,000.
3. The surplus for the years was £2,495

4. The increase in current assets is entirely due to the advanced payment by Great Western Railway for funding to the Mind the Gap joint venture with the North Wessex Downs AONB of £3,750,000. This is treated as deferred income and the corresponding liability is shown in current liabilities reflecting that these funds will be spent in future years as the Mind the Gap programme advances. This is in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice rules for income recognition.
5. It was noted that the CCB's pension scheme is 105.9% funded. The Triannual valuation and the FRS 102 valuation for the annual accounts are performed using different assumptions as advised in the Pension Scheme report discussed by the Committee at its January 2020 meeting (ref 19/20.20)
6. Reserves were noted. Most are restricted. The free reserve is £100,000.
7. The internal audit report required in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been completed and has confirmed that there are no matters of concern to be brought to the attention of the Board.
8. The final internal audit report is awaited and will be brought to the Board. The external audit is delayed until the AGAR has been approved by the Full Board. The restrictions due to Covid-19 have meant the AGAR approval will be at the next Board meeting instead of at the time of the AGM normally held in June.

The Finance Officer was thanked for his work.

1. The Committee NOTED the CCB's financial results for the year ending 2019-20

10.07 Paul Mains joined the meeting.

19/20.42 Board Review

The Chief Executive Officer had provided a comprehensive overview of the team's activities and achievement over recent months.

She thanked the Finance Officer for advising her and managing the CCB's accounts effectively.

The Finance Officer complimented her detailed understanding of the finances.

The CEO commented that the Board report had been a team effort with every member of the team contributing to the report. She highlighted a few points.

1. The team is managing working from home exceedingly well. More work has been generated due to Covid-19 and the team has responded to the opportunities that have arisen. The team is exploring how to manage delivery of the additional work in the long term.
2. One of her key priorities has been looking after the team while working remotely. Staff have been able to collect items of equipment and furniture to enable working from home and are meeting in small groups, but are primarily based at home for the time being.
3. The CCB's core work is in the Chilterns, but the CEO and the team are also working to have more of a voice nationally, for example through working with other AONBs and the National Association of AONB (NAAONB).

4. The team is drafting an Expression of Interest for a bid for the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, recently launched by the Government. The focus is on practical work as well also looking at bidding for a greater sum with the NAAONB's for this fund. The focus is on practical work to restore chalk streams and education, connecting people with nature. This bid includes working in partnership with NGO's. The CEO is developing a bid with the NAAONB. The deadline for expressions of interest for smaller bids (>£250k) is 24 September 2020 and for bids £250,000 to £5m the deadline is 2 October 2020.
5. It is still expected that the Government will respond to the Glover Review by the end of the year. The CEO continues to contribute to the Defra contact group for AONBs and National Parks.
6. The Chilterns Chalk Streams project continues to be busy, with chalk streams currently a very topical issue.
7. The Countryside Officer is working with the team and partners on identifying priorities for a delivery plan for the AONB Management Plan.
8. The CCB submitted Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for 2019/20 to the NAAONB, which compiles the data and sends them to Defra. The CCB's KPI is impressive with increases in metric including the number of volunteers (612 to 3,281) and the value of volunteer time (£75,680 to £240,476). Attendance at events that we have convened also increased (3,597 to 4,464) and the number of young people engaged (436 to 1,486). The CCB is also part of the steering group or lead partner on a great number of partnerships (17 to 29).

Members thanked the CEO for her report. They were impressed with all the activity and very encouraged by the progress she highlighted.

The CEO expressed her concern regarding the design of the HS2 Amersham vent shaft. The impression is being given that the AONB approves the current design, though this is not the case. A briefing document was provided to Buckinghamshire Council and the local MP, Cheryl Gillan. She expressed her concern that the CCB's view had not been taken into account, even though they are members of the HS2 Chilterns AONB Review Group and highlights the challenges of not being a statutory consultee.

The Chairman stated that he was very impressed with all the work the CEO and the team have been doing including the projects, engagement and increasing the profile of the CCB. He was grateful to the CEO and the team for all the work that is going on in very difficult circumstances.

1. The Committee NOTED the Board Review and provided feedback.

19/20.43 Mend the Gap

The CEO updated members on the development with the Mend the Gap programme and provided the Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Agreement for approval.

1. The project was initiated following the installation of steel gantries and wires for the Great Western Electrification project between Reading and Didcot, affecting the North Wessex Downs AONB and the Chilterns AONB. Network Rail provided a £3.75m grant to restore the natural beauty in these two nationally protected landscapes.

2. Jo Watson was been appointed as Programme Manager in February 2020. A month later the Covid -19 restrictions came into play, curtailing a lot of the work, but with the easing of restrictions momentum is starting to build.
3. The key governance documents have been updated and discussed by the Committee. It was noted that the CEO Chairs the Mend the Gap Steering Group and the CCB Finance Officer oversees the finances for the programme, regularly reporting to the Executive Committee. The members asked for a bi-monthly summary report in advance of the steering group meetings. The Advisory Group will stay in place and it was agreed that the programme will be a standing item on the agendas of the Executive Committee and Board Meetings.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the update, provided feedback and APPROVED the Terms of Reference and the Memorandum of Agreement.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED that the Mend the Gap programme will be a standing item on future agendas for the Executive Committee and Board Meetings.**

19/20.43 Future establishment of the Board

The Deputy Chairman had tabled a draft of Phase 1 of the Board's report on the future establishment of the Board.

He acknowledged the assistance of the Board members, Paul Mains, John Nicholls, John Griffin, the Finance Officer and the Clerk in their advice and assistance in preparing the draft report.

The future establishment of the Board is divided into three basic phases. Phase 1 establishes the facts and subsequent reports will make recommendations.

The Members discussed and agreed the report and the programme for delivery. The document is very helpful.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the progress and the programme for delivery of the review.**

19/20.44 Any Other Business

1. The Vice-Chairman reported that the first review of the HR policy will be released shortly.

11.38 The Vice-Chairman left the meeting

2. The Clerk had asked if the CCB's website complied with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (no2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Post meeting the Communications Officer confirmed that the new website will comply, but the launch had been delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions. The existing website requires two hours work to make it compliant, which she has actioned straight away.

3. The Chairman advised the Committee that the Vice-Chairman's appointment to the Board will end after ten years in March 2021. Defra will be recruiting a replacement.

Next meeting: TBC

The Chairman.....

Date.....