



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON Thursday 23rd May at THE LODGE, 90 STATION ROAD, CHINNOR OXON. OX39 4HA COMMENCING AT 10.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30PM

Present:

Mike Fox	Board Member, Chairman of the meeting
Cllr Marion Mustoe	Board member
Ray Payne	Board Member
Cllr. Ian Reay	Board Member
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	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

12/13-68 Item 1- Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from: Dr. Heather Barrett-Mold, Cllrs John Griffin and Shirley Judges. Although the meeting was quorate no parish council member was presents and, therefore, any decisions will have to be ratified at the next meeting.

12/13-69. Item 2- Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

12/13-70. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments were made; Ray Payne is not a councillor, but a Secretary of State appointee, minute 12/13-63-7; notable was changed to notably.

12/13-71. Item 4- Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 5th March 2013

Item 12/13-55 item 8 Draft budget: the budget will be adjusted upwards due to deferred changes in the pension scheme.

12/13-72. Item 5- Public Question time

No members of the public were present.

12/13-73. Item 6- Finance Report (2012-13)

The Finance Officer advised members of the Board's likely financial position to the end of the financial year 2012-13.

Subject to any financial adjustments core expenditure totalled £546,389, 2% or £11,876 below the original estimate. Core income was £25,164 or 4.4% above the original estimate at £596,274. Some changes will be made to restricted and earmarked reserves. The members were provided with detailed financial information.

Income was higher than forecast partly due to local authority contributions not being cut as expected and higher than forecast earned income achieved.

1. Formal accounts will be presented to the Board in June and are subject to audit by the Audit Commission.
2. The Government will present a new spending review in June. In the light of this the Medium Term Financial Plan will be updated and presented to a future meeting.
3. At the same time a review will be presented of reserve holdings. It is recommended that the number of earmarked reserves be rationalised. Those relating to Getting close to Nature, Countryside Festival, Woodland, HS2, Commons, Chilterns Cycleway and Access Issues will be transferred to the Development Reserve.
4. A rationalisation will result in the following reserves:

General Reserve	£135,000
Budget Equalisation Reserve	£137,320
Development Reserve	£245,027
Chalk Stream Reserve	£ 19,697
Red Kites Reserve	£ 6,629
Total	£543,673

1. **The Committee NOTED the likely financial outcome and that the formal accounts will be presented to the Board in June.**
2. **The Committee APPROVED in principle the merging of reserves.**
3. **The Committee NOTED that an updated Medium Term Financial Plan will be presented to a future meeting.**

12/13-74. Item 7- Report of Internal Auditors

The Finance Officer reported to the Committee that the auditor, Hertfordshire Shared Internal Audit Service had completed their annual review and had submitted their report.

1. The audit had focussed on high risk areas as shown in the Boards Risk Register.
2. The audit had shown that effective controls are in operation for those elements of risk management processes covered by the review.
3. A definition of assurance level was provided.
4. 2 recommendations were made following the audit, 1 with medium priority; a business continuity plan has not yet been subject to full testing and 1 with merits attention; two old outstanding cheques should be written back.

5. The management action plan provided will provide the required action to be taken.

The report provides good levels of assurance to support the Annual Governance Statement.

- 1. The Committee NOTED and AGREED the report of the internal auditors.**

12/13-75. Item 8- Review of the AONB Management Plan

The Chief Officer reported that the process of consulting on the review of the Management Plan has begun. The scoping report for the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) has been published and an on-line issues consultation has gone live. Long term objectives, big issues and possible adjustments of the membership of the Board were touched upon.

1. The scoping report for the SEA was circulated for consultation on 8th May. The consultation period closes 19th June. Comments received will be fed back to the Board and will influence the content of the draft plan and SEA.
2. Between September and December a public consultation exercise on the draft plan and draft SEA will take place.
3. Committee members have received electronic copies of the draft SEA scoping report. They can be accessed via- www.chilternsaonb.org/management-plan.
4. Future public consultation exercises will also be promoted via the above link.
5. The Board's working group had reviewed the draft scoping report 24th April. The group is scheduled to meet again in July.
6. The consultation with a wide range of partners on technical issues is ongoing.
7. The informal consultations are now supplemented by a public questionnaire on general issues. The questionnaire is undertaken electronically and can be completed by the link above.

- 1. The Committee NOTED that the review of the Management Plan is progressing and the first consultation phase is underway.**

12/13-76. Item 9- Report on HS2

The Chief Officer informed the Committee of recent and expected HS2 related activity. The Queen's speech included provision for a HS2 Bill (a preparation or so called paving bill) to enable the Government to commit the necessary funds to plan the railway including elements of property compensation.

1. Community Forum Meetings. These had been suspended by HS2 Ltd in February due to the upcoming County Council elections and the period that the draft Environmental Statement is being consulted on. The community had decided to continue to hold forum meetings and HS2 Ltd was invited to attend.
2. Draft Environmental Statement. This has been issued electronically, but is a lengthy document and the Board has requested a hard copy. The document is wholly

inadequate and all the board's staff are working on it. A staff meeting is to be held 04/06/13 to put the first thoughts together. It is intended to have the first draft response ready two weeks before the closing date. It is believed that a number of one day road shows will be organised by HS2 Ltd. Due to the size and the nature of the document the Board may need to increase the extent of its collaboration with others. A budget (up to £5,000) has already been approved for this purpose.

3. Judicial Reviews.

- a. The review challenging the legality of the compensation arrangements was successful and government has stated that it will not appeal.
- b. The judge gave leave to appeal the ruling on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment. HS2AA is preparing an appeal which will be heard on 10th June.

4. External benefits of a longer tunnel.

- a. In January 2012 the Secretary of State announced the current route proclaiming that the Chiltern would be protected by having a longer tunnel leaving only 1.4 miles of route visible in the Chilterns. The longer tunnel now emerges at Mantles Wood at an elevation of 500feet in the centre of the AONB, in the middle of an ancient woodland. According to the Board's own calculations the length of the visible route remains nearly 4 miles. A Freedom of Information request and an appeal for confirmation of the length of the visible route were refused. It is proposed to make a complaint.
- b. It is the Board's and others view that the environmental and social impacts of the length of railway not in a tunnel is considerable, including the effects of constructing a so called green tunnel. Therefore, a full length tunnel is the best solution.
- c. Campaign groups had paid for consultants to prepare a technical feasibility report and cost estimate of a longer tunnel. This showed that the cost of a longer tunnel would not be significantly more than the current proposal. HS2 Ltd rejected the report and claimed that the cost would be £400 million more. This is strongly disputed and HS2 Ltd refuses to disclose their calculations.
- d. Another sub group led by Ray Payne is now preparing the case for a full length bored tunnel based on calculating the cost to society and not just the construction costs to the Department of Transport.
- e. An initial and very rough estimate suggest that the benefits to society of a full length bored tunnel are substantial, in the order of £400m, sufficient to make the full length bored tunnel the best option for minimising the cost to society.
- f. To develop this approach independent consultants will need to be engaged, estimated cost of £40,000. The task of securing support for this brief has begun. A report will need to be ready before the Hybrid Bill is laid. It was discussed that the Board could be prepared to contribute up to £5,000 from the Development Reserve. The budget allocated for the assistance to assess the Environment Statement may not be required and it was suggested that the bulk of £5,000 allocated for that could be transferred to this work.

- g. The Queen's speech to Parliament included provision for a High Speed Rail (preparation or paving) Bill. This would enable the Treasury to release funds that the Department of Transport needs to develop the railway. It is believed this was done for two reasons: firstly the expenditure is already over budget. Secondly, it will require parliament to vote for this Bill, thus securing a form of endorsement for HS2 earlier than the Hybrid Bill, which may well not, now secure Royal Assent during this Parliament. The Board has to bear in mind that HS2 still has cross party support even if that is expressed more softly now than it once was.
- h. The Board has been asked to provide observations on the Draft 'Paving Bill' on matters of Governance, timing and amount. Ray Payne will provide governance on this.

Ray Payne thanked the Board's staff for their extra work and support on the HS2 work beyond the call of duty.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED making a formal complaint to the Information Commissioner over HS2 Ltd.'s refusal to provide confirmation of the length of visible route in the Chilterns AONB.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED to allocate £5,000 to the cost of commissioning consultants to prepare a report on the external benefits of a tunnel.**
- 3. The Committee AGREED that the Board provides observations on the draft 'Paving Bill' on matters of governance, timing and amount.**

12/13-77. Item 10- Proposed cycle to work scheme.

The Chief Officer advised the Committee that the Government has introduced a tax efficient scheme to help buy bikes and safety equipment to promote cycling to work.

The Committee discussed registering and introducing a cycle to work scheme and to develop an appropriate personnel policy. The scheme encourages green travel, promotes a healthier life style and reduces environmental pollution. The benefit is tax free to employees and the administrative costs to the Board are minimal.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the Board's Registration for a Cycle to Work Scheme.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED that an appropriate policy is prepared and included in the employee handbook.**

12/13-78. Item 11- Report on IUNC Qualification.

The Chief Officer informed the Committee that The International Union for Conservation of Nature provides international recognition for the AONB designation, which it places in its Category V - Protected Landscapes and Seascapes. The IUCN is seeking renewed to Commitment to nature conservation in these areas and is requesting evidence of that commitment. The National Association for AONS has prepared and had accepted, a Statement of Compliance for all AONBs but this needs to be supported by an individual statement from

each AONB. The Committee discussed retaining the status of an IUCN Category V designated area for the Chilterns AONB and the statement of commitment to be submitted.

- 1. The Committee AGREED that the Board seeks continued recognition of the Chilterns AONB an IUCN Category V protected area.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED that the Board endorses the Statement of Compliance for AONBs approved by the IUCN.**
- 3. The Committee APPROVED the draft statement for the Chiltern AONB and that it is submitted on behalf of the Board.**

12/13-79 Any other business:

- At last year's AGM a recommendation to change the balance of the membership of the Executive Committee was submitted. The AGM referred the matter to the Executive Committee. The Committee discussed the proposal to reduce the Local Authority membership of the Executive Committee from 5 members to 4 and the membership of Secretary of State Members from 2 to 3.
- 1. The Committee AGREED to put the resolution for the change in balance of the Executive Committee membership as suggested above to the next AGM.**

12/13-80. Future meeting dates: Thursday 19th September 2013 and Thursday 12th December 2013 at 10.30am at the offices in Chinnor.

The meeting closed at 12.30m

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