



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 5TH MARCH 2013 at THE LODGE, 90 STATION ROAD, CHINNOR OXON. OX39 4HA COMMENCING AT 2.00PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.55 PM

Present:

Mike Fox	Board Member, Chairman of the meeting
Cllr John Griffin	Board member
Cllr Shirley Judges	Board member
Cllr Marion Mustoe	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

12/13-48 Item 1- Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from: Dr. Heather Barrett-Mold

12/13-49. Item 2- Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

12/13-50. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments were made; minute 12/13-45second paragraph the letter “d” was added to the word “boar”. Minute 12/13-48 the days of the future meetings were corrected to read: Tuesday 5th March, Thursday 19th September and Thursday 12th December.

12/13-51. Item 4- Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 12th December 2012

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

12/13-52. Item 5- Public Question time

No members of the public were present.

12/13-53. Item 6- Finance Report:

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

To the end of January the expenditure against the core budget was 3% below profile and income 4% above profile. By the end of the year core expenditure is forecast to exceed the budget by £5,480 or 1%. Core income will exceed the budget by £24,290 (4.2%), mainly due to higher than anticipated local authority contributions and higher than targeted earned income.

The current financial position is satisfactory with no problems to report. The members were provided with detailed information of other income.

Core expenditure is below profile, but it is anticipated that this will change by the end of the year.

1. The Committee NOTED the current financial position.

12/13-54. Item 7- Pension Scheme- Discretionary Policies:

The Chief Officer reported to the Committee that under Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, membership and contributions Regulations 2008), each Employing Authority is required to formulate, publish and keep under review a policy statement in relation to the exercise of a number of discretions under the LGPS. The Board must approve and publish policies for listed discretions by 31/03/13.

The Board is an admitted member of the Bucks Local Government Pension Scheme and as such has to have a policy on the following discretions:

1. Whether to augment membership of an active member (by up to 10 years)
2. Whether to grant additional pension to a member (by up to £5,000 p.a.)
3. Whether all or some benefits can be paid if an employee reduces their hours or grade (flexible retirement)
4. Whether to waive, in whole or in part, actuarial reduction on benefits paid on flexible retirement.
5. Whether to grant application for early payment of benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60 (for both active and deferred members).
6. Whether to waive, on compassionate grounds, the actuarial reduction applied to benefits paid early.
7. Whether to grant an application for reinstatement of a suspended tier 3 ill health pension on or after age 55 and before age 60.
8. Whether to waive, on compassionate grounds, the actuarial reduction applied to the reinstatement of a suspended tier 3 ill health pension paid early (i.e. on or after age 55 and before age 60).
9. Whether the employer intends to adopt a discretionary injury benefit scheme.
10. Whether to permit late inward transfer of pension rights.

The proposed discretions policy discussed is modelled on that of Bucks CC. The requirement for a published policy on discretions 7 and 8 above is new. The presented policy meets the requirements of the Bucks Local Government Pension Scheme. No current member of staff is able to draw a pension until the age 55 and no member of staff will reach that age until March 2014. During the next 12 months the policy discretions are to be reviewed and refined. The chief officer will seek advice.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the proposed pension Scheme Discretionary Policy.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED that the policy is further reviewed during the next 12 months.**

12/13-55. Item 8- Draft Budget 2013-14:

The Finance Officer reported the draft budget 2013-14 in great detail in the new format as approved by the committee at its last meeting.

The core activity will be covered by the Defra grant (at 80%) , local authority and parish grants and by the use of a small amount of earned income.

On-going activity will be funded from the balance of earned income and from planned use of part of the Development Reserve.

Project activity will be met largely by external funding, the balance of Defra funding for the Chalk Stream Project plus the application of earmarked reserves.

Earmarked reserves will be needed to fund a Small Grants Scheme.

1. Core activity as indicated at the last meeting totals £542,485 plus a £2,500 contribution to the National Association for AONBs. To meet the total core expenditure, after the Defra and local authorities and parish grants; £3,742 is expected to be contributed from the Board's earned income of £35,535. The Defra grant will fall by £28,654 between 2012-13 and 2013-14. Local authority income has shown a 10% reduction.
2. On-going activity totals of £38,860 will be met by £31,793 of earned income and the remainder coming from the earmarked reserves.
3. Project activity of £205,265 is expected, although this may change as further project funds are secured.
4. £198,972 of project activity is met by various HLF grants, other grant funds and the balance of the Defra grant. Any balance required will come from earmarked reserves.
5. Small Grants Fund: a total of £20,000 funded from earmarked reserves and restricted reserves will include former SDF activity.

The impact of this budget on reserves is a total reduction of £33,360 (£7,067 for on-going activity, £6,293 for project and £20,000 for a small grants fund)

- 1. The Committee CONSIDERED and RECOMMENDED the Draft Budget and its adoption to the Board.**

12/13-59. Item 9- Medium Term Financial Plan:

The Finance Officer reported that budget from 2014-15 onwards will be prepared in the context of probable further cuts in funding.

In response to a probable continuation of grant cuts, the most recent initiative has been to change the format of the budget so as to separate the highest priority core activity from the total budget. The Finance Officer had provided the Committee with the details.

The financial model for 2014-15 has been based on the adjusted draft budget for 2013-14. The adjustments are:

- A two per cent staff pay awards plus, increments where they are due, from April 2014.
- A two per cent increase in members' allowances
- A seven per cent reduction in Defra grant and a ten per cent reduction on local authority grants for 2014-15, compared to 2013-14.

The overall impact is an increase of £14,380 in core expenditure and a reduction in grant income of £26,418, a net impact of £40,798.

This means that the reduced Defra grant will not meet 80 per cent of core expenditure as it has done to date. When all earned income is applied there will be a small deficit of £9,000 to be met from reserves.

All other expenditure from 2014-15 onwards will depend upon external funding.

Once the outturn for 2012-13 is known and reserve levels confirmed a further report will be presented to the Committee that reforecast future activity and presents a fundamental review of reserve holdings and required levels.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the implications of the latest financial modelling and AGREED to conduct a review of future activity and reserve holdings at the next meeting.**

12/13-60. Item 10- Treasury Management:

The Finance Officer presented a draft Treasury Management Strategy for the Conservation Board for the approval of members. Whilst there is no legal requirement for the Board to adopt such a Strategy, it is considered to be good practice for the Board to adopt a Treasury Management Strategy. The Board adopted a Treasury Management Strategy for the first time in February 2008. A Treasury Management Strategy is adopted and reviewed on an annual basis. The first report for 2013-14 covering policy and Strategy was presented.

The overall objective is to balance risk against return.

Due to the significant reduction in interest rates since autumn 2008 the need has arisen over time to extend the Board's investing opportunities.

- 1. The Committee ADOPTED the Treasury Management Strategy outlined in the report and the Treasury Management Policy Statement detailed in Appendix 'A' of the agenda.**

2. **The Committee RECEIVED a report on the performance of the Treasury Management after the end of each financial year and REVIEWED the Treasury Management strategy before the start of each year.**
3. **The Committee APPROVED the decision taken by the Finance Officer and Chief Officer to add Nationwide International to the list of approved institutions to which the Board will lend money.**

12/13-61 item 11- Draft Review of Members' Allowances:

The Chief Officer reported that the Review panel had met and the members had been provided with the report containing the conclusions and recommendations and suggestions of the panel. The members discussed the report and the recommendations were considered before these are put to the full Board on 27th March 2013.

The recommendations to be presented to the Board:

1. There should be no link between attendance rate and payment of allowances.
2. Allowance rates for both the Executive Committee and the Planning Committee remain on a par.
3. The Chairman of the Board's special responsibility allowance should cover the role of being a member of the Executive Committee, but an additional special responsibility payment should be offered if they also chair the Executive Committee.
4. There should be a link between the annual cost of living award given to staff and the recommended allowance paid to Board members.
5. However, the Board should decide annually whether, and by how much, to adjust allowances.
6. Consideration should be given to capping the total costs of the Board members allowance scheme as a maximum percentage of the Board's budget.
7. The Board commits to undertaking a full review of the Allowances Scheme every 5 years, but decides annually whether this is an appropriate cycle.

15.20 Jeremy Ryman left the meeting

1. **The Committee CONSIDERED the recommendations from the Review Panel.**
2. **The Committee FORMULATED recommendations on the panel report to be presented to the full Board on 27th March.**
3. **The Committee GAVE full weight to the additional suggestions made by the Panel**

12/13-62 item 12- Review of Risk Register:

The Finance Officer and Chief Officer reported that the Risk Register adopted by the Committee on 27/02/2008 had been reviewed. The Finance Officer explained to the Committee the various control measures in place to identify, assess, evaluate and manage risks that are faced in a continually

changing environment. The Risk Register is a live document that will be reviewed and amended on a regular basis. The Executive Committee will review the latest version every six months.

1. **The Committee CONFIRMED this version of the Risk Register as controlling risks currently faced by the Board.**
2. **The Committee NOTED that the Register will be reviewed again in six months.**

12/13-63 item 13. Report on HS2

The Chief Officer reported the latest activities relating to HS2:

1. Judicial Reviews
 2. Longer tunnels
 3. Bucks Blueprint
 4. Community Forums
 5. Bucks and Herts Planning Forum
 6. Environment Statement
 7. Communication with the Secretary of State
1. The decisions on the Judicial Reviews (JRs) are not known yet.
 2. Even if the rulings are unfavourable they will be appealed unless it is clear from the wording of the ruling that it is unlikely to succeed.
 3. Two groups had commissioned an assessment of practicality and a cost estimate for a longer tunnel to Wendover, including the option of a discontinuous tunnel. The report has concluded that it was practical, but there would be an additional cost of approx.£65million.
 4. HS2 Ltd has stated that due to the cost difference they will not be instructing any work to extend the tunnel currently from the M25 to Mantles Wood.
 5. This has been met with local anger. The communities have now secured support from local MPs and many more organisations.
 6. The Board has prepared an initial assessment of various wider costs, which would be saved by having a longer tunnel. They amount to a savings in the order of £400million.
 7. Led by Bucks County Council, a considerable amount of effort has been invested by staff and notable Ray Payne, to help prepare what is called a Blueprint for HS2, should it go ahead. It is intended to help everyone respond to the Environmental Statement expected this spring and subsequently with the petitioning of parliament, when the Hybrid Bill is laid by the end of the year.

8. HS2Ltd have been reluctant to discuss design. The prevalent view is that good design starts at the beginning. HS2 Ltd proposes to appoint a Design Panel once Royal Assent is given, sometime in 2015. This is considered to be too late.
 9. Community forum meetings have been delayed and HS2Ltd have unilaterally announced that they are now suspended until September. This means that communities are denied the opportunity to discuss matters which are of importance to them. HS2Ltd has not been prepared to listen carefully to views presented or responded to them. There is widespread anger over this. The Board has been represented at all forum meetings by staff and members.
 10. Bucks and Herts Planning Forum. This forum comprises the local authorities in Bucks, Herts and the Conservation Board. At the second meeting on 24th January 2013 HS2 announced its intention to disband county based meetings. They were considering replacing them with a whole line forum of local authorities. This was resisted by local authorities, but the outcome is not known. No date for future meetings has been set.
 11. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is being prepared. This is incorporated in an Environment Statement (ES), which describes how the EIA has influenced the proposal and design choices etc.
 12. The draft scoping of the EIA was consulted on last year and criticised heavily by many. It is likely to be weak in many respects, not least due to the unusual weather conditions which will have affected field data gathering and because many landowners denied access to HS2Ltd surveyors.
 13. A subject of one of the JR's is that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) should have been prepared, which would have required the Government to consider and consult on alternative routes to avoid significant impacts.
 14. When the Environment Statement is published it is imperative that the Board scrutinises all relevant parts closely. This will divert staff and member time; it is proposed to engage additional expertise to assist. There will be a cost, but will not exceed the current earmarked allocation in reserves (£10,000).
 15. It is proposed to set up a sub group of the Board to prepare its response.
 16. Due to the ineffectiveness of the community forums and the unwillingness of HS2Ltd to discuss environmental impacts with the Board it is recommended that the Board writes to the Secretary of State for Transport expressing its concerns and its support for an extended tunnel. A meeting should be sought with either the Secretary of State or the Minister of State who is taking the lead on HS2.
- 1. The Committee APPROVED the engagement of technical expertise to assess the draft Environment Statement at a cost not exceeding £5,000 initially.**

2. **The Committee AGREED to set up a sub group of the Board to oversee the Board's response to the Environment Statement.**
3. **The Committee AGREED to write to the Secretary of State expressing concern over the effectiveness of the process of engagement conducted by HS2Ltd and to seek a meeting.**

12/13-64. Item 14- Approval for Expenditure on Commons Project:

The Chief Officer requested authorisation from the Committee to undertake expenditure of up to £14,000 for the repair work of erosion damage to the Five Knolls Neolithic barrow on Dunstable Downs.

1. **The Committee APPROVED the planned expenditure on repairs of the Five Knolls Neolithic Barrow, Dunstable.**

12/13-65. Item 15- Approval for Bank Signatory:

The Chief Officer sought approval to add Claire Forrest as a bank signatory, due to the departure of the Administrative Officer on maternity leave.

1. **The Committee APPROVED the addition of Claire Forrest to the bank signatory list.**

12/13-66 Any other business:

There was no other business

12/13-67. Future meeting dates: Thursday 23rd May 2013, Thursday 19th September 2013 and Thursday 12th December 2013 at 10.30am at the offices in Chinnor.

The meeting closed at 15.55pm

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