



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON Wednesday 10th December 2014 at Princes Risborough Golf Club, Saunderton Lee HP27 9NX commencing at 10.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30PM

Present:

Dr Heather Barrett-Mold	Board member
Cllr. John Griffin	Board Member
Cllr David Nimmo-Smith	Board Member
Ray Payne	Board Member
Cllr. Ian Reay	Board Member, Chairman of the meeting
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Board Member
Helen Tuffs	Board Member
Cllr Alan Walters	Board Member
Cllr Julia Wells	Board Member

Kath Daly	CCB Countryside Officer
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer

In attendance	
Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board

14/15-17 Item 1- Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Marion Mustoe.

14/15-18. Item 2- Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

14/15-19. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 17th September 2014 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments were made:

- P82 14/15-7 item7: 2nd paragraph, apostrophe in Boards' moved to read Board's.
- P84 14/15-11 item 11.1st paragraph Jarman changed to Charman.
- P84 14/15-11 item 11. Final paragraph's' removed from acknowledges to read acknowledge.

- P85 14/15-12 item 12. 2nd paragraph add “and he has accepted a further 3 year appointment.
It was noted that apologies for Elizabeth Wilson had been included, but that she is not a member of the Executive Committee.

14/15-20. Item 4- Matters Arising from the minutes 17th September 2014

1. The Chief Officer reported that Wendy Jordan has been appointed to the Board by Three Rivers DC replacing Brian Norman.
2. The Secretary of State has announced a £30m Community and Business Support Fund for HS2.
3. The Chief Officer will have completed a paper on the establishment of a Board Member Fellowship before the end of the year.

10.40 David Nimmo-Smith arrived.

14/15-21. Item 5- Public Question time

No members of the public were present.

14/15-22. Item 6- Finance Report

The Chief Officer informed members that DEFRA will not be reducing its grant this financial year.

The Finance Officer advised the Committee of the Board’s financial position to the end of the November 2014 and the projected position by the end of the year. Members discussed the position.

The current financial position is satisfactory with no significant problems to report.

1. Core expenditure at the end of November is just £1,520 below profile or 0.4%
2. Ongoing activity is on target with the exception of Special Events activity which is falling behind profile.
3. Project expenditure is £17,795 below profile; special projects are likely to be underspent.
4. Income from all the various sources is generally in line with expectation. The anticipated in-year reduction in DEFRA funding not taking place is reflected in the reinstatement of £7,845
5. Other income is £ 12,880 above profile, primarily due to the success of the Countryside Festival.
6. It is anticipated that the financial impact of staff changes from November to March will result in potential saving of £7,857.
7. The figures presented to the meeting show that the reserves at the end of the year will be largely unchanged.

The Finance Officer informed the Committee of the proposed changes to the presentation of the financial figures in the next year. The Committee welcomed the intended changes.

1. The Committee NOTED the current financial position.

14/15-23. Item 7- Bank Signatories

The Finance Officer informed the Committee that the forthcoming retirement of Steve Rodrick necessitates a change to the bank mandate. The mandate with HSBC provides for financial transactions, other than money market negotiations, to be subject to any two signatories from a list of four. The four signatories are: Steve Rodrick, Colin White, Claire Forrest and Donna Webb. It was proposed to replace Steve Rodrick with Kath Daly with the effect from 1st January 2015.

1. The Committee AGREED to replace Steve Rodrick with Kath Daly as a bank signatory with effect from 1st January 2015.

14/15-24. Item 8. Fidelity Guarantee Insurance

The Finance Officer asked the Committee to carry out its annual review of policy on fidelity guarantee insurance. He advised the Committee to continue the current policy. The current position is unchanged from a year ago. Reserve holdings are in the region of £700,000, whereas cover is £250,000. Money market transactions are under the direct control of the Finance Officer, who is not a cheque signatory and no individual investment exceeds £250,000.

1. The Committee DECIDED to leave the amount of fidelity cover unchanged on the grounds that the funds are under the direct control of the Finance Officer, who is not a bank signatory and no individual investment exceeds £250,000,

14/15-25 item 9. Review of Risk Register

The Finance Officer reminded the Committee that due to the Board's changing objectives and operating environment it was resolved at the Committee's last meeting to review the Risk Register at each meeting.

The Chief Officer and Finance Officer had reviewed the risk register and had concluded that in the majority of cases the control measures in place are adequate to control the risks facing the Board. The highest risks remain those associated with the retirement of the Chief Officer and the potential for future funding cuts.

The Committee reviewed in detail the latest version of the Risk Register. The Committee also looked at whether the Risk Register was appropriate and fit for purpose. After discussion it was agreed to bring suggested changes to the next Executive Committee meeting.

1. **The Committee CONFIRMED this version of the Risk Register as controlling risks currently faced by the Board.**
2. **The Committee AGREED to consider at its next meeting whether the risk process currently in use is fit for purpose.**
3. **The Committee NOTED that the Register will be thoroughly reviewed at the next meeting of the Committee.**

14/15-26. Item 10- Budget 2015-16.

The Finance Officer sought guidance on the assumptions used for preparing the 2015-16 budget. The draft budget has been prepared on slightly changed definitions to its component parts.

1. The current round of Government funding will end in 2015-16. In 2015-16 DEFRA is offering the same as in 2014-15 with no allowance for inflation.
2. Contributions from local authorities are assumed to be falling slightly.
3. The works programme and major projects will rely on securing external funding, earned income and possibly Board Reserves.
4. The budget has already been re-structured separating basic core activity (operating costs) ensuring the Board was able to live within its means by covering these costs in full by the funding provided by DEFRA and local authorities. Any surplus can be used to fund Ongoing activity. Further proposals were made to simplify the budget.
 - a. Core activity to be retitled as Operating Costs. Up to 80% of these costs can be funded by DEFRA grant and the balance by local authorities' and investment income. The Chalk Streams Officer post is now treated as a core post, and its funding provided by the Environment Agency and water companies is treated as core income.
 - b. Ongoing activity to be retitled as Work Programme, funded by the balance of DEFRA grant, earned income and Board Reserves.
 - c. Projects to be retitled as Major Projects, largely funded by external sources.
 - d. Special projects to be subsumed into the Work Programme
 - e. Reserves stand at over £650,000. The Budget Equalisation Reserve will be used to cover any shortfall in the work programme and Development Reserve to support the Major Projects Programme subject to a limit of 10% of the reserves.
5. Operating costs: The main elements of these are employment costs together with office and Board costs. No provision has yet been made for inflationary pay awards or increments. The other operating costs are likely to remain unchanged.
6. Operating income: the DEFRA grant is expected to remain unchanged; the Board must be prepared for possible in-year changes following the election.
7. Overall income from local authorities is expected to fall by 5%, with some increases and decreases anticipated. It is proposed to ask for an inflation adjustment.
8. Work Programme: all those activities which are not considered a basic operating cost will be included in the Work Programme.
9. Special Project support will be included in the Works Programme with a reduced budget of £10,000.
10. Board contributions to Major Projects will appear in the Work Programme.

11. Major Projects: two of these, Commons and Box Wood projects will come to an end in 2015-16, but two new projects could begin next year; Hillforts and Historic Harm Buildings.
12. Income to cover the Work Programme will be derived from a variety of sources

Based on early assessment of the requirements and the above assumptions implications are that:

- a. Operating costs would reduce by some £20,000
- b. 93% of the DEFRA grant would be needed to balance the expenditure after taking account of local authority income.
- c. Assuming earned income will equal 2014-15 an overall balanced budget could be achieved.
- d. Staff pay awards and increments will add further costs
- e. The Board review may cost more than anticipated.
- f. DEFRA in-year cuts are possible
- g. There is the possibility of a rent increase.
- h. In the event of an overall deficit the Board's reserves will be applied to cover the shortfall.

The budget for 2015-16 will be worked up for submission to the Board and Executive Committee in January and February 2015.

The Committee discussed the new approach to the budget and the various types of expenditure. The new budget format was welcomed by the Committee.

- 1. The Committee AGREED to the restructuring of the budget and the re-titling as proposed.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED that the budget should be prepared on the following assumptions:**
 - a. That local authorities should be asked to contribute the same as in 2014-15 but adjusted for inflation.
 - b. That staff and members be awarded a cost of living increment based on the CPI in February.
 - c. That staff receive any contractual rise due to them and those on discretionary pay scales receive any performance related increments.
 - d. That the budget for Special Projects may be revised upwards from £10,000 subject to further discussion around funding for Parish Councils.

14/15-27. Item 11 Management Review

The Chairman sought approval for the proposed terms of reference and programme for the review of the Board's management structure and operation.

1. The Board meeting of 26th June 2014 established a working group to oversee the recruitment of a Chief Officer to take up the position upon the retirement of Steve Rodrick at the end of December 2014.

2. It was decided that it would be prudent to review the need for any changes to the management structure and modus operandi to help ensure the Board is equipped to face the challenges ahead.
 3. The process has begun with the appointment of Kath Daly as Acting Chief Officer w.e.f. 1st January 2015.
 4. The review will be led by a working group supported by Kath Daly. The aim is to complete the review by June 2015. The working group will report to the Executive Committee, who in turn will report to the full Board.
 5. At the October Board meeting Board members were invited to advise the Chairman if they wished to be involved in the Review Group. The Review Group is made up of the following members: Ian Ray, Helen Tuffs, Ray Payne, Alan Walters, Jeremy Ryman, Wendy Jordan and Gill Gowing.
 6. Kath Daly will report regularly to the working group (review group). She outlined the scope of the review. The overview will cover:
 - External factors and trends likely to impact the operation of the Board over the next 5 years (and longer)
 - Business planning
 - Effectiveness of the current organisational structure in supporting delivery of the Board's objectives.
 - Measures of success and best practice
 - The Board's relationships with key stakeholders
 - Resources and management
 - Governance
 7. It is envisaged that the Review Group will commission additional support to help with specific elements of the review. It is also envisaged that the Board's HR Advisor, Sally Charman and the Finance Officer, Chris Smith will participate in the review process. Active involvement of all Board members, staff, key volunteers and stakeholders will be encouraged.
 8. A budget of £4,000 was proposed to primarily to meet the cost of commissioning external support. The money to be allocated from the Project Support budget.
 9. The aim is to complete a significant part of the review process in the period January – April 2015 in order to present initial findings and recommendations to the Board meeting in April.
 10. Further work packages are expected to be identified which will be developed and completed over a longer period of time.
 11. A timetable was presented and agreed with final recommendations to be presented at the June Board meeting and if required to the AGM in June.
1. **The Committee Approved the proposed scope, terms of reference, programme and timetable of the Management Review, subject to further refinements that may be proposed by the Review Working Group.**
 2. **The Committee AGREED an initial budget of £4,000 to be allocated from the Project Support Budget.**

14/15-28. Item 12 Backfilling Countryside Officer post- update.

Kath Daly, Acting Chief Officer (Jan-June 2015), updated the Committee on the appointment of Neil Jackson, Conservation and Landscape Officer, to the post from January 2015 for 6 months.

1. To cover the workload of the Conservation and Landscape Officer there appears to be no realistic scope for internal recruitment.
2. It was proposed that identified elements of the Conservation and Landscape Officer's work programme would be covered by buying in support. Other aspects can be deferred or temporarily covered in other ways. For a 6 month period this was considered to be a pragmatic and realistic approach. Some aspects of the role will require continued input from Neil, notably HS2.
3. A provision of £10,000 over a 6 month period was proposed to pay for external support. This cost would be fully covered by savings made through staffing arrangements over this period.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the proposed approach to covering the Conservation and Landscape Officer role over the 6 month period January to June 2015 and AGREED to make provision in the budget to buy in support on specific work.**

14/15-29. Item 13 Board Member Role and Specification

The Chief Officer had put before the Committee a draft specification of the role of Board member.

1. It had been noted that Secretary of State Appointments to the Board have to apply and as part of that process they are supplied with an information pack which includes a description of the role.
2. The matter had been discussed at the Board meeting in October and it was felt that the role description should not be overtly prescriptive or specify the qualities of individual members, as there are advantages to diversity.

The Committee considered and discussed the draft role specification and made suggestions refining the role.

- 1. The Committee CONSIDERED the draft Board member role specification and the Committee RECOMMENDED the draft Board member role specification following a number of changes.**

14/15-30 item 14. 50th Anniversary of the AONB

The Acting Chief Officer (January to June 2015) advised the Committee of the proposed programme of celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Chilterns as an AONB (16th December 1965).

1. She presented an outline programme.

2. Much of the proposed programme is based on existing planned activity and at a minimal or no additional cost.
3. 2015 is also the 50th anniversary of the Chiltern Society. A proposed joint celebration had been agreed at the June Board meeting. Initial discussions have been held with the Chiltern Society, which have proven very positive.
4. The main cost would be a join event with the Chiltern Society and an event planned for the anniversary date December 2015. A budget of £3,000 was proposed.
5. The Information Officer will develop a more detailed proposal of events and present it to the Board meeting in January.

1. The Committee NOTED the outline programme of events and activities for the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Chilterns as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2. The Committee APPROVED a budget of up to £3,000 for the 50th anniversary celebrations and AGREED to make provision for it within the 2015-16 budget.

14/15-30. Next meeting:

Thursday 26th February 2015 at 10.30 am at the offices in Chinnor

Future meeting dates: Wednesday 20th May 2015, Thursday 10th September 2015 and Wednesday 9th December 2015.

The meeting closed at 12.30

The Chairman.....

Date.....