



**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON
Wednesday 18th September 2019 at the offices of the Board, The Lodge, 90 Station
Road, Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 10.00 am**

Present:

Alison Doggett	Board Member
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:

Dr Elaine King	CCB Chief Executive Officer
Graham Hurst	CCB Finance Officer
John Shaw	New Secretary of State Appointee to the Board

Deirdre Hansen	Clerk to the Board
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The CEO welcomed all present and opened the meeting.

19/20.1 Election of Chairman

Ian Reay was unanimously elected Chairman of the Executive Committee for the ensuing year and took the chair.

19/20.2 Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown.

19/20.3 Declarations of interest

None.

19/20.4 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd May 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record after the following corrections:

- 19/20.35 Future Partnership working: first paragraph 'off course' was amended to 'of course'.

- 19/20.37 Any Other Business: 'Grays Court' was amended to 'Greys Court'

19/20.5 Matters arising

The Chairman had looked at the Governance paper and noted that there will be some minor changes at the next AGM.

19/20.6 Public Question Time

The Chairman welcomed John Shaw to the meeting as the new Secretary of State Appointee to the Board.

The members introduced themselves and John Shaw introduced himself and gave a bit of background. John is the MD of Chiltern Rangers.

19/20.7 Finance Report

The Finance Officer had circulated a financial report to the Committee on the financial position for the first four months of the new financial year 2019-20. He went through the figures and reported that the lower than anticipated loss was due to externally generated income as fees and interest were higher than expected.

The Finance Officer reported that the finances are under control and that he continues to budget cautiously.

1. Expenditure shows a small deficit of £1,367 over income, which is less than had been expected.
2. Core income has been more than expected due partly to the cautious view in Local Authority contributions when setting our budget.
3. Our largest project to date is the GWR (Great Western Railway) project, which comprises AONB enhancements in the Great Western Rail corridor (Reading to Didcot). The income has been received in advance. This project is in its early stages and has a duration of several years.

It was acknowledged that the North Wessex Downs AONB, which is also part of the GWR project, has requested that the CCB hold the GWR funds.

4. The Finance Officer highlighted the issues caused by the external auditors' use of s151 (financial administration) Local Government Act 1972 when examining the CCB's annual accounts. This required the CCB to keep accounts of income and expenditure of the general fund (S23 The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Establishment of the Conservation Board) Order 2004).

The Board's income is frequently not received in line with expenditure, especially large sums. By not using commercial accounting practices this can and will create financial misleading figures. They do not assist in the proper management of the business, the budgets and ultimately the accounts.

The Finance Officer has established the use of commercial accounting practices to enable prudent (financial) management of the business. By *reporting the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), which we have to complete with Local Authorities, Internal Drainage Boards and other smaller authorities where the higher gross income or expenditure exceeded £25,000, but did not exceed £6.5m*, we will show year on year widely varying results with at times extreme variations, we will at times give a completely misleading statement to the outside world.

The Committee agreed to support the Finance Officer in seeking a clear understanding with the external auditors to enable the CCB to present its financial statement in a responsible and comprehensive way as well as complying with the regulations.

5. It was noted that discussion of the grant funding agreement with Defra is on-going and the Committee agreed to some further amendments.

Future funding once the Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority has been established was discussed. The risk is that five authorities becoming one may result in a reduced contribution to the CCB overall.

Paul Mainds offered to assist with progressing at least a status quo in Buckinghamshire's total funding.

6. Appropriate insurance cover was discussed in the context of increasing income and staff numbers. The Finance Officer is discussing this with our insurers to ensure we have appropriate cover.

The Committee discussed the financial report and future funding implications.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the financial results and report for the four-month period to July 2019.**

19/20.8 Review of Treasury Management

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.

Treasury Management procedures and review were discussed.

- 1. The Committee AGREED to continue to maximise interest received from deposit accounts where the risk of losing capital is minimised.**
- 2. The Committee AGREED to review the Treasury Management procedures and if required bring the matter to a future meeting.**

19/20.9 Banking arrangements

The Finance Officer requested that the CCB's banking procedures be updated with the departure of Sue Holden and the appointment of Dr Elaine King as CEO.

- 1. The Committee AUTHORISED the Finance Officer to add Dr Elaine King to the CCB banking mandate and remove Sue Holden.**

19/20.10 HR Advisory Group

The Vice-Chairman brought to the Committee a proposal to establish a HR advisory Group. He had provided members with the objectives, outputs currently anticipated and the membership framework of the HR Advisory Group.

It was emphasised that the HR Advisory Group does not have any decision-making authority.

The initial members of the HR Advisory Group will be Ray Payne, Paul Mainds, Lynn Lloyd, John Nicholls, with a vacancy to be filled by a Board member and two co-opted members, the CCB's CEO and the HR adviser.

The Committee discussed the proposal.

- 1. The Committee AGREED that a HR Advisory Group should be established.**

19/20.11 GWR Project update

The CEO updated members and sought comment on governance, project planning, recruitment and financial arrangements for the GWR project.

The Committee recognised the scale of this project, being the single largest that the CCB has yet undertaken and lasting over several years with potentially many partners. As such it is considered by the Committee to be more a programme of work, rather than a single project to be delivered.

The Committee discussed the outline programme as far as possible and it was acknowledged that the programme needs to comply with established CCB governance and staffing arrangements. Terms of reference, an appropriate structure and a project planning programme, that is able to deliver on this large scale, flagship programme, needs to be established.

This will be an excellent opportunity for the CCB to demonstrate the value of partnership working. It was agreed that templates are available for many of the documentation required, which could be adapted and used. The programme should provide valuable development opportunities for CCB staff.

The Planning Officer was congratulated on her successful achievement in gaining this large funding to mitigate the damage done by the GWR electrification.

- 1. The Committee COMMENTED and PROVIDED guidance on current governance, financial and project planning arrangements for the GWR project.**

19/20.12 Farm Clusters

The Finance Officer requested approval for the CCB facilitating and administering the activities of two local farm clusters. He provided administrative details.

- 1. The Committee APPROVED the CCB entering into an agreement to facilitate local farm clusters and to undertake the relevant administration.**

19/20.13 Any Other Business

- 1. The Chilterns Woodlands Project.
 The Vice-Chairman had been asked by the former CCB Chief Officer to undertake an audit of this project.
 The aim of the Chiltern Woodlands Project is to promote and encourage the sensitive and sustainable management of Chiltern woodlands in order to protect the landscape of the Chilterns and maintain and enhance its biodiversity. The Project was started in 1989 and is now an independent charity. The sole member of staff is hosted in the Chilterns Conservation Board.
 The audit showed the business is unsustainable.
 The project has some funds and valuable intangible assets. Following the audit, the Trustees of Chilterns Woodlands have agreed to wind up the project.
- 2. The CEO reported on a visit to the Museum for English Rural Life (Reading) and the Henley River and Rowing Museum. Both have offered their meeting and exhibition facilities for use by the CCB and are keen to explore closer working.

Next meeting: Wednesday 15th January 2020 at 10.00 am at the offices of the Board in Chinnor.

The Chairman.....

Date.....