



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at THE LODGE, 90 STATION ROAD, CHINNOR OXON. OX39 4HA COMMENCING AT 10.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.45PM**

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. David Nimmo-Smith	Board Member
Ray Payne	Board Member
Cllr. Ian Reay	Board Member
Cllr Jeremy Ryman	Board Member
Helen Tuffs	Board Member
Alan Walters	Board Member
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer
Chris Smith	CCB Finance Officer

In attendance  
Deirdre Hansen

Clerk to the Board

**13/14-107 Item 1- Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Heather Barrett-Mold

**13/14-108. Item 2- Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**13/14-109. Item 3- Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments were made;

- Minute 13/14-97 item 4 in recommendation 1 “HighSpeed’ was changed to High Speed and in the last sentence of the recommendation the first ‘had’ was removed.
- Minute 13/14-101 last sentence 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph ‘A’ was inserted before presentation.
- Minute 13/14-101 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph last sentence 20014 was amended to 2014 and ‘. This’ was inserted after 2015-16.

### **13/14-110. Item 4- Matters Arising from the minutes 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

In reference to 13/14-101 item 8: 2<sup>nd</sup> recommendation, The Chief Officer reported that the CPI now stood at 1.9%

### **13/14-111. Item 5- Public Question time**

No members of the public were present.

### **13/14-112. Item 6- Finance Report (April 2013-Jan 2014)**

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 1% below profile and income was almost exactly in line with profile. By the end of the year ~~core expenditure~~ it is forecast that reserves will have increased by £15,367 and income received in advance applied to project will be £25,551.

The current financial position is satisfactory with no problems to report. The members were provided with detailed information, which was discussed. IT costs were higher due to the purchase of new PCs and the upgrading of software, which will reduce costs in following years.

The Small Grant Scheme payments will not be as great as anticipated.

10.40 Shirley Judges arrived.

The Committee congratulated the Finance Officer on his reports and on his managements of the Boards' finances.

#### **1. The Committee NOTED the current financial position.**

### **13/14-113. Item 7- Medium Term Financial Forecast 2014-16 incl budget for 2014-15**

The Finance Officer presented a detailed budget for 2014-15 that reflected the decisions of the Executive Committee and the Board, as advised by the Finance Sub-Committee formed to review the Medium Term Financial Forecast. The Executive Committee considered the detailed budget and **resolved to** ~~would~~ recommend it to the Board. The net effect of this budget will be a drawdown of £34,622 from reserves.

At this point the local authority grants for 2014-15 are not certain; the information is due at the end of March.

#### **1. The Committee considered the budget for 2014-15 and **RESOLVED DECIDED** to recommend its adoption to the Board.**

### **13/14-114. Item 8- Draft business Plan.**

The Chief Officer sought approval from the Committee of the draft Business Plan and its agreement to present it to the full board on 25<sup>th</sup> March.

The draft Business Plan gives detail of the Boards' plans for 2014-15 together with an indication of the resources at its disposal and its modus operandi.

The business Plan is both an internal working document to provide structure to its activities and a link to the AONB Management Plan. It also serves as a promotional document to those who wish to know more about the work of the Board.

The budget is yet to be finalised, but the latest provisional figures have been used.

The works programme contains little new as it is an evolving programme. The proposed changes for 2014-15 are a change of emphasis. The following changes of emphasis were discussed:

1. Promotion of the newly published AONB Management Plan.
2. The development of new areas of activity connected to Hill Forts.
3. Development of the Historic Farmsteads Survey
4. More work with farmers and landowners on good management practices.
5. ~~Less emphasis and resources spent on HS2~~ **Change the emphasis of HS2 related work.**
6. Continuing emphasis on chalk streams and greater weight given to flooding and water management.
7. More work on promoting understanding and enjoyment of the AONB including special events programme.
8. Honouring the First World War.
9. More involvement with the Thames Path and especially, The Ridgeway, National Trails.
10. Development of proposals to succeed the HLF supported Commons and Box Woodland Projects.

1. **The Committee provided comment on the draft Business Plan.**
2. **The Committee AGREED to present the discussed draft Business Plan to the Board on 25<sup>th</sup> March.**

### **13/14-116. Item 10 Insurance Fidelity Cover**

The Finance Officer brought the Committee up to date with the Board's response to the Audit Commission's auditor's recommendation (September 2013) relating to Fidelity Insurance Cover, which cover is designed to protect the Board's cash holdings against misappropriation. The current cash holdings, approx. £600,000 are in excess of the insurance cover. Additional cover up to £250,000 can be bought for an additional premium of ~~6% plus tax.~~

Only the section 151 officer and the Chief Officer are authorised to handle the reserves. **The Section 151 Officer, (Finance Officer) is not a bank signatory.** The degree of risk involved is negligible and as such there little justification in increasing the cover for part of the cash holding.

1. The Committee **AGREED** that the **additional** cost of (partial) cover is disproportionate to the risk involved.

### **13/14-116. Item 10 Report on General Reserve**

The Chief Officer reported that the General Reserve is £135,000 and is primarily held to meet the costs of winding up the Board should such eventually arise - the primary cost being that of redundancy. It is also held as contingency to cover major unforeseen costs.

Following the adoption of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014-16 the predicted level of reserves on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 would be £470,751 ~~of which £135,000 is general reserve. The major winding up costs of the Board would be redundancy payments and the outstanding term on the lease on the office.~~

**As** winding up of the Board would require **legislation, there would be notice of at least one year and possibly two.** ~~at least 2 years notice giving a notional winding up date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.~~

The maximum redundancy liability has been calculated to be £250,000. ~~, 79% of that covers older members of staff.~~

Winding up costs would take precedent over any other uses of reserves and it was assumed that annual grants could be used to meet all the winding up costs.

The reserves are expected to reduce gradually over the next few years but they are not expected to fall below £350,000.

The lease on the office runs until 2020, the relationship with the landlord is good.

Following the Government's recently completed review of "Quangos" the likelihood of the Board being wound up **in the foreseeable future was considered very unlikely.** ~~is remote.~~

**It was agreed that** the Board should ensure that its **available** reserves never fall below the estimated costs of winding up the Board; there is little justification for having a specific reserve to meet such eventuality. The Committee discussed reducing the general reserve to £100,000 and considered investing this sum for longer than a one year period, to attract a higher rate of return.

1. The Committee **APPROVED** a reduction to **£100,000** in the **General Reserve** for the **next two years.**
2. The Committee **AGREED** to review the level of **General Reserve** annually.

### **13/14-117. Item 11 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. The first report for 2013-14 covering policy and Strategy was presented.

- 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.**

### **13/14-118. Item 12 Review of Risk Register.**

The Finance Officer and Chief Officer reported that the Risk Register **first** adopted by the Committee on 27 February 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 reviews the latest version every six months.

At the last review the score for financial risk was increased to  $3 \times 4 = 12$ , reflecting grant reduction. The subsequent work carried out by the subcommittee and this committee should reflect a reduction in this score to  $2 \times 3 = 6$ , a medium risk rather than a very high risk.

- 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.**

### **13/14-119. Item 13. Report on High Speed 2.**

The Chief Officer reported that the response to the Environmental Statement had been submitted. A £5,000 contribution had been made to Chiltern DC for the commissioning of work on an "idealised Chilterns Tunnel". The next stage is to prepare petitions for improvements if the HS2 Hybrid Bill passes its second reading. The Board has instructed Sharpe Pritchard, Parliamentary Agents, to act on its behalf including lodging of the petitions.

The main thrust of the Board's response has been that there would be many significant adverse impacts ranging from: landscape intrusion; loss of ancient woodland and hedgerows; noise, severance of rights of way; urbanisation; threats to the aquifer and hydrology; and disturbance of wildlife.

A longer bored tunnel would avoid most of the adverse impacts. Chiltern DC has commissioned engineering consultants to investigate and cost what an idealised tunnel alignment might be. Ray Payne has been engaged directly with Chiltern DC to oversee the contract and is representing the Conservation Board. The work Ray Payne has been carrying out on behalf of the Board was discussed by the members.

The most recent Board meeting agreed the basis of the Board's petitioning's.

The Chief Officer explained the next stages that the Bill will follow.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the recent and planned HS2 related activity.**
- 2. The Committee NOTED that petitions should be submitted that seek enhancements to the current proposals.**

### **13/14-120. Item 14 Report on Board Membership.**

The Chief Officer reported that a number of changes to Board Membership will occur in the next few months.

1. Mike Fox, Bettina Kirkham and John Willson have to stand down having served three terms as Secretary of State Appointees.

The vacancies were advertised in November and there were 19 applicants. Nine candidates were interviewed by the interview panel, made up of Catherine Graham –Harrison (Board member Natural England), Max Caller (Chairman of the Local Government Boundary Commission) and Ian Reay (standing in in Mike Fox's absence).

It was agreed to recommend three candidates to the Secretary of State for appointment. This process will take several weeks.

2. Brian Norman will not be seeking re-election in the district council elections in May Margaret Jarrett will not be seeking re-election either in May. It is unlikely that replacements will be in place for the June Board meeting. The Board's Establishment Order provides for this possibility and allows for those members stranding down the opportunity to continue on the Board for a further three months. The 26<sup>th</sup> June will be the last meeting for these two members.
3. Mike Fox's position as Chairman of the Board can be taken by the Vice Chairman, Ian Reay until the AGM.
4. A similar position has arisen with the Planning Committee currently chaired by Bettina Kirkham. The current members of the Planning Committee can appoint a new Chairman either at the Board meeting 25<sup>th</sup> March or otherwise at the next Planning Committee meeting in May.

- 1. The Committee NOTED the forthcoming changes to Board membership**

### **13/14-121. Item 15 Review of the AONB Management Plan.**

The Chief Officer reported that the review is on course to be completed and the new plan will be ready for publication by the end of March 2014.

**1. The Committee NOTED that the publication of the AONB Management Plan 2014-16 for April this year is on target.**

**13/14-122. Any other business:**

There was no other business.

**13/14-123. Future meeting dates: Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014, Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at 10.30am at the offices in Chinnor.**

The meeting closed at 12.45

The Chairman.....

Date.....