



**AGENDA FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO BE HELD AT 10.30 AM ON TUESDAY
27 FEBRUARY 2007 AT CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD OFFICES, CHINNOR**

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Buckinghamshire County Council, Mrs A Davies, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, County Hall, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1UA

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER 2006 AT THE CONSERVATION BOARD OFFICES, THE LODGE, CHINNOR, COMMENCING AT 10.30AM AND CONCLUDING AT 1.12PM

Present:

Sir John Johnson	Board Member
Cllr Alan Walters	Board Member
Cllr Bill Storey	Board Member
Cllr Richard Pushman	Board Member
Kevin Mayne	Board Member
Shirley Judges	Board Member
Richard Brown	Hertfordshire County Council
Steve Rodrick	CCB Chief Officer

In Attendance:

Maureen Keyworth	BCC and Clerk to the Board
Chris Smith	CCB financial Adviser

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Sir John Johnson be elected Chairman of the Executive Committee for the ensuing year.

SIR JOHN JOHNSON IN THE CHAIR

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Rhys Goodwin, John Griffin, Chris Brearley and Mike Woods.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2006

The Minutes of the Committee Meeting, held on 6 September 2006, copies of which had been circulated, were confirmed, subject to the following amendments:

Item 8 Finance Report 2006/07.

Second paragraph, second line, insert the word 'was' after CIPFA.

Fourth paragraph first line, start of first sentence to read 'Members were informed that the figures to *the end of July*.....'

Item 14 Report on the Creation of Natural England

Penultimate line on the page should read '....this was an opportunity for *us* to....'

5. MATTERS ARISING

Item 4 Matters arising

The Chairman informed the Committee that Barry Gardiner, Under Secretary of State for DEFRA had accepted the invitation to visit the Chilterns and was making a visit on 8 March 2007. He will be taken on a tour of the Chilterns which will include tree planting on Downley Common.

Item 7: AONB Conservation Boards – Model Code of Conduct

The Committee was informed that the formal consultation was being undertaken by Defra. No further comments had been received apart from the reference to Whistleblowing.

Item 10: Report on the 40th Anniversary Parish Fund

Grant awards for 35 bids had been approved up to £8,000. The Chief Officer commented on the good geographical range of applications received.

Item 11: Report on the sustainable Development Fund

Of the 44 applications received, 18 have been approved. The value of projects supported amounted to £244,000.

Members noted that Julia Wells had joined the SDF Advisory Panel.

Item 12: Personnel Report

Members were informed that Donna Hunt had been appointed as Administration Assistant on a part time basis. However, at peak times, Donna was able to work a 35 hour week if needed to help with specific projects which had ring fenced budgets.

Item 13: Relationship with the Chiltern Woodlands Project

Members were informed that Mike Render had been appointed as a Trustee to the board to the Woodlands Project. The Chief Officer informed members that the Accord would be ready for the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Item 14: Report on the Creation of Natural England

Members noted that Roger Clarke, a Board member of Natural England had attended the Annual Forum on 9 November 2006.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present to ask questions.

7. AUDITING 2005-06

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer and Financial Adviser the purpose of which was to advise the Committee that the Board has complied with legislative requirements and that the final audit opinion from the Audit Commission is still awaited.

The Financial Adviser informed members that the public advertisements regarding the audit had been placed and that the Audit Report had been submitted to the Audit Commission.

The Audit Commission fee would be in the region of £2,000-£3,000.

Members NOTED that the Board has complied with the requirement of the legislation and an unqualified audit report is expected from the Audit Commission.

8. FINANCE REPORT 2006-07

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer and Financial Adviser, the purpose of which was to advise members of the Board's financial position to the end of October and likely position at the end of the financial year.

The Financial Adviser confirmed that in light of previous discussions about the format of the report it had now been changed in accordance with the Committee's request.

The following was noted:

- The savings under Finance related to audit and payroll services. The Audit Commission fee was originally £10,500 and was invoiced in the last financial year. However, because the turnover of the Board is under £1m a full audit is not needed and the fee was therefore reduced. However, this was shown as an overspend in last year's figures which, therefore, cancels out the underspend in this year's figures.
- The variance under 'Local Authorities' relates to one LA payment which was made in the previous financial year. If the same situation arises in this financial year, it will be carried forward as an advance.
- Changes have been made to the projected outcome because some figures were not accurately forecast for the current year. This has now been rectified. The variance related to employment costs which should have included the £600 car allowance per employee. The National Insurance figure has also been re-calculated.
- The average number of visits to the website has doubled compared to last year and the cost of site maintenance has also increased. The Chief Officer proposed that the overspend be accepted.
- The third publication in the Design and Materials series would shortly be completed. It was hoped that funding from the project budget would be available to complete this but cutbacks from the Countryside Agency made it difficult. However, there was capacity for the cost to be met from the core budget.

The Committee NOTED the current financial position and APPROVED the variances and proposed re-allocations of funding.

9. DRAFT BUDGET 2007/08

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer and Financial Adviser, the purpose of which was to seek the Committee's approval of the draft budget, to be used for negotiations with Natural England and local authorities.

SR informed the Committee that the figures were calculated on the basis of the core budget remaining the same, except for inflation. However, a further £30,000 may be needed for the preparation and review of the Management Plan.

In order to achieve a standstill budget, given that the employment costs would rise by more than inflation once cost of living and salary increments were paid, it was necessary to make savings in other parts of the budget. In this connection, there were several areas where savings could be made, such as corporate services, general business costs and the suggestion that Chris Smith could undertake the work of the Section 151 Finance Officer in place of Hertfordshire CC. There could also be further efficiency savings in operational and financial terms.

So far no indications had been received from Natural England with regard to their views on the budget. The Board had received a letter from NE inviting a grant application and it was hoped that the SDF would remain at £100,000.

When the Board was set up the CA granted core budget at up to 80% and the current position, of approx. 77%, is close to what the AONB would have had if it had not received Conservation Board status. There has been no indication from NE as to what type of project bids they would expect. In addition, NE expected its own grant supplement to be made available in October but this did not happen. There was also no current indication of the level of Local Government pay awards for the next financial year. 56% of the core budget is for employment costs. Over and above the cost of living award, the scale of salary points used (Wycombe DC scales) indicates a 2% increase. Most staff will be eligible for increments and, therefore, employment costs will rise by approximately 4.5%. This will mean that efficiency savings of 2%+ will have to be made.

Discussion took place with regard to what indicators should be used to calculate inflation - Consumer Prices Index (CPI), Retail Price Index (RPI) or the median. Government used the RPI for pensions and wages. The CPI did not include costs such as housing, mortgage interest and energy. There was a need to be clear as a Board what the budget should be for the coming year and to inform local authorities what increase is needed. In this connection, evidence of the 2% efficiency savings need to be shown to inform local authorities of the savings already being made. This would reassure local authorities that the Board has been through the exercise of identifying real efficiencies and also identified pressures for growth, one of which is the Management Plan.

Concern was expressed that local authorities may not look favourably on the request for a higher percentage increase than that which they are presenting to their own services. The suggestion that inflation costs are reflected separately to the static costs may be a way forward. 3% on budget as a whole could be difficult.

SR commented that local authorities needed to be aware that contributions to Board costs are around 17%-18%. Six years ago it was 50% and has been at standstill in real terms since that time. Members agreed that this point should be emphasised. The statutory obligations carried out by the Board on behalf of local authorities could also be reported in the executive summary.

CS suggested that the starting point for the 2007/08 budget should be standstill as at 2006/07 plus increments. Against this, financial efficiency savings should be shown together with growth items and price inflation.

The Committee noted that AW had invited SR talk to South Bucks District Council members about the work of the Conservation Board. It was also suggested that a summary be prepared which could be circulated to local authority members. However, it was noted that it was officers who would be making recommendations to members and therefore any information should be provided to them.

1. The Committee APPROVED the draft budgets.

The Committee AGREED

- 2. To seek an inflation only increase in the core financial contributions from local authorities and a supplement to help meet the additional costs of reviewing the Management Plan.**
- 3. To seek grant aid from Natural England of
£491,620 to core costs (76.9%)
£121,000 to project costs (47.8%)
£100,000 to the Sustainable Development Fund (100%)**

4. **To approve, in principle, the appointment of Chris Smith as the Board's Finance Officer (Section 151 officer). The appointment to be confirmed subject to a report to the next meeting. In this connection, the Committee noted and appreciated the work carried out by the Chief Officer and the Financial Adviser.**

10. REPORT ON AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to inform the Board of the need to review the plan and the process advised by National England. A proposed timetable was put forward for consideration.

The Chief Officer reported that it was a statutory requirement to review the Management Plan. This would be an onerous task, with the guidance alone being some 50 pages in length. The Board needed to look at the plan and decide whether it needed amending prior to publication. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) also want a strategic environmental assessment to be carried out, to include a statement of community involvement. This will entail a much information gathering and collation which will take up a great deal of staff time. The Committee noted that the Cotswolds Conservation Board have commenced work on the document and will be funding the work themselves. However, the lowest tender was £30,000. The Cotswolds Planning Officer will be spending 50% of his time on this work over the next 18 months. SR said he didn't anticipate great revisions to the existing plan and that if NE wanted the guidance to be implemented in full there would be considerable resource implications and they would be expected to provide additional grant aid to meet the cost.

Members agreed that NE should be asked whether they are prepared to fund this work, otherwise the Board should just carry out a light touch report. The Board would welcome the opportunity to provide such an evidence base which would enable it to do a better job, but not at such a cost.

It was suggested that NE should be asked to look at producing a national evidence base which would be more cost effective than commissioning 37 AONBs to carry out the same study. SR agreed to raise this with NE. However, he suggested it may be better to ask NE for extra money in order to improve the information which the Board already has. The evidence gathering would be beneficial. Members agreed on the need to make sure all AONBs were of the same opinion with regard to this project. KM suggested that once SR has received further information a risk assessment should be carried out on the impact of such a project.

With regard to the Management Plan, members noted that the Secretary of State did not need to sign off the Plan. The Board can review the plan and then make the decision as to whether the amendments suggested were of sufficient scale to require the Plan to be reviewed and published.

SR suggested that because the grant application has to be with NE by the year end, provision for this work must be included. CS commented that the budget would need to be re-positioned in light of any further funding need.

The Committee AGREED

1. **To include in the draft Budget for 2007-8 and 2008-09 adequate funding for the review, estimated to be £30,000 per annum.**
2. **To advise Natural England and local authorities of the resource implications and need for their assistance with acquiring the necessary information.**

11. REPORT ON CCB SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer and Financial Adviser, the purpose of which was to advise the Committee of progress in implementing the Board's Sustainability Plan.

The Chief Officer reported that the information base was not complete due to the short period of time in which the plan had been in place

KM would provide the annual report to the Board in Spring 2007.

The Committee AGREED

- 1. To improve the information base on which performance is assessed.**
- 2. To seek further advice on energy saving options.**
- 3. To install solar photovoltaic cells at the office.**
- 4. To present an annual report on performance to a Board meeting in March 2007.**

12. RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer and Planning Officer, the purpose of which was to seek the Committee's approval to install photovoltaic cells for electricity production at the Board's offices.

Investigations had been undertaken into the best means of installing renewable energy capacity and reducing energy demand. Wind turbines would not prove to be viable and photovoltaic cells were the best option. These would cost approximately £5,000 without a grant. They were low maintenance and could be removed if the offices were vacated.

- 1. The Committee AGREED that solar PV panels with a generating capacity of 1.4Kw be installed at the Board's offices in Chinnor.**
- 2. The Committee APPROVED expenditure of up to £6,000, to be funded from underspend on the core budget, SDF (if funds available) and, if necessary, from reserves.**
- 3. The Committee AGREED that, if necessary, reserves of up to £6,000 be allocated to this initiative.**
- 4. The Committee AGREED that a policy be adopted of allocating 5% of any delegate fee charged for attending an event to the cost of installing the solar panels as a carbon offset scheme.**
- 5. The Committee AGREED that staff should be congratulated on their performance regarding energy saving and that they be encouraged to continue the good work.**

13. PERSONNEL REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer, the purpose of which was to inform members of the progress in reviewing the Employment Policies and Conditions of Service and the need for further work, to be presented to the Board in early 2007.

The following was noted:

- Further work was needed on the salary grading process which had previously been dealt with by Wycombe District Council. Training was needed on the Hay System.
- KM suggested a handbook should be produced containing all the personnel policies, which could be revised as and when new procedures needed to be put in place.
- SJ expressed concern regarding the policy on taking time off in lieu and wondered whether there was scope for one off payments if necessary. She also hoped that in the future there would be scope for sabbaticals for staff. The Committee noted the system of time off in lieu was working well.
- With regard to any grievance procedures, backup would be given by the County Council.
- RP informed members of the work of graduate employees on secondment from John Lewis, which encouraged staff to take on alternate forms of working. SR agreed to look into this.

The Committee AGREED

1. To request that a revision of the Employment Policies and Conditions of Service be presented to the Committee for consideration and adoption at its meeting in February 2007.
2. To secure external personnel/HR services to help complete this task and to provide ongoing support.
3. To use WDC salary grades for 2007-08.
4. That double time off in lieu can be taken for any statutory public holiday worked, with immediate effect.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

15. DATES OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday 27 February 2007 at 10.30am.

Dates of future meetings are as follows:

Executive Committee

2007

Tuesday 15 May
 Tuesday 18 September
 Tuesday 11 December

Board

2007

Tuesday 23 January
 Wednesday 28 March
 Tuesday 19 June
 Wednesday 10 October

CHAIRMAN

Finance Report

Authors: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer
Chris Smith Financial Advisor to the Board

Summary: A finance statement to the end of January 2007 is presented. Expenditure is predicted to be in line with the budget as previously reported. The project expenditure profile is in line with expectations. Income from non grant sources is higher than expected.

Grant payments from Natural England have been very slow, but the problems have now, nearly, been resolved. As yet there is no grant offer from Natural England for 2007-08.

There has been no formal contact from the Audit Commission on the accounts for 2006-07.

Accounts 2005-06

1. The Board complied with the Accounting and Audit Regulations 2003 and the 2006 amendments, which required the Board to approve accounts by June 30th 2006. The accounts were also made available for public inspection as required. However the Audit Commission should have issued its report by 31st December 2006. As nothing had been heard contact was made in January. They acknowledged they had received the Board's accounts, but due to pressure of work were behind schedule. They indicated they would be in touch shortly, but there has been no further contact.

Finance Statement to 31st January 2007

2. See Table 1 for the core budget and Table 2 for the project budget.

Grant Payments

3. The Board can claim advance quarterly payments from Natural England, to avoid cash flow problems. Each quarterly grant is for approx £110,000. Claims were submitted in October and in January. Unfortunately Natural England's new finance systems could not cope. Eventually the payment expected in October was received on 8th Feb. The January payment is still outstanding. no payments were received until February 7th. This meant that the Board had to live off reserves for several months. Local and regional staff were very helpful but the national payment service, contracted out, is plainly a cause of concern.

End of Year Forecast

4. At the time of writing it is anticipated that core expenditure will be approx. £5,000 less than planned. Income could be approx £6,000 higher than

estimated leaving an end of year surplus of £11,000. This sum can be allocated to the general reserve

5. Project expenditure will be close to estimate. There is likely to be an underspend against the Forest Research Project, but it is likely that the Forestry Commission will agree to these funds being carried forward.

Recommendations

1. **To note the current satisfactory financial position.**
2. **To note that the end of year forecast shows a surplus in the order of £11,000.**
3. **To seek re-assurance from Natural England that its grant payments will be made on time in future.**

BUDGET v ACTUAL YEAR TO DATE 2006/07

MONTH 10: JANUARY

Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to date	Actual to date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Expenditure							
Department 10: Promotion and Awareness							
Information Officer & RK Officer	(71,976)	(59,980)	(60,923)	(943)	(73,107)	(1,131)	
Travel and subsistence	(1,500)	(1,250)	(1,022)	228	(1,500)	-	
Publications (bought in)	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Web site	(5,000)	(4,167)	(5,711)	(1,545)	(10,000)	(5,000)	Variance agreed by Exec Committee
CCB Literature (C&T etc.)	(20,200)	(12,833)	(12,206)	627	(22,452)	(2,252)	£2,252 added from 2005/06
Displays	(600)	(500)	(451)	49	(600)	-	
Events	(3,500)	(2,917)	(3,257)	(341)	(3,500)	-	
Environmental education	(1,000)	(833)	-	833	(1,000)	-	
40th Anniversary celebrations	(3,000)	(2,500)	(2,465)	35	(2,600)	400	
Miscellaneous	(1,000)	(833)	(107)	727	(1,000)	-	
Sub total	(107,776)	(85,813)	(86,142)	(329)	(115,759)	(7,983)	
Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to date	Actual to date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	

Department 20 Countryside Management							
Countryside & FLU Officer	(64,736)	(53,947)	(58,465)	(4,518)	(69,858)	(5,122)	£4k to be recharged to SDF at end of year for admin
Travel and subsistence	(4,000)	(3,333)	(1,867)	1,467	(4,000)	-	
Award schemes	(800)	(667)	(744)	(77)	(800)	-	
Fieldwork & research	(3,000)	(2,500)	(1,519)	981	(4,500)	(1,500)	Overspending - land use survey was doubled in size
Publications	(1,000)	(833)	(315)	518	(1,085)	(85)	
Events	(500)	(417)	(439)	(22)	(500)	-	
Wildlife conference	-	-	2,480	2,480	-	-	Not planned, but delegate fee income will cover cost
Monitoring	(3,000)	(2,500)	-	2,500	(1,500)	1,500	Planned underspend to cover additional cost of land use survey
Miscellaneous	(500)	(417)	(49)	368	(500)	-	
Sub total	(77,536)	(64,613)	(60,917)	3,696	(82,743)	(5,207)	
Description	Annual Budget	Profiled Budget to date	Actual to date	Variance	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Department 30 Planning and development							
Planning Officer	(49,999)	(41,666)	(42,348)	(682)	(50,818)	(819)	
Travel & subsistence	(1,000)	(833)	(1,135)	(301)	(1,000)	-	
Technical assistance	(2,000)	(1,667)	-	1,667	(2,000)	-	Underspending against profile
Planning Committee	(2,000)	(1,667)	(491)	1,176	(2,000)	-	

Department 50 Corporate Services							
Chief Officer / Office Manager / Admin	(116,232)	(96,860)	(93,197)	3,663	(111,278)	4,954	Underspent due to admin ass't post becoming part time
Travel and subsistence	(2,300)	(1,917)	(1,616)	300	(2,300)	-	
Staff training & insurance	(5,700)	(4,750)	(5,549)	(799)	(5,700)	-	
Premises	(28,785)	(27,023)	(26,950)	74	(29,485)	(700)	
Office costs	(17,700)	(14,750)	(17,904)	(3,154)	(17,700)	-	£1,500 postage costs to be recharged to Promotions £2,400 postage costs to be recharged to Projects
Office furniture & equipment	(600)	(500)	(113)	387	(600)	-	
IT (incl OS licences)	(22,450)	(20,850)	(18,989)	1,861	(25,000)	(2,550)	Improved back up system needed
Meetings & events	(1,000)	(833)	(1,062)	(228)	(1,000)	-	
Finance	(32,450)	(15,375)	1,792	17,167	(11,169)	21,281	Savings on audit and payroll services
Personnel	(3,500)	(3,500)	-	3,500	(3,500)	-	
Legal services	(9,800)	(8,167)	(5,746)	2,420	(9,800)	-	
Insurance	(9,000)	(6,000)	(6,962)	(962)	(9,000)	-	
Recruitment	(2,000)	(1,667)	(793)	874	(800)	1,200	
Miscellaneous	(2,000)	(1,667)	(497)	1,170	(2,000)	-	
Sub total	(253,517)	(203,858)	(177,587)	26,272	(229,332)	24,185	

Description	Annual Budget £	Profiled Budget to date £	Actual to date £	Variance £	Projected Outturn £	Projected Variance £	Notes
Department 60 Member Services							
Members' allowances	(36,000)	(30,000)	(30,244)	(244)	(36,000)	-	
Board member training	(1,800)	(1,500)	(2,156)	(656)	(2,175)	(375)	
Board meetings	(2,700)	(2,250)	(889)	1,361	(2,700)	-	
Miscellaneous	(1,500)	(1,250)	-	1,250	(500)	1,000	
Sub total	(42,000)	(35,000)	(33,290)	1,710	(41,375)	625	
Contribution to SE Protected Landscapes Co-ordinator	(2,000)	(1,667)	-	1,667	(2,000)	-	Contribution not yet paid
Merchandise purchases	(2,000)	(1,667)	(320)	1,347	(2,000)	-	Stock levels high
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	(588,447)	(478,967)	(439,355)	39,611	(583,208)	5,239	
Income							
Description	Annual Budget £	Profiled Budget to date £	Actual to date £	Variance £	Projected Outturn £	Projected Variance £	Notes
Countryside Agency/Natural England	454,000	454,000	454,000	-	454,000	-	
Local Authorities	117,513	117,513	102,070	(15,443)	102,070	(15,443)	Balance of budgeted amount collected in 2005/06
Transfer from reserve	-	-	-	-	15,443	15,443	and transferred from reserves in 2006/07
Merchandise sales	3,000	2,500	6,277	3,777	4,500	1,500	Performing well ahead of target

Other income	15,300	12,750	15,902	3,152	19,800	4,500	Interest from investment of surplus cash ahead of budget
TOTAL INCOME	589,813	586,763	578,248	(8,515)	595,813	6,000	
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	1,366	107,796	138,893	31,097	12,605	11,239	

Table 2

PROJECT ACTIVITY YEAR TO DATE 2006/07								
MONTH 10: JANUARY								
PROJECT	Budget Expenditure	Actual Exp. YTD	Actual Income YTD	Transfer from Reserves	Actual Income and Reserves less Exp YTD	Income Secured incl. income received, grant offers and reserves	Balance to Find	Comments
PROMOTION AND AWARENESS								
Getting Close to Nature	(31,000)	(13,399)	21,023	7,744	15,368	31,000	-	HLF has agreed the project can continue to Sept '07. On target for 06/07
Red Kites	(3,000)	(886)	1,511	2,010	2,635	3,000	-	Expenditure will be covered by donations
Friends of Red Kites	-	(408)	2,523	195	2,310	685	-	
Parishes Fund	(10,000)	(4,853)	-	10,000	5,147	10,000	-	Grants paid likely to be £8,000 by year end
Dunstable Downs	(10,000)	-	-	-	-	10,000	-	
People and Places	(5,000)	-	-	-	-	-	-	HLF has warded a grant of £13,000 (7.2.07)
TOTAL	(59,000)	(19,545)	25,057	19,949	25,461	54,685		

COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT								
Chalk Streams	(48,700)	(25,704)	25,200	20,400	19,896	48,700	-	On target
Woodland Research Programme	(47,000)	(436)	-	24,106	23,670	47,000	-	Most of the work will be completed and paid for in quarter 4.
Commons	(10,000)	(1,639)	541	2,000	902	5,000	(5,000)	Most of the balance is given in the form of volunteer time.
Special Trees and Woods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£3k will be met from Woodland Research Prog.
Chalk Grassland Programme	(18,000)	(878)	1,087	2,000	2,210	9,000	(9,000)	A number of projects are nearing implementation stage.
Hedgerow Survey	(5,000)	(3,162)	-	-	(3,162)	5,000	-	Completed. Results are being prepared.
Landowner Management Guidance	(2,500)	(2,730)	1,136	2,500	907	2,500	-	Published
TOTAL	(131,200)	(34,548)	27,964	51,006	44,422	117,200	(14,000)	
ACCESS AND RECREATION								
Ridgeway Link	(17,700)	-	-	6,059	6,059	17,700	-	Works underway
Visitor Survey	(4,000)	-	3,000	-	3,000	4,000	-	Survey commissioned
Access Publications	(4,000)	-	226	-	226	4,000	-	Ongoing
Routes for All	(12,000)	(811)	1,700	-	889	12,000	-	Underway
Chilterns Country Leaflets	(5,000)	(3,484)	1,550	-	(1,934)	5,000	-	Several have had to be re-printed
Tranquil Cycling	(2,000)	(590)	-	2,000	1,410	2,000	-	Ongoing
TOTAL	(44,700)	(4,885)	6,476	8,059	19,420	44,700	-	

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT								
Building Heritage Skills Project	(1,000)	(664)	-	-	(664)	12	(640)	
Historic Environment	(1,000)	-	-	1,000	1,000	1,000	0	HLC additional work has begun, but only likely to cost £1,000
TOTAL	(6,000)	(664)	-	1,000	336	1,012	(640)	
Sustainable Development Fund	(80,000)	(724)	60,000	-	59,276	80,000	-	
GRAND TOTAL	(320,900)	(60,366)	119,497	80,014	148,915	297,597	(14,640)	

Report on Changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

Author: Chris Smith Financial Advisor to the Board

Summary: The government proposes to make changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The overall cost to the Board in the short to medium term is unlikely to change significantly. Employee contribution rates may fall or rise depending upon salary.

Purpose of Report: To advise the Board of proposed changes to the scheme. At this stage no action is required on the part of the Board.

Background

1. The Minister for Local Government and Social Cohesion Phil Woolas MP announced in November 2006 a series of proposals to be introduced from April 2008. The changes are intended to address the needs of a longer-living workforce and find a solution that is affordable and realistic.
3. The solution is largely based upon a revision to the benefits linked to early retirement in order to control the costs of the scheme. The main changes are set out below.
 1. The new pensions will still be a final salary scheme, based upon the better of the final year's salary or an average of the best three consecutive years' salary in the last 10 years (adjusted for inflation).
 2. The accrual rate is going up from 1/80th to 1/60th which means that pensions earned should be bigger on retirement.
 3. The tax free lump sum is no longer automatic but can be "purchased" by the employee by giving up some of the pension benefit at a rate of £1 of annual pension for £12 of lump sum.
 4. Death in service benefits will rise from twice to three times salary.
4. Average employee contributions will rise from the current 5.8% to 6.3%, although for those on lower incomes the rate will reduce.
5. Employer contributions are predicted to average 13.2% in future plus the cost of transitional protection. The current CCB rate is 14.1%.
6. The "Rule of 85" was removed on 1 October 2006. This previously enabled employees with a combined age plus length of service calculation of 85 to retire earlier than 65 on full pension.
7. Arrangements will be provided which will protect the rights of existing scheme members (according to age and date of joining the scheme) both under the new scheme and as a result of the removal of the "Rule of 85".

8. Phased retirement arrangements will allow members to draw down some or all of their pension whilst still continuing to work.
9. All staff have been advised on the proposed changes and been given an explanatory newsletter published by the Dept for Communities and local government.

Conclusions

1. The changes are intended to make the LGPS more affordable. The costs to the Board will not change significantly. Employee contribution rates for most employees will rise slightly, by up to 1% but this will vary according to salary.
2. The tri-annual revaluation of the pension fund is due in 2007. Employer rates may change in the light of that valuation, which will be available by December 2007.

Recommendations

1. **To note the proposed changes**
2. **To ensure the staff are aware of the proposals.**

Financial Memorandum of Agreement

Author: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary: The draft MoA on funding for the period 2007-2013 needs to be agreed by the Board, Natural England and all 15 local authorities. This draft was circulated for comment in January 2006 and no objections were received from local authorities. Countryside Agency agreement to the wording was not secured before NE was established. It is proposed to re-consult and to seek agreement to allow the MoA to be in place by 1st April. An additional clause has been inserted to cover the possibility of local government reform.

Purpose of the report: To seek Executive Committee approval for the funding Memorandum of Agreement for the period 2007- 2013

Background

1. In 2001 the Countryside Agency increased the rate of its core grant from 50% to up to 75%. In return for this the Agency sought an undertaking from local authorities that they would not reduce their contribution. The intention was that the AONB budget would grow significantly rather than there simply be an adjustment to the funding profile. The Agency required all local authorities to agree to a Memorandum of Agreement to ensure that their grant was not reduced. Initially this was for a period of 6 years with a review after 3 years.
2. All local authorities agreed to this arrangement and signed the Memorandum. The Countryside Agency increased its grant rate to 75%. During the period since 2001 all 15 local authorities have maintained their contribution, adjusted for inflation. No increase above inflation has been sought.
3. When the Board was established without the ability to reclaim VAT the Countryside Agency agreed that its rate of grant would be further increased and could be up to 80%. The local authorities were not required to increase their contributions despite the increase in operating costs.
4. The revised Memorandum is based on the same funding profile as before and is seeking to maintain the real value of funding contributions from all parties. An additional clause has been added to cover the possibility of local government reform. In effect the MoA seeks to ensure that the funding contributions from new authorities equals the value of contributions from these forming the new councils.

Recommendation

1. **To approve the Memorandum of Agreement on funding for the period 2007-2013**



MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

**THE CHILTERN CONSERVATION BOARD,
NATURAL ENGLAND AND ALL THE LOCAL
AUTHORITIES IN THE CHILTERN AONB.
2007- 2013**

Bedfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Chiltern District Council
Dacorum Borough Council
Luton Borough Council
Mid Bedfordshire District Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Bedfordshire District Council
South Buckinghamshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Three Rivers District Council
Wycombe District Council

**FUNDING AGREEMENT (Memorandum of Agreement) BETWEEN THE CHILTERN
CONSERVATION BOARD, NATURAL ENGLAND AND ALL THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES
IN THE CHILTERN AONB FOR 2007 - 2013**

Background

1. This agreement is between the Chilterns Conservation Board, the fifteen local authorities (Table 1) that are entitled to nominate a member to the Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England Agency. This agreement is effective from April 2007 and will run for an initial period of 6 years, but will be reviewed at a 3 year interval. Subject to a satisfactory review involving all partners, this agreement will be extended for a further 6 year period. The 3 year review and agreement extension process will be repeated for future years thereby creating a ‘rolling’ 3 year agreement.

Table 1

Authority
Bedfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Chiltern District Council
Dacorum Borough Council
Luton Borough Council
Mid Bedfordshire District Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
South Bedfordshire District Council
South Buckinghamshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Three Rivers District Council
Wycombe District Council

2. This agreement supersedes all previous funding memoranda produced by the Countryside Agency.
3. This funding agreement (MoA) and its approval by all the Local Authority partners (who are entitled to nominate a member to the Chilterns Conservation Board), is a condition of the Natural England core funding arrangement which allows the Chilterns Conservation Board to bid for a maximum of 80% grant aid support for core costs.
4. If local government re-organisation affects any of the local authorities, the funding contribution provided by the newly formed authorities will equal that previously provided by the councils which form the new authorities.

Description of Partnership / Activities of partnership / Employment of Staff / Administrative arrangements

5. A full description of the Conservation Board is provided by the following:
 - Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (Part IV)
 - Establishment Order (July 2004)
 - Business Plan (2007-08)

- CCB Standing Orders and Regulations
6. The following core functions will be carried out by the CCB:
- i) Developing a vision and strategy for AONB management.
 - ii) Preparing an AONB management plan as required by the CROW Act 2000.
 - iii) Promoting the vision and strategy for the AONB.
 - iv) Implementing, and co-ordinating the implementation by others of the management plan.
 - v) Co-ordinating and advising on local authority services in the AONB.
 - vi) Monitoring and reporting on progress against management plan targets.
 - vii) Accessing resources for undertaking management activities, including external financing, project development and proposals, and providing matching funding for special projects
 - viii) Securing advice from, and liaising with other AONBs individually and nationally.
 - ix) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection.
 - x) Promoting the value of the AONB to the community.
 - xi) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB.
 - xii) Providing planning advice and related activities.
 - xiii) Seeking additional funds to assistance with the delivery of management activity.

Financial arrangements

7. The Board is subject to the Accounting and Audit Regulations 2003 and subsequent amendments in 2006. It will be audited on an annual basis by the Audit Commission.
8. The core costs of the Board and its core activities will be met directly by the Board, which will be responsible for the exercise of proper financial control and for collecting contributions from other funding bodies.
9. Eligible core costs will include:
 1. Recruitment costs including advertising.
 2. Travel and subsistence costs incurred by interview candidates and other recruitment costs such as relocation where payable.
 3. Accommodation (office rents and rates), IT, office equipment, insurance, health and safety.
 4. Core staff salaries, employer's national insurance, superannuation contributions.
 5. All payments made in relation to the Board's terms and conditions of employment.
 6. Training.
 7. Travel and subsistence expenses.
 8. Redundancy costs arising from a Board decision (to be met from the annual core funding contributions agreed by the local authorities and Natural England. Only in exceptional circumstances would the Board seek additional financial assistance.)
 9. A partnership budget to be used for promotion, information, monitoring the condition of the AONB and Management Plan delivery, and research.

10. External costs of establishing and operating the Chilterns Conservation Board.
 11. Costs associated with the review, monitoring and production of the AONB management plan.
 12. Other project and activities necessary to deliver functions listed in paragraph 7.
10. Natural England will fund the core costs incurred at up to 80% of actual expenditure. An annual bid in an agreed format will be submitted to Natural England by the Board. The bid will be based upon a business plan agreed by the Board and will comprise details of estimated costs and the annual work programme and outcomes to be delivered. Natural England will make a formal offer of grant to the Board by March 31st in each year. The value of the grant to core costs will be maintained with an annual inflationary allowance for the term of this agreement.
 11. Payment of grant for core costs will be paid quarterly in advance by Natural England in recognition of the potential cash flow implications of receiving grant payment in arrears. An annual reconciliation will be undertaken to ensure that any excess grant is identified and repaid or used as agreed.
 12. An application for grant aid for projects will be made by Jan 1st (or whichever date is set by the Natural England). A formal grant offer will be issued by no later than March 31st.
 13. Project grants will be paid in arrears. Interim payment will be considered to avoid cash flow difficulties.
 14. Grant applications and claims will be made by the Board's Finance Officer.
 15. Local Authority partners will contribute to core costs at the following levels (Table 2) in the first year 2007/08 and will be maintained with an annual inflationary allowance for the term of this agreement.
 16. Subject to agreement the core funding contribution of local authorities may be increased in line with the Business Plan and work programme.

Table 2

Authority	Amount
Buckinghamshire County Council	15,908
Oxfordshire County Council	14,234
Hertfordshire County Council	13,834
Bedfordshire County Council	12,450
Wycombe District Council	8,852
South Oxfordshire District Council	8,852
Chiltern District Council	8,852
Luton Borough Council	6,915
South Bedfordshire District Council	6,915
Dacorum Borough Council	6,915

Aylesbury Vale District Council	4,842
North Hertfordshire District Council	4,150
Mid Bedfordshire District Council	2,765
South Buckinghamshire District Council	2,792
Three Rivers District Council	2,765
Total	121,040

20. In the first year (April 1st 2007 - March 31st 2008) the total core budget will be £613,634 (excluding costs of reviewing the Management Plan). Natural England core grant aid applied for is £467,620 (76.2%). The budget was adopted by the CCB for 2007/08 on January 23rd 2007. **(this section to be finalised once NE grant offer is made.)**
21. In addition to annual core contributions, Local Authority contributions will be sought for projects which implement the AONB Management Plan. Future year's contributions will be agreed according to actual project costs and contributions from elsewhere, but in general partners will be expected to maintain contributions to ongoing projects at similar levels throughout the period of this agreement.
22. Contributions will continue to be sought for project costs from a variety of sponsors and partner organisations.
23. Any funds outstanding at the end of the financial year will be retained and added to the Board's reserves. Where these funds have any restriction placed on them this will be identified in the accounts. Otherwise the funds will be allocated to the general reserve.
24. During the year the Board may decide to use its general reserve for specific purposes. Usually this will be identified in the Business Plan and budget. Where it is not, the use of any reserves will need to be approved by the Board's Executive Committee.
25. The Board will prepare and circulate to the Natural England and all local authorities the following on an annual basis:
1. A draft budget for the following year for comment.
 2. A draft work programme for comment.
 3. A half and full year review of the work programme.
 4. A review of the Board's activities.
 5. A full copy of the audited annual accounts.
26. The Board will finalise its budget and work programme in the light of comments received from the Countryside Agency and local authorities.
27. Any person authorised by the Natural England shall be entitled at all reasonable times to examine the progress of the project or to inspect any relevant books, documents, records or audited accounts.
28. The Board's staff will be expected to maintain regular contact with the Natural England's regional and area teams. Natural England will be invited to attend meetings of the Board's Executive committee and all relevant working groups. Copies of Board papers will be provided to the agency.

Termination

29. A partner may, by giving not less than 12 months written notice, terminate their participation in this Agreement setting out the reasons for termination. A review of the financial

implications for remaining signatories to this agreement will be undertaken immediately (n.b. the local authority's right to nominate a Board member will remain unaffected as this is incorporated in the CCB Parliamentary Establishment Order. Any local authority withdrawing from this Agreement should take into account whether it will continue to exercise this right).

- 30. The Agency will pay grant in respect of inescapable contractual commitments entered into in good faith prior to any party giving notice of termination whether or not such commitments involve expenditure after the date of termination.
- 31. Where a reduction or cessation in funding leads to redundancies the cost will be borne from the annual contributions given by all partners.

Signed.....

Date.....

Position.....

on behalf of the Natural England

Signed.....

Date.....

Position.....

on behalf of the Chilterns Conservation Board

Signed.....

Date.....

Position.....

For each local authority

Training/Awareness Sessions for Board Members

Author: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary: It is proposed to organise a series of training sessions and field visits on specific topics for interested Board members. The annual cost is estimated to be in the order of £1,200.

Purpose of Report: To support provision of additional technical training for Board members.

Background

1. Currently the provision of training for Board members includes;
 - Occasional post Board meeting sessions.
 - Two Board tours each year and walking tour.
 - Occasional workshops.
2. In general awareness raising is based on Board papers, presentations at Board meetings and member involvement in task groups.
3. This format doesn't provide many opportunities for more in depth coverage of a specific topic. It is, therefore proposed to introduce a series of training sessions, probably involving a field visits, on specific subjects such as:
 1. Vernacular buildings
 2. Woodland Management
 3. Farming for Wildlife
 4. Access Provision for the less mobile
 5. Field Archaeology
 6. Ecology of chalk streams
4. It is expected that member attendance at each session would be approx 5 - 10. The sessions would be organised and led by members of staff and members themselves. Colleagues from other organisations might be invited as guest tutors.
5. The cost for each session might typically involve provision of a reading list, an introductory session indoors followed by field visits. Each course will cost in the order of £100 - 200.

Recommendations

1. **A series of one day courses/visits are organised for Board members.**
2. **If agreed Members are contacted to identify the subjects on which more training is required.**

Readability of Conservation Board Documents and Publications

Author: Claire Forrest Information and Interpretation Officer

Summary: The Board needs to ensure that its documents and publications are readable by everyone including those with poor eyesight. Weight also needs to be given to the increasing tendency to read documents and web pages on a computer screen. It is proposed to switch to a sans serif type face, possibly Arial, for all documents as this is generally regarded as easier to read, especially for those with failing or poor eyesight. Currently Times Roman is used for all working documents and some publications. (Times Roman 12pt)

The Board needs to ensure that its documents and publications are readable by everyone including those with poor eyesight. Weight also needs to be given to the increasing tendency to read documents and web pages on a computer screen. It is proposed to switch to a sans serif type face, possibly Arial, for all documents as this is generally regarded as easier to read, especially for those with failing or poor eyesight. Currently Times Roman is used for all working documents and some publications. Arial is already used for the web site. (Arial 12pt)

Purpose of report: To seek approval to change the Board's default font for documents to a sans serif font.

Background

1. Currently the Board's publications, both printed and electronic, use either the serif Times Roman font or the sans serif Arial font. As a rule the more formal publications such as the Annual Review, Chalk and Trees, Board papers and minutes use Times Roman. Shorter more informal publications such as walk leaflets or visitor guides such as Discover the Chilterns use sans serif fonts such as Arial or similar.
2. In general it is increasingly popular now to use sans serif fonts for printed matter and on screen, in order to improve the legibility of documents.
3. Serif fonts still have a use, particularly in publications with large amounts of text. They work well for titles and subheaders, providing contrast to the sans serif body text beneath. The use of serif and sans serif fonts in adjacent articles creates a pleasing look in magazine-style layouts.
4. It is proposed that the Board adopts a sans serif font as its default font for the majority of its documents, both electronic and printed. This would include Board papers, minutes, letters, web documents, reports and leaflets.
5. Times Roman or a similar serif font should continue to be used in Chalk and Trees to provide contrast and create an attractive look.

6. A default sans serif font needs to be chosen. It should be one which is commonly available in Microsoft Word, for example Arial or Helvetica.

Recommendations

1. **That the default font for the majority of the Board's publications is changed to a sans serif font such as Arial or similar.**
2. **That Times Roman continues to be used for contrast and variety in Chalk and Trees.**

Accord with the Chiltern Woodland Project

Author: Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

Summary: The Executive Committee requested that an Accord be prepared between the Board and the Chiltern Woodland Project to describe the working relationship.

Purpose of Report: To seek committee approval for the Accord with the Chiltern Woodland Project.

Background

1. There is a close working relationship between the Conservation Board and Woodland Project which has been in place for many years. The Project was established by The Chiltern Society in the early 1980s with a specific remit to promote the management of small woodland across the Chilterns, including all the AONB. Since its establishment the project has been managed by John Morris. From time to time the project has employed other staff as finances have allowed. Currently the CWP manages the Special Trees and Woodlands Project, including the project officer, Liz Manley.
2. In 2006 the Woodland Project invited the Board to appoint a trustee. At its meeting in October 2006 the Board nominated Dr. Mike Render. (Mike works for the Forestry Commission and was formerly the forestry officer for Bucks CC).
3. Since 1999 the Board, and its predecessors, has provided office accommodation, which it continues to do. Depending upon the Project's finances a charge is made for rent. The Project has always been charged for its share of direct costs such as postage and telephone.
4. In view of the close working relationship, the Board has not sought to employ a woodland officer (other staff including the Chief Officer also have some forestry expertise) as the necessary skills were available from John Morris.
5. The Board has from time to time also provided funding directly or helped arrange funding from other parties. For example the Board helped develop the EU funded project known as TWIG and more recently the HLF funded Special Trees and Woods Project, both of which were and are managed by the CWP.
6. It is in the interests of both organisations to maintain a close working relationship and for the Board to assist the Project remain a viable body.

Recommendation

1. **To approve the Accord with the Chiltern Woodland Project**



**Chiltern
Woodlands Project**

**Draft Accord between the
Chilterns Conservation Board and
Chiltern Woodlands Project**

The Purpose of this accord is to describe how the Chilterns Conservation Board and Chiltern Woodlands Project will work together to meet shared objectives

The Chiltern Conservation Board was established by Parliamentary Order on December 14th 2004. Its statutory aims are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns
- To promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB
- In do so far as it is compatible with the first two aims, the Board will seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.

The Chiltern Woodlands Project is a registered charitable trust (no. 1002512) company limited by guarantee (not for profit) founded in 1989. Its aims are:

- To promote and encourage the sustainable management of woodlands in the Chiltern Hills.
- To protect and enhance the landscape
- To maintain and enhance the biodiversity
- To promote a sustainable woodland economy
- To increase awareness, understanding and enjoyment of Chiltern woods.

The Chilterns Conservation Board and Chiltern Woodlands Project have identified their shared priorities as:

- Securing an attractive and sustainable landscape.

- Protection of existing woodlands.
- Promoting the long term sustainable management of woodlands.
- Promoting public enjoyment and understanding of woodlands and woodland heritage.
- Encouraging appropriate economic activity which supports the management of woodlands.
- Securing the protection of the special woodland heritage of woodlands.

The Conservation Board and Woodlands Project will work together in partnership to deliver these shared priorities.

We will do this by:

- Working closely and collaboratively at all levels.
- The CCB and CWP will agree an annual joint work programme.
- The CWP will assist the CCB with the preparation and implementation of the Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB.
- The CWP Board has given the Conservation Board the right to appoint a trustee of the CWP.
- The CCB Chief Officer and CWP manager will hold regular liaison meetings.
- CCB staff and CWP staff will liaise directly on all relevant matters.
- Staff will respond positively to request to attend Board meeting of each organisation and to provide information useful to each organisation.
- The CCB and CWP will invite the other organisation to be represented on any relevant work groups.
- The Conservation Board will provide office accommodation for the CWP which will be occupied on a Tenancy at Will lease.
- The Conservation Board will re-charge direct costs on an annual basis and will consider requires to waive other charges such as rent and rates depending upon the CWP's financial position.
- The Conservation Board will make available to the CWP meeting room facilities and general use of office equipment.
- The CCB will make available general IT support. Direct IT support will be charged directly.
- The CWP manager/staff will provide, on a no cost basis, the Conservation Board and its staff general support and information on woodland issues.

- The Conservation Board will assist the CWP with its fund raising efforts to enable it to function effectively and employ a manager.
- CWP and CCB will jointly develop a promotion and events programme.
- CCB and CWP will jointly identify priorities for future woodland work in the new Chilterns AONB Management Plan, these might include for example:-
 - Woodfuel
 - Climate Change and wood
 - Pest management
 - Woodland heritage
- Run the Special Trees and Woods project (until June 2009) with funded agreed by Heritage Lottery Fund and Chilterns Conservation Board. Working with volunteers and community groups to record the tree and woodland heritage of the Natural Area. Results are shown on the Chilterns AONB website.