

## **Report from the Executive Committee**

**Author:** Steve Rodrick Chief Officer

**Summary:** The Executive Committee met on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

1. The Annual Return for 2006-07 was approved for submission to the Audit Commission.
2. The financial report was approved for the year to date.
3. Amendments to the Board's Financial Regulations were approved.
4. It was agreed to take out a policy to provide financial support to staff for medical treatment.
5. A flexible retirement policy was adopted based on that of Bucks CC.
6. A report was noted that general HR support is being sought.
7. A carbon offset scheme was approved to assist the Board to become carbon neutral by 2011.
8. A report was noted on the Board's involvement with the LEADER and Interreg IVb programmes, both EU funded to promote sustainable rural development.

**Purpose of Report:** The Executive Committee operates with delegated authority from the full Board, but is required to make a report to each Board meeting.

### **Finance**

1. The Executive Committee approved the Annual Report for 2006-07 to be submitted to the Audit Commission. The audit fee is likely to be in the order of £2,500. There were no unusual items reported and an unqualified report is expected.
2. The Executive Committee approved a report on the financial position to the end of September from the Finance Officer. There were no unusual items to report.
3. The committee approved amendments and additions to the current Financial Regulations which were prepared in 2004 and adopted by the Board in January 2005. Good practice requires these regulations to be reviewed at least every three years.

### **Health Care**

4. The Committee approved a health care policy which provides financial support to staff for a range of medical treatments. The cost to the Board will be £1,800 per annum.
5. All staff who have their position confirmed following the initial probationary period will be eligible. The cost is £15 per month per person.

### **Flexible Retirement Policy**

6. The Board is a member of the Buckinghamshire Local government Pension Scheme. Following changes to the Age Equality Regulations the managers of the fund have required all members to adopt a flexible retirement policy consistent with the new guidance (in effect if an employee is capable of fulfilling their duties they can continue working beyond what was a previously considered to be their normal retirement age). The fund managers recognised that smaller organisations which are members of the scheme have not yet developed their own policy and invited them to use the Bucks CC policy as a model. This model is similar to that already in place for the Board, which was that of Wycombe DC when the Board was established. The Executive Committee approved a slightly amended version of the Bucks CC model.
7. The Committee also decided that the Board should prepare its own policy within twelve months.

### **Human Resources Support**

8. The Board has been without specialist human resource support since the agreement with Bucks CC was terminated in 2006. Wycombe DC and South Oxon DC were approached to provide the Board with support based on a Service Level Agreement. Both declined and recently consultants have been approached to provide the Board with support. A number of expressions of interest have been received and interviews will take place at the end of October.
9. The Board urgently needs to bring its personnel policies and terms and conditions of employment up to date. Once this has been done most HR support will be called upon only when needed.

### **Carbon Offset Scheme**

10. The Executive Committee approved the proposed scheme to offset the net carbon emission of the Board after it has undertaken all other practical measures. This issue is dealt with more fully in Item 8.

### **LEADER and INTERREG Programmes**

11. The Committee received a briefing report on these two EU funded programmes. Both are at the bidding stage and the Board is heavily involved.

12. The Board prepared the expression of interest for the LEADER programme which was approved in July. An invitation was issued to submit a full bid by January 2008. This programme is designed to support rural development and in particular farming and forestry. Business Link has agreed to co-ordinate the bid and if successful will be the accountable body. Board staff and members are heavily involved. The total budget has still not been finalised but up to £3million may be available for the Chilterns for the period 2008- 2013. All the Chilterns AONB will be included in the bid.
13. All the AONBs in the south east, the New Forest National Park authority together with the French regional parks around Paris will be developing a joint bid to the Interreg IVb programme which will run from 2008 – 2012. The total sum being sought will be up to £3m (approx. £70,000 per AONB per annum). The aim of the programme will be to promote sustainable development in protected areas close to London and Paris. The bid will be prepared by the SE AONB co-ordinator and Kent County Council. The match funding will be the Sustainable Development Fund (n.b. Natural England need to keep providing this grant in order to support this proposal).

### **Recommendation**

1. **To note the report from the Executive Committee.**