

MEETING OF
THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE FARM OFFICE, GUITING MANOR FARMS, GUITING POWER

TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

Present:

Vice-Chair	-	Brendan McCarthy
David Broad		Catherine Le Grice-Mack
Ed Macalister-Smith		Mike Dean
Charles Mathew		Molly Groom (observer)
George Lambrick		Graham Hopkins (observer)

Also in Attendance:

John Mills	Planning and Landscape Officer
Simon Smith	Project Development and Business Planning Officer
Alana Hopkins	Communications Officer
Andy Parsons	Chief Executive elect

E 2.26 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Liz Eyre, Martin Lane, Tony Merry and Nigel Colston.

E 2.27 INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

E 2.28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

E 2.29 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

E 2.30 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – 25 JUNE 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board Meeting held on 25 June 2019 be approved as a correct record.

E 2.31 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 28 MAY 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee held on 28 May 2019 be approved as a correct record.

E 2.32 BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 QUARTER 1 REVIEW**Summary:**

The Committee received an update on the budget for Quarter 1. It was highlighted that there was a £32,500 year-end surplus compared to the original budget. £50,000 had been put into the general fund which was the money paid by Network Rail for hosting the Mitigation Fund project. There was unexpected expenditure of £26,500 owing to the recruitment of the new Chief Executive. Sponsorship income was tracking behind where it was budgeted to be. The Hare Trail cancellation had saved £15k.

Key Consideration(s):

Budget planning for Quarter 2, for reporting to the Board.

Action(s):

The Committee considered there needed to be a realistic view on whether it is right to invest monies in new projects such as the hedge laying competition which made a £6k loss when last held (even though it recognised the reputational implications if it did not go ahead). Ed Bonn would look into the challenge, and whether the wider reason for doing this meant it was a useful way of spending the money.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the Quarter 1 review be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

This item was for noting only.

E 2.33 BUSINESS PLAN 2020 - 2023**Summary:**

The Committee discussed the first draft of the 2020-23 Business Plan. It noted that the format and content were not dis-similar to previous plans and clearly the new Chief Executive would need to be closely involved in its development once he starts. The final draft needs to be ready by March 2020. The results of the Glover review relating to the AONB's may also have an impact on the plan. Concern was expressed that too many projects were being supported and there remains a risk of projects running in parallel with the ongoing commitments of the organisation such that we could risk overstretching ourselves.

One project which would need to feature in the Business Plan is the need to identify new office premises and facilitate a successful move.

Key Consideration(s):

The 2020-23 Business Plan to be presented to a future Committee/Board.

Action(s) Arising:

Officers to work on the plan and the amount of projects contained within it, as there is a need to focus on fewer specific issues. This item is to be kept on the agenda in order to consider and review at future meetings.

Decision(s):**RESOLVED that:**

- (a) Comments on the 2020-23 business plan be noted;**
- (b) the production schedule for the 2020-23 business plan be noted.**

Reason for Decision(s):

This item was for noting only.

E 2.34 PROJECT PROPOSAL TEMPLATESummary:

The Committee were presented with a new template for proposing projects. Although there needed to be manual override for urgent decisions, when the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chief Executive would need to consider between meetings the intention is that this would come to the Executive (and if necessary the Board, for consideration. Some debate took place at what constituted a "project" but the committee agreed with the definition in the paper. It also felt that the risks of not pursuing a project should be considered alongside those of doing it and the fit with the Board's ambitions, Management and Business plan could be subject to a simple scoring system to help the decision making process.

Subject to these amendments the Executive agreed to give the proposal support, recognising that the new CE and experience gained from using it would inevitably lead to further refinements

Key Consideration(s):

New project proposals should be presented to the Committee or Board within the Board's current systems.

Action(s) Arising:

Officers to work on the template with the comments noted from the Committee.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the new template for proposing projects be adopted, with amendments as outlined by Committee.

Reason for Decision(s):

To ensure the consistent presentation of information when proposing projects.

E 2.35 EXTERNAL FUNDING CHALLENGE

Summary:

The Committee were invited to comment on the draft funding plan and challenge for Board Members developed by the External Funding Working Group. The group will meet again in October. The Committee welcomed this work and congratulated the group on its work so far. However, it considered that the list of projects in Appendix A of the plan represented a huge workload and further prioritisation would still be needed to make this realistic. Also, the success of fundraising depended on having not a long list of possibilities but a few only that everyone targeted within a specific Business Plan period. We should also recognise the need for dedicated fundraising staff rather than relying on current staff to add to their workloads or the assumption that board Members will simply use their contacts. There would be a need for a lot of preparatory work so that projects are properly presented as funding/sponsorship opportunities

Officers commented that in order to keep track of fundraising properly a Customer Relations Management system (CRM) would be required. The Committee agreed but equally recognised that the acquisition, setting up, populating with information and maintaining such a system would be a major workload in itself and extra staff resources would be needed to run it. Mike Dean offered the experience of Tewkesbury Borough Council in respect of their CRM system at the appropriate time.

The Committee also noted the experience of the new Chief Executive in this regard.

The Committee were also concerned that sources of funding were unable to be sought because of lack of staff time, the profile of the Board would need to be higher within the public realm. Councillor induction should also include ideas on different opportunities that external funding can bring to the Board.

The newly appointed Chief Executive, who was due to commence working with the Board in October 2019, commented that this would be something he considered would be brought to the Committee again in the new year.

Key Consideration(s):

Generating and reviewing ideas for income generation and challenging the Planning and Infrastructure Working Group to look at how income can be generated.

Action(s) Arising:

Officers to note the comments from the Committee relating to this important subject and to continue to refine the proposals with a view to presenting a future report to the Committee in the new year.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the comments on the draft funding plan and challenge for Board Members be noted;**
- (b) a refined paper to come to the Executive meeting in early 2020.**

Reason for Decision(s):

- (i) To ensure the income generation proposals are properly developed through further refinement

E 2.34 RISK MANAGEMENT

Summary:

The Committee received a report of the Risk Management Framework and the Corporate Risk Register.

Key Consideration(s):

Corporate Risk Register and Risk Management Framework.

Action(s) Arising:

None

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the contents of the Risk Management Framework and Corporate Risk Register be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

To ensure the Corporate Risk Register and Risk Management Framework are up to date.

E 2.35 A417 MISSING LINK PREFERRED ROUTE CONSULTATION

Summary:

The Committee received a report which provided an update on Highways England's planning release of consultation material on the A417 missing link preferred route. Officers highlighted that they had been advised that consultation will begin on 27 September 2019 – 6 November 2019. A response will need to be sent promptly following the next Executive meeting.

Key Consideration(s):

The consultation and new route of the A417 missing link.

Action(s) Arising:

To respond to Highways England following the Board's site visit on 1 October 2019.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the report and comments be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

The report was for noting only.

E 2.36 PLANNING ISSUESSummary:

The Committee considered a report on the proposed updating of the Board's approach to working with Local Authorities and particularly how the Board would like to be pro-actively consulted on planning applications within the AONB, recognising that we are not a statutory consultee. Consultation with Local Authorities is not consistent and feedback taken from LA's indicate issues over workload, both within LAs and the Board, complexity of existing Board advice and the need for the Board to be efficient in prioritising which applications to comment on.

The Committee also considered that the tone of voice of any new guidance issued was extremely important. This should clearly express that we are there to help find the right outcomes not tell people what to do.

The committee debated the difficult issues of scale when considering major developments but ultimately accepted that the paper provided a balance approach to a problem where there was no single right answer.

It was agreed that there would be real benefit in trialling this approach before formally adopting it as feedback from LAs would help to determine its final shape.

The Committee also noted that the Chair has some views which she was feeding in to John Mills, Planning Officer, separately.

It was agreed that the proposals were overdue and recognised the level of detailed work involved in getting the paper this far. It noted that further refinement would happen at the next meeting of the Planning Group

Key Consideration(s):

Identifying, developing and promoting best practice and guidance on AONB-related planning issues.

Action(s) Arising:

Officers to make amendments as required, to ensure there is no ambiguity in the consultation document to Local Authorities.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that, the Committee, subject to amendments, endorse the recommendations to Board meeting in December 2019:

- (a) the proposed draft consultation criteria, subject to amendments.**
- (b) agree that it is not necessary to further update or re-launch the 2011 planning protocol;**
- (c) the proposed position relating to the scale at which housing developments and / or allocations in the Cotswolds AONB should always be considered to constitute major development;**
- (d) the proposed position relating to taking a landscape-led approach to housing provision in the Cotswolds AONB.**
- (e) the proposed position relating to evidence of affordable housing need that should be required for housing proposals within the Cotswolds AONB;**
- (f) the proposed position relating to choice-based lettings systems;**
- (g) the proposed next steps.**

Reason for Decision(s):

To ensure the Board's engagement in the planning system.

E 2.37 THE BOARD'S CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS

Summary:

Committee received a report on the Board's concurrent functions.

Key Considerations:

The concurrent functions enabled through other legislation which the Board provides with 15 Local Authorities.

Action(s) Arising:

To review the functions

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Board's concurrent functions be noted;**
- (b) the Board should continue to promote its potential to deliver services to and on behalf of the local authority partners and agencies;**

- (c) the Executive Committee should invite the Board's local authority appointees to consider how the concurrent functions might operate in future and identify if the Board could be better placed to lead on some concurrent functions and pilot different approaches.**

Reason for Decision:

To ensure the Board continues to promote its potential to deliver services to and on behalf of the local authority partners and agencies.

E 2.38 THE CONSERVATION BOARD'S MAIN LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Summary:

Committee received an update of the main legislative and policy framework referring to the Board.

Key Consideration(s):

Main legislative background and policy framework.

Action(s) Arising:

To ensure the Board has all the right

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the main national legislative and policy framework under which the Board operates is noted;**
(b) the Board's own Constitution, Position Statements, Policies and Statements and the date of their agreement and planned review be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

The legislative and policy framework is agreed.

E 2.39 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY REVIEW

Summary:

The Committee received an update on the Communications Strategy 2017/2020. Alana Hopkins Communications Officer advised that a strategy was currently being drafted for 2020/23 and gave an update on the projects currently being undertaken.

The committee recognised the scale of the workload falling to the Communications Officer and how this could easily escalate, creating unrealistic expectations. The new CE would clearly wish to be closely involved in how our work in this important area develops over time ensuring that we are targeted in our approach to audience development.

Business cases would be needed for extra resources for sponsorship development, donor development, a CRM system and other prioritised activities. All this would need to be properly built in to the next Business Plan.

Key Consideration(s):

To ensure an updated Strategy is fit for purpose.

Action(s) Arising:

None

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

The report was for noting only.

E2.40A GLOVER REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARKS AND AONBS

Summary:

Committee received an update on the Glover Review of National Parks and AONBs.

Key Consideration(s):

To note the Board's ambition for a Cotswolds National Park and the anticipated publishing of the Glover Report within the next week or so.

Action(s) Arising:

None.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the latest progress report be noted.

E2.40B COTSWOLD LEADER PROGRAMME UPDATE

Summary:

The Committee received an update on the progress of the LEADER programme, which had come to a very successful conclusion. It was noted that the programme had met its brief very well and the reputation of the Board had been

duly enhanced. The Committee recorded its thanks to all involved, both Officers and the Leader Group who oversaw the roll out of the programme.

NB: After note. A report from Defra following their successful visit in September was subsequently circulated to the Committee.

Key Consideration(s):

None

Action(s) Arising:

None

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

To update Committee.

E2.40C TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Committee were updated on the following groups:

- (a) A417 Working Group
- (b) Walking and Exploring Working Group
- (c) Planning and Infrastructure Working Group
- (d) External Funding Working Group
- (e) Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands Working Group
- (f) Previous task and finish and working group, who have delivered their remits:
 - Caring for the Cotswolds (Visitor Giving) task and finish group
 - Rural skills task and finish group
 - Dark skies task and finish group

E2.41 EXTERNAL BIDS UPDATE

Committee received an update on progress in applying for external funding. Advice from the Heritage Lottery Fund was that projects should have more emphasis on aspects of the project.

Committee were concerned about the Southill Solar project, and whether there would be reputational risks to the Board in that we are now receiving money from a scheme that we previously objected to.

Summary:

To keep Committee updated.

Key Consideration(s):

To ensure the Board receives funding.

Action(s) Arising:

Officers to be aware of the concerns of Committee.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

The report is for noting.

E 2.42 COMMENTS, COMPLEMENTS, AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Summary:

The Committee were provided with a report on the Annual Summary of performance for the comments, compliments and complaints policy and procedure 2018/19. It was agreed that this was important and it was pleasing to see many more compliments than complaints

Key Consideration(s):

The annual summary of performance.

Action(s) Arising:

To keep committee updated.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the review of the Board's performance be noted.

Reason for Decision(s):

The report was for noted.

E 2.43 COTSWOLD CONSERVATION BOARD – SITE VISITS ON TUESDAY 1 OCTOBER 2019

The Committee were presented with an itinerary for the site visits.

E 2.44 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2019/20

Summary:

Committee received the updated Executive Committee Forward Plan for 2019/20. It was noted that this was likely to be subject to some considerable change as the incoming Chief Executive would need to consider the priorities

Key Consideration(s):

Papers within the Forward Plan.

Action(s) Arising:

To note the items for decision at meetings.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

Reason(s) for Decision(s):

The item was for noting only.

E 2.45 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Vice-Chair requested that all core Committee members remained.

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and Press be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs (1) and (3) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the said Act (Information relating to an individual) and (Information relating to financial or business affairs) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information concerned.

E 2.45 DISCOVERY CENTRE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Summary:

Committee received a resume of the Board's experience from the agency operational agreement with the Discovery Centre Partnership Board. Committee were disappointed and dismayed with the circumstances and costs which have been incurred throughout the time of the agreement.

Key Consideration(s):

Agency Operational Agreement with the Discovery Centre Partnership Board

Action(s) Arising:

To keep Committee updated with the circumstances surrounding the agreement.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the report be noted;**
- (b) it be noted that Committee are dismayed at the events and content of the report;**
- (c) Committee recognise the level of challenge that the Board face over the next three years.**

Reason for Decision(s):

The item was for noting, although Committee considered that further decisions (b) and (c) should be noted in the minutes.

E 2.47 APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Summary:

Committee were presented with a report and update on the appointment. Following discussion Committee considered a further report to the next meeting would be necessary.

Action(s) Arising:

A further report be presented to the Executive Committee meeting on 5th November 2019.

Decision(s):

RESOLVED that the report be noted and Committee receive a further update at the next meeting on 5th November 2019.

Reason for Decision(s):

Committee considered that a further report was required.

E 2.48 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 13.59 p.m.

Vice-Chair