



**NOTES ON THE BOARD BRIEFING FOR THE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR THE CHILTERN'S AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

**Held by remote video conferencing on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 at 10.00am**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Appointed by Local Authorities**

Cllr Andrea Baughan  
Cllr Robert Carington  
Cllr Paul Duckett  
Cllr Carl Jackson  
Cllr Steve Jarvis  
Cllr. Lynn Lloyd  
Cllr Richard Newcombe  
Cllr Phillip Williams

**Appointing Body**

Buckinghamshire Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Central Bedfordshire Council,  
Buckinghamshire Council  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
South Oxfordshire District Council  
Buckinghamshire Council  
Three Rivers District Council

**Appointed by Secretary of State**

Colin Courtney  
Alison Doggett  
Paul Mains  
John Nicholls  
John Shaw  
Elizabeth Wilson

Secretary of State  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of State

**Elected by Parish Councils**

Cllr John Griffin  
Cllr Charles Hussey  
Cllr Sue Rowland

Oxfordshire  
Buckinghamshire  
Oxfordshire

**CCB Officers**

Lynne Cordice  
Elaine King  
Graham Hurst  
Claire Readey

Administration Officer  
Chief Executive Officer  
Finance Officer  
Development and Funding Manager

**Other:**

Deirdre Hansen

Clerk to the Board

The Chairman opened the briefing and welcomed all present.  
All members were invited to introduce themselves.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Alison Balfour-Lynn, Hertfordshire Parish Councils and Ian Waller, Secretary of State Appointee.

Absent without notice: Cllr Peter Martin, Buckinghamshire Council and Cllr Phil McDowell, Dacorum Borough Council

**2. Notice of AOB**

The Chairman notified everyone present that the Finance Officer would go through the Annual Governance Statement and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020-21 to be approved at the EOM on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June.

**3. Chairman's Update**

The Chairman took up the post at the AGM 21 April. In recent weeks he has been talking to Staff and Board members, visiting farmers and farm clusters, visiting the "Mend the Gap" programme manager.

He also attended a Defra meeting for Arms Length Bodies chaired by Tamara Finkelstein, Permanent Secretary at Defra. Items covered at this meeting included "online meetings" which have ceased from 7<sup>th</sup> May, the CCB has now submitted a response to the "Call for Evidence"- a government survey on public bodies' views on the use of online meetings. Conflicts of interest in government bodies' such as ours was also discussed. In this regard, the CCB is updating its declaration of acceptance of office and the members register of interest.

All members have been sent the new documents and have been asked to complete them. It is a legal obligation to do so and for the CCB to publish the members register of interest on its website. This will be done as soon as possible, and the Chairman is due to report on progress at the next Defra meeting in September.

The Chairman is anxious to make sure that the board members are given more opportunity to make a greater contribution to the board's work and in general to improve the links between board members and staff.

He has used the following acronym as a way of simply summarising the roles of a board member:

S- support  
C-connect  
O-oversight  
R-react (help)  
E-enjoy (all members are volunteers)

He talked about his "project reset", which he has developed with board members and the senior team:

1. Linking with the team. 30 September 2021 an away day for the Board to see some projects and interests on the ground. (*Subsequently this date to be reviewed*)
2. Induction for new members. A new clear process in three stages is being developed: 1. Welcome from the Chairman, 2. Introduction and detail from the CEO, 3. Introduction to official documents, website etc.

3. Increased frequency of meetings, 4 Board meetings p.a. and 4 meetings p.a. for the Executive and Planning Committees. All fitted into a cycle.
4. Clearer budgeting and business- planning. This is all about running the organisation as opposed to the management plan: with its five-year timescale.
5. Money: We should have a more visible project funding pipeline. The CCB is good at raising money, but we also have a responsibility to look forward and board members need to be both aware and more involved. The Development and Funding manager has produced a draft report, which will be circulated to board members in due course. The Chairman will meet with her to discuss an income generation strategy.
6. Draft minutes will be circulated more promptly.
7. Meetings to include staff presentations and stake holder presentations.
8. The Chairman is discussing with the Administration Officer ways of electronic sharing of documents for Board member to make life more efficient.
9. It is intended to set up a structure to make the best use of Board member skills, interest and time. This will allow people to play a bigger part. The Vice-Chairman is working on and will distribute a skills audit for members to complete.
10. The terms of reference and membership for both Human Resources and the Governance Review Group are under discussion.
11. The wider Committee structure needs review
12. Finally, time should be allocated at a future meeting to discuss how a longer-term vision document might be developed articulating what we think the future of the Chilterns should be with perhaps a twenty-five- or thirty-year horizon. This will enable us to look beyond the management plan and not simply be reacting.

He wanted to bring all members up to date.

The CCB is fortunate to have the team of staff that it does. They are very competent, hardworking with an enormous amount of patience. We need to help them to get back to a normal way of life.

There were no questions.

#### **4. Chief Executive's Review- including Reports from the Executive and Planning Committees and an update on the Landscapes Review.**

The CEO remarked that she was looking forward to working with the Chairman in the future.

She had presented a full report with the agenda.

Highlights were mentioned:

1. The team is still working from home.
2. The office is being redecorated
3. The team have worked brilliantly over the past year or so. They have done an enormous amount of work during lockdown and have been very productive.
4. The Development and Funding Manager gave an update on funding streams and partnership working.
5. The CEO mentioned the soft influencing work that takes place at a local and national level, which gives the CCB greater visibility and influence, for example through her role on the Defra Contact Group looking at implementing the Glover

- Review proposals and is working strategically with other national organisations and the AONB family.
6. Bucks is one of the five Government Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots, working with Buckinghamshire Council and other partners.
  7. A Government announcement will be made tomorrow, and the CEO has arranged a Members Q&A session (Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> 3-4pm). Following the Written Ministerial Statement, the CCB will issue a press release and write to local authorities, MPs and key partners and stakeholders. The Government statement will require Board discussion.
  8. The Government is launching its Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which will support our work with farmers to deliver environmental outcomes.
  9. The CCB is recruiting a Business Support Officer and a Farming Engagement Officer. Members were asked to share the job adverts and support the recruitment.

The Chairman asked that the board's thanks be sent to the whole team; the work they have done is impressive and their hard work is much appreciated.

#### **5. Finance Officer- Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020-21**

The Finance Officer explained that the AGAR is required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and subject to audit once it has been approved by the Board and subsequently published on the CCB's website.

The AGAR has to be approved at a face-to-face meeting, hence the EOM 24<sup>th</sup> June to approve the AGAR.

The additional papers showing detailed accounts are commercial- in confidence and not for public display as they would allow access to individual salaries.

The Finance officer gave explanations of the results and brought the following to members attention:

1. The Annual Governance statement is about the internal controls the CCB has in place to function correctly. He is meeting with the internal auditors later this week.
2. The Accounting statement of the AGAR is prepared under local government accounting principles which do not recognise deferred income and therefore income is recognised when funds are received rather than earned.
3. The yearend position shows an overall excess of expenditure totalling £13,339. This has been taken from reserves.
4. The £49K surplus from Core business is due to Buckinghamshire Council making an advance payment, this distorts the figures as the AGAR does not recognise advance payment.
5. Most of the reserves are restricted reserves. As an organisation we cannot make a "surplus". The majority of our reserves is the Mend the Gap money.
6. All money received is spent, but the timing may not always align.
7. Core business is funded by Defra and Local Authorities. All projects are self-funded.
8. Budgeting has been difficult as this year we did not know what the Defra settlement would be until the financial year had started.
9. Our main costs are staff costs.
10. The internal auditors have 100% visibility of all our accounts.

Members had the opportunity for questions.

The only question was on the interest rate received. The majority of the interest is credited to the Mend the Gap project.

The Chairman thanked the Finance Officer for all the work that he does and the successful change of accounting system from Sage to Xero.

The Chairman.....

Date.....