

## **CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Friday, 14 November 2014 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Derek Butler, Hugh Evans, Hugh Jones, Huw Jones and Ian Roberts

**Observers:** Councillors Stuart Davies, Martyn Holland, Rhys Hughes, Win Mullen-James and Carolyn Thomas

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (DCC - GW), Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer (HS), Countryside and Heritage Services Manager (DCC – HR), Head of Flintshire Countryside Services (TW), Parks / Countryside and Rights of Way Manager (WCBC – MH), Democratic Services Manager (DCC - SP), Senior Countryside Officer AONB (DS), Finance and Assurance Manager (DCC - SG), and Senior Finance Officer (DCC – PO'H)

Representative from Natural Resources Wales (PM)

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Bernie Attridge (Flintshire County Council).

#### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

#### **3 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

Councillor Hugh Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council) was proposed for appointment as chair of the Joint Committee by Councillor Huw Jones. Councillor Ian Roberts seconded the proposal. With no other nominations Councillor Hugh Jones was appointed as chair.

***RESOLVED – that Councillor Hugh Jones be appointed chair of the Joint Committee for the 2014 / 15 municipal year.***

#### **4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

Councillor Huw Jones (Denbighshire County Council) was proposed as vice chair of the Joint Committee by Councillor Derek Butler; seconded by Councillor Hugh Evans. With no other nominations it was:

***RESOLVED – that Councillor Huw Jones be appointed vice chair of the Joint Committee for the 2014 / 15 municipal year.***

## **5 ADOPTION OF THE CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AONB CONSTITUTION**

The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services for Denbighshire County Council (HLHRDS) introduced a report (previously circulated) which sought the adoption of the appended Joint Committee constitution (standing orders) by the Joint Committee.

The HLHRDS advised that the appended constitution had already been approved by the legal departments of the 3 authorities and witnessed with the seal of each authority. He outlined some of the key parts of the document; that the Joint Committee's membership was drawn from the executives of each authority (i.e. Cabinet or Executive Board members) with each authority having two members, the provisions for an annual meeting and meetings every 4 months. The meeting venues would be rotated between each authority. He reported on quorum and voting arrangements shown in the standing orders and confirmed that Denbighshire as lead authority for the AONB would prepare, publish and circulate the agenda packs for each Joint Committee meeting, though the minutes of meetings would be produced by the authority hosting the meeting.

The HLHRDS pointed out an error in the standing orders whereby standing order 8.6 should refer to standing order 14 (not 4) when dealing with nuisance activity.

Councillor Martyn Holland queried standing order 13 which prohibited expressions of dissent. The HLHRDS advised that the provision prevented dissensions after a vote had been taken from being recorded in the minutes. He confirmed that dissensions could be recorded in the minutes as part of the debate and that a recorded vote could be used to record the way each member voted.

***RESOLVED that the constitution (standing orders) attached as appendix 1 to the report be approved by the Joint Committee (subject to the correction of standing order 8.6).***

## **6 OVERVIEW OF JOINT COMMITTEE AGREEMENT**

The HLHRDS introduced a report (previously circulated) which contained information on the legal agreement underpinning the Joint Committee and he referred to the following points.

- The agreement created the Joint Committee and set out its powers
- The agreement established an officer group to make recommendations on strategic direction and the budget, to implement the management plan, annual action plan and the Joint Committee's decisions; this group to include co-optees from Natural Resources Wales, officers from the 3 participant authorities and from other partners.

- Denbighshire would provide financial expertise, legal and administrative support for the Joint Committee with minute-taking support coming from the authority hosting the Joint Committee meeting
- A process for financing the Joint Committee to meet its objectives through a core budget provided by the 3 authorities and grant funding from Natural Resources Wales
- The agreement would last until 2019 and unless it was changed, withdrawn or terminated it would then roll over for a further period of 5 year.
- Any of the 3 authorities could withdraw from the Joint Committee by giving not less than 18 months' notice to each authority and the Secretary (Denbighshire's HLHRDS).

Councillor Hugh Evans referred to the stated objectives of the Joint Committee whereby it would seek to exert 'influence' in favour of the AONB's designated purposes. Councillor Evans reported that he was unclear about the definition applied to the influencing aspect and what the implications were. He advised that he'd experienced the negative effects of the AONB's activities where it had sought to influence the outcomes of decisions on properties and communities outside of the AONB itself.

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer (AONB Officer) explained that the AONB was a national designation which the 3 authorities needed to take account of. He reported that the Joint Committee was required to promote policies and decisions that conserved and enhanced the natural beauty of the AONB in line with its statutory purpose. The HLHRDS added that the agreement had already been cleared by the legal teams in the 3 authorities and had been approved by each authority's Cabinet or Executive Board.

Councillor Stuart Davies supported the concerns raised by Councillor Evans, adding that he lived in an area affected by the AONB's activities which he viewed as unfairly restricting the freedom of residents and businesses. Councillor Hugh Jones reported that the Joint Committee could only act within its terms of reference, had clear processes and would develop a forward work programme to operate within.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **7 JOINT COMMITTEE BUDGET 2014 / 15**

Denbighshire's Finance and Assurance Manager (FAM) introduced a report (previously circulated) on the AONB's revenue budgets. He reported that the budget setting process for the current year recognised that the AONB had to have had a budget to operate with up to this point which could now be formally approved by the Joint Committee. The FAM reported on the small overspend and underspend in the core and area budgets respectively and advised that the budget for 2014 / 15 was secure but warned of possible difficulties in future years.

In highlighting that the Joint Committee needed to agree a budget each year and request that each of the 3 authorities provide an appropriate contribution, Councillor

Hugh Jones advised that the Joint Committee would need to meet to discuss the draft budget in time for recommendations on funding to be made to the authorities.

Members discussed the issue of ensuring an equitable apportioning of the budget between the authorities. In response it was reported that the majority of the AONB lay within Denbighshire and the majority of work and expenditure was therefore within Denbighshire.

***RESOLVED that the report be noted and the budget set for 2014 / 15 be formally approved.***

## **8 APPOINTMENT OF PARTNERSHIP AND ASSOCIATED BODIES FOR THE CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)**

The AONB Officer introduced a report (previously circulated) regarding finalising the outstanding governance arrangements for the Joint Committee's legal agreement. He advised that as part of the legal agreement the AONB Partnership was being overhauled with the replacement of the Interim Joint Advisory Committee by the AONB Partnership (Stakeholders Group) and associated fora.

The AONB Officer reported that the production of a management plan was the main area of work for the Partnership and he referred to the list of members that would comprise the AONB Partnership as shown in the report.

***RESOLVED that the Joint Committee:***

- (i) Approves the appointment of a sub-group comprised of Councillors Derek Butler, Huw Jones and Ian Roberts to appoint the AONB Partnership (subject to the formal confirmation of the sub-group's membership by each authorities delegated decision procedures);***
- (ii) A date for the AONB Forum and Community and Town Council meeting be confirmed following a consultation with participants; with an invitation to attend being extended to the elected members of the 3 authorities.***

## **9 RECEIPT OF DOCUMENTS FROM EXISTING WORK PROGRAMME 2014 / 15**

The AONB Officer gave a verbal report and tabled a Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. The Strategy had been produced by The Tourism Company following consultation workshops in order to set the scene for developing sustainable tourism.

A publicity event to promote the Strategy was to be held in Corwen the following week.

The AONB Officer also circulated a climate change work programme and advised that the document made suggestions on how farms, residents and businesses within the AONB could adapt to mitigate climate change effects. Members were advised that the programme had associated documents including one for children

that was seen to address a gap in provision and was hoped would bring families and others interested in climate change issues into the AONB.

Councillor Hugh Jones queried whether there was a distribution policy for these documents, and it was confirmed that there was a good distribution network within Denbighshire but the distribution points, such as the tourist information centres, in Flintshire and Wrexham were not as well connected.

***RESOLVED that a Communication Strategy, to include the monitoring of the effectiveness of communication, be added to the Joint Committee's forward work programme.***

## **10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The AONB Officer introduced a report (previously circulated) on the development of a forward work programme for the Joint Committee in order to consider the committee's future priorities and areas of work. Members considered the following issues:

- The Edeyrnion Strategy was being taken forward by partners in the south of the AONB
- The Outreach and Volunteers Strategy was intended to increase the numbers of volunteers and maximise their contribution to the AONB's aims.

The production of a supplementary planning guidance for the AONB was discussed by members, with Councillor Hugh Evans concerned that the AONB was at risk of damaging its reputation when it tried to influence the outcomes of planning applications and should be carefully in this respect. The ensuing debate covered:

- Concerns that additional costs from complying with the AONB's guidance could prevent residents and businesses from making an application, leading to a stagnation of development within the AONB
- Councillor Carolyn Thomas argued that the guidance was intended to be helpful advice to be considered prior to the submission of a planning application.
- The role of the AONB in promoting its aims and the role of planning authorities in determining the merits and viewpoints of those promoting or objecting to planning applications. Councillor Derek Butler said that the Joint Committee's role was to advocate for the AONB's aims and that other bodies and individuals would do the same in respect of their aims and remits.

***RESOLVED that:***

- (i) A review of the AONB's finances and funding be added to the forward work programme; and***
- (ii) The forward work programme be approved.***

## **11 CURRENT WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN WALES**

The AONB Officer gave a verbal report on the review which would examine the landscape designations and purposes and the merits of classifying Wales' designated landscapes under one type of designation. Members were advised that the review would also consider the governance arrangements of designated landscapes and take account of the Planning (Wales) Bill in respect of the future arrangements for planning in National Parks.

In response to questions, members were advised that the governance arrangements were thought to be the main aim of the Welsh Government's review. The possibility of a national park-type designation being placed on the AONB was discussed together with the possibility that the governance of national parks could be returned to local authorities.

Members were advised that members could contribute to the consultation either as the Joint Committee or as individuals and the Interim Joint Action Committee had already made written representations.

Councillor Hugh Jones thought that the Joint Committee lacked sufficient information on the review to make a response to the Welsh Government at this time.

## **12 FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The Democratic Services Manager reported that the Joint Committee's forward work programme indicated that meetings in 2015 should be held in January, June and November. Members advised that they would prefer meetings to be arranged for Friday mornings wherever possible.

In light of the new chair being a Wrexham County Borough Councillor, it was agreed that Wrexham be considered as the venue for the January meeting of the Joint Committee.

***RESOLVED that meetings of the Joint Committee be arranged for January, June and November 2015.***