

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

5 APRIL 2019

AONB BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

Recommendation

- 1. The Committee is recommended to:**
 - a) Note the budget for 2019/20; and**
 - b) Comment on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

Background

2. A grant application to support the core work of the AONB Partnership in 2019/20 was considered by members of the Steering Group before being submitted to Defra in January 2019. NB flexibility needs to be employed when delivering the AONB budget to ensure that it best supports the AONB Partnership. Therefore, details of the budget/work programme may change through the year and money may be moved from one head to another to reflect this.

Summary

3. A summary of the core budget and expected key work tasks is provided in Appendix 1 and 3 respectively. Anticipated budget figures from previous years are provided in brackets for comparison. The main points to note are as follows.

Budget

4. The total budget for 2019/20 is expected to be £191,298 (187,976). The increase is the result of a real terms protection in funding to AONB Partnerships from Central Government. This inflationary protection was signalled in the 2015 Spending Review and subsequently confirmed by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs in February 2016. 2019/20 marks the end of the four-year inflation-linked funding settlement put in place in 2015. No indication has yet been provided about future funding contributions.

5. Of the total, £168,423 (£165,104) can be identified as 'core' funding with £22,875 (£22,872) allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). Central government is providing all the funding for the SDF and a maximum of 75% of the total core budget, a combined total of £149,224 (£146,700). Local authorities in the area are expected to provide £42,074 of match funding to core costs in the following proportions:

Herefordshire Council - £16,334¹
Worcestershire County Council - £13,268

¹ This amount includes a contribution to project work.

Malvern Hills District Council - £11,000
Forest of Dean District Council - £872
Gloucestershire County Council - £600

Voluntary Contributions

6. At its meeting on 26/04/13, JAC members agreed that there was merit in inviting Parish and Town Councils to make voluntary contributions to the work of the AONB Partnership. An initial request was made to a small number of Councils and, following some success, additional Councils were contacted. Appendix 2 summarises contributions received since 2014/15. Whilst some individual contributions may be small they can add up to very decent totals which are useful when added to the overall budget for delivering the Partnership's work programme. Financial contributions can be seen as a tangible expression of how local councils value the work of the AONB Partnership.

Staff

7. Salaries look set to rise by 2% for staff of Worcestershire County Council. Additional increases apparent in Appendix 1 relate to back-funding pension contributions.

Work Priorities

8. The Unit's work programme for 2019/20 is centred around the implementation of the new AONB Management Plan (2019/20).

Project Funding

9. It is hoped that a small amount of external funding linked to the Natural Networks grant programme (Worcestershire only) will be secured.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk

Specific Contact Points for this report

Paul Esrich, AONB Unit Manager

Tel: 01684 560616

Email: PEsrich@Worcestershire.gov.uk