

## **MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **29 April 2016**

## **AONB BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME**

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### **Background**

1. A grant application to support the core work of the AONB Partnership in 2016/17 was considered by members of the Steering Group before being submitted to Defra in January 2016. Defra has now issued a grant offer letter. 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**

2. 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.

3. **Budget:** The total budget for 2016/17 is expected to be £181,436 (£179,039). This represents an increase of just over 1% from 2015/16. The increase is the result of a real terms protection in funding to AONB Partnerships from Central Government. This 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. It has also been confirmed that the real terms protection will extend throughout this Spending Review period, until 2019/20.

4. Of the total, £155,934 can be identified as 'core' funding with £25,502 (£24,000) allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). Central government is providing all of the funding for the SDF and a maximum of 75% of the total core budget, a combined total of £141,781 (£139,384). Local authorities in the area are expected to provide the match funding to core costs (a total of £38,983).

5. **Voluntary contributions:** 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, a small number of additional Councils were contacted. Appendix 2 summarises contributions received in 2014/15 and 2015/16. We are waiting to hear about contributions for 2016/17. 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.

6. **Staff:** Salaries look set to rise by 1% for staff of Worcestershire County Council.

7. **Work priorities:** As ever, the Unit's work programme for 2016/17 continues to be centred around the implementation of the AONB Management Plan.

8. **Project funding:** Outwith Core and SDF it is expected that c. £100,000 will be spent on the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project during 2016.

## **Recommendation**

9. **The Committee is recommended to:**

- a) **Note the budget for 2016/17;**
- b) **Comment on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

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### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Supporting Information**

- Appendix 1 – Budget for Malvern Hills AONB Partnership in 2015/16
- Appendix 2 – Voluntary Contributions from Parish/Town Councils
- Appendix 3 – Unit Work Programme 2016/17