

Record of Cabinet portfolio holder decision

Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Decision made by	Elaine Ware
Key decision?	No
Date of decision (same as date form signed)	
Name and job title of officer requesting the decision	John Backley, Technical Services Manager
Officer contact details	Tel: 01235 422667 Email: john.backley@southandvale.gov.uk
Decision	<p>To agree grant funding for the next three years from 2019-20 to 2021-22 to the Letcombe Brook Project (LBP) on a sliding scale of:</p> <p>£7,000 in 2019-20 £6,000 in 2020-21 £5,000 in 2021-22</p> <p>To review this decision in 2022 to consider grant funding for the following three years 2022 to 2025.</p>
Reasons for decision	<p>The Letcombe Brook is a chalk stream flowing for 12 km through Wantage and Grove.</p> <p>The LBP was established in 2003 in response to concerns that the brook was declining and was an asset of community value. The aims are to enhance and protect the ecology and landscape of the brook and help appreciate and enjoy the environment along the Letcombe Brook corridor. With financial input from the council this should also include reducing the risk of any flooding to properties.</p> <p>LBP is a registered charity (number 1172111). The project operates with a project officer supported by a steering group (made up of Letcombe Regis, Grove, East Hanney and Wantage parish/town councillors, the countryside officer from the Vale of White Horse District Council, the Environment Agency).</p> <p>It relies on grant funding from the Vale of White Horse District Council and other local authorities, to pay for a Project Officer. The Vale has funded the LBP £7,000 each year for the past three years.</p> <p>The LBP has requested further funding for the next three years</p>

from June 2019 to May 2022 which will fund the salary of the Project Officer. Officers consider that funding on a sliding scale starting at £7,000 but decreasing by £1,000 each year will encourage the Project to seek alternative ways of raising funds or gain sponsorship to ensure a long-term future.

If agreed, the funding will be arranged under a legal deed and the conditions are summarised below and taken from the LBP business plan 2019-2022.

1. Services

To undertake projects to enhance and protect the natural beauty of the brook, reduce flood risk and to help people appreciate and enjoy the environment along the Letcombe Brook corridor.

2. Mission statement

To provide and maintain an environmentally rich green corridor, along all the Brook reaches, as a Community resource, whilst maximising the length with natural flow and minimising flooding.

The main aims of the LBP are delivered via an Operational Plan 2019-2022 provided as part of the Business Plan 2019-2022 submitted to officers in January 2019.

3. Key objectives (to define further as measurable outcomes and include in legal agreement)

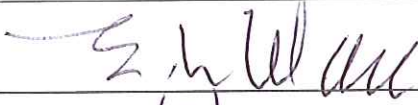
- Increase the lengths of the brook that come under appropriate management regimes. Get more of the brook and its corridor into appropriate management by influencing landowners to undertake appropriate habitat management, partnership working to secure funding for major projects and by taking direct action with volunteer work parties. We will focus on high profile areas of community green space to maximise public awareness and participation and use those sections to show others what can be achieved. Appropriate management will result in a brook that is a valuable community asset and will at the same time reduce flood risk.
- Inspire people by community engagement. We will do this by working at a local level to educate and engage, to encourage positive actions whilst demonstrating that Letcombe Brook has an important part to play in the lives, wellbeing and economy of local people.
- Protecting and preserving the brook. We have championed the Letcombe Brook in the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan and influenced many large landowners to “do the right thing”. We can help VWHDC in achieving the aims and objectives of its Local Plan for 2031.

We know that we will not have sufficient resources to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. We also know that some expectations are often in conflict with others. We will

	<p>sometimes have to make difficult decisions but will do so in a well informed and transparent way. We will seek to obtain the greatest value out of each pound we spend and always do so with our charitable objectives in mind of preserving, protecting and managing the Letcombe Brook for the benefit of local communities and wildlife alike.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost effective delivery and fund raising. Funding from existing sources allows the LBP to work in an extremely cost-effective manner with the Project Officer (PO) able to prioritise raising funds for specific enhancement projects. It also enables the PO to give timely, expert advice to the many riparian owners without having to charge a fee. The LBP is seen as local, neutral and approachable which enables us to deal with potential conflicts quickly and effectively. We can act as the eyes and ears of larger more remote regulatory bodies. <p>4. Review</p> <p>Officers will arrange for a legal deed which will require identification of work planned, monitoring and a review at the end of each year along with the financial accounts.</p> <p>The grant will be paid at the end of the year on successful submission of a review from LBP including accounts and if key objectives have been met or not.</p>
<p>Alternative options rejected</p>	<p>The Vale council could decide not to support the funding application or pay a lesser amount to LBP. If this is the case and the LBP does not continue there may be a risk of flooding to nearby properties and a detrimental impact on local water and wildlife.</p>
<p>Legal implications</p>	<p>A legal deed would be required setting out the terms and conditions of the grant and objectives of the LBP.</p>
<p>Financial implications</p>	<p>There is an existing budget in the Land Drainage cost centre PS11 of £7,000 for the payment of grants.</p>
<p>Other implications</p>	<p>The district council is either riparian or land owner of three stretches of the brook at Smith's Wharf and Willow Walk in Wantage and Mably Way/Wolage Drive in Grove. Some of the work done by the LBP team at present is work that would otherwise need doing by the council and so not only do we benefit from a flood prevention angle but also a Parks Team maintenance one. If the funding is reduced there is a potential that maintenance work may need undertaking by the Vale, for either flood prevention or aesthetic reasons which may off-set the saving each year.</p>

Background papers considered	LBP business plan 2019-2022.			
Declarations/conflict of interest? Declaration of other councillor/officer consulted by the Cabinet member?	None			
List consultees		Name	Outcome	Date
	Ward councillors	Jenny Hannaby	No reply	
		Julia Reynolds (Wantage and Grove Brook)	Reply by email. Does not agree to reduce by £1000 per year. Highlights the council's riparian resp. Consider the LBP provides very good value for money.	15 Feb 2019
		Matthew Barber, (Steventon and the Hanneys),	Reply by email. Supportive	14 Feb 2019
		Catherine Webber, (Marcham)	No reply	
	Legal	Pat Connel	Agreed by email	20 Feb 2019
	Finance	Emma Creed	Agreed by email	4 Feb 2019
	Human resources	N/a		
	Sustainability	Heather Saunders	Agreed by email	19 Feb 2019
	Parks	Richard Ballard	Agreed by email	14 Feb 2019
	Diversity and equality	Cheryl Reeves	Agreed by email	15 Feb 2019
	Property	Tom Putt	Agreed by email	4 Feb 2019
	Democratic Services	Steve Culliford	Agreed by email	11 Feb 2019
	Chief Executive	N/a		
Confidential decision? If so, under which exempt category?	No			
Call-in waived by Scrutiny Committee chairman?				
Has this been discussed by Cabinet members?				

Cabinet portfolio holder's signature
To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.

Signature 
Date 7/3/19

ONCE SIGNED, THIS FORM MUST BE HANDED TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.

For Democratic Services office use only		
Form received	Date:	Time:
Date published to all councillors	Date:	
Call-in deadline	Date:	Time:

Guidance notes

1. This form must be completed by the lead officer who becomes the contact officer. The lead officer is responsible for ensuring that the necessary internal consultees have signed it off, including the chief executive. The lead officer must then seek the Cabinet portfolio holder's agreement and signature.
2. Once satisfied with the decision, the Cabinet portfolio holder must hand-sign and date the form and return it to the lead officer who should send it to Democratic Services immediately to allow the call-in period to commence.
Tel. 01235 422520 or extension 2520.
Email: democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk
3. Democratic Services will then publish the decision to the website (unless it is confidential) and send it to all councillors to commence the call-in period (five clear working days) if it is a 'key' decision (see the definition of a 'key' decision below). A key decision cannot be implemented until the call-in period expires. The call-in procedure can be found in the council's constitution, part 4, under the Scrutiny Committee procedure rules.
4. Before implementing a key decision, the lead officer is responsible for checking with Democratic Services that the decision has not been called in.
5. If a key decision has been called in, Democratic Services will notify the lead officer and decision-maker. This call-in puts the decision on hold.
6. Democratic Services will liaise with the Scrutiny Committee chairman over the date of the call-in debate. The Cabinet portfolio holder will be requested to attend the Scrutiny Committee meeting to answer the committee's questions.
7. The Scrutiny Committee may:
 - refer the decision back to the Cabinet portfolio holder for reconsideration or
 - refer the matter to Council with an alternative set of proposals (where the final decision rests with full Council) or
 - accept the Cabinet portfolio holder's decision, in which case it can be implemented immediately.

Key decisions: assessing whether a decision should be classified as 'key'

The South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' Constitutions now have the same definition of a key decision:

A key decision is a decision of the Cabinet, an individual Cabinet member, or an officer acting under delegated powers, which is likely:

- (a) to incur expenditure, make savings or to receive income of more than £75,000;**

- (b) to award a revenue or capital grant of over £25,000; or**
- (c) to agree an action that, in the view of the chief executive or relevant head of service, would be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward in the area of the council.**

Key decisions are subject to the scrutiny call-in procedure; non-key decisions are not and can be implemented immediately.

In assessing whether a decision should be classified as 'key', you should consider:

- (a) Will the expenditure, savings or income total more than £75,000 across all financial years?
- (b) Will the grant award to one person or organisation be more than £25,000 across all financial years?
- (c) Does the decision impact on more than one district council ward? And if so, is the impact significant? If residents or property affected by the decision is in one ward but is close to the border of an adjacent ward, it may have a significant impact on that second ward, e.g. through additional traffic, noise, light pollution, odour. Examples of significant impacts on two or more wards are:
 - Decisions to spend Didcot Garden Town funds (significant impact on more than one ward)
 - Changes to the household waste collection policy (affects all households in the district)
 - Reviewing a housing strategy (could have a significant impact on residents in many wards)
 - Adopting a supplementary planning document for a redevelopment site (could significantly affect more than one ward) or a new design guide (affects all wards)
 - Decisions to build new or improve existing leisure facilities (used by residents of more than one ward)

The overriding principle is that before 'key' decisions are made, they must be published in the Cabinet Work Programme for 28 calendar days. Classifying a decision as non-key when it should be a key decision could expose the decision to challenge and delay its implementation.

