



**Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board
26th January 2016**

The Agreement between Surrey County Council and Surrey Wildlife Trust to Manage the Countryside Estate

Purpose of the report: *Scrutiny of Services and Budgets/Performance Management/Policy Development and Review*

This report updates the Board on the review of the Agreement between Surrey County Council (SCC) and Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) to manage the County Council's Countryside Estate. A decision report is going to the County Council's Cabinet in February 2016, a draft of which is attached. This will set out the changes to the way the Agreement is managed, the commitment by SWT to reach a zero contribution from SCC by 2021 and the monitoring process put in place to ensure the service is delivered to the agreed standards. The Board is asked to provide feedback on the proposed changes.

Introduction:

The Agreement with SWT to manage the County Council's Countryside Estate has run from 2002 with an end date of 2052. Following a review of the Agreement a number of changes to the way it is managed are due to be taken to Cabinet in February 2016 for approval. The draft report attached outlines those changes. These changes will provide better value for the residents of Surrey and provide improved visitor facilities in the countryside.

Memorandum of Understanding

1. Key to the changes is the premise that the Countryside Estate can generate an income which will allow the direct contribution from SCC to reduce to nil by 2021. SWT and SCC have agreed to work together to achieve this target and to this end a range of income generating projects have been drawn up. These are now being worked up into business cases. These cases will underpin the rolling five year business plan which will demonstrate the process of getting to the nil contribution by 2021.
2. Following achievement of the cost neutral position for the Countryside Estate the share of costs and profit from each of the income generating projects will be

assessed on a case by case basis. A Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted to cover this process and once agreed would be signed by both SCC and SWT.

3. A further key change is in the Governance which includes:

- The requirement for a rolling five year business plan
- The requirement for an Asset Management plan and rolling five year Repairs and Maintenance Programme.
- A revised Service Delivery Specification and set of Key Performance Indicators.
- A new system to ensure that the Annual report is signed off by both partners.
- A clear process for developing and approving the business cases and business plan.

Recommendations:

1. That prior to the report to Cabinet in February 2016, the Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board is requested to review the proposals and give feedback.

Next steps:

- The report goes to Cabinet for Approval of the proposed changes to the management of the Agreement and the principles of the Business Plan for the Countryside Estate. The final details to be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning in consultation with the Strategic Director for Environment and Infrastructure and the Director for Democratic and Legal Services.

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Sources/background paper: None