

APPENDIX I

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 3 MARCH 2009

Title:

**REVIEW OF THE SURREY HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING
NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) MANAGEMENT PLAN**

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Carole Cockburn]

[Wards Affected: All wards except Farnham, Cranleigh and Godalming]

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of the report is to seek endorsement of the AONB Management Plan which has been prepared by the Surrey Hills AONB Board. The five local authorities who are affected by the AONB have collaborated on this project.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Management Plan deals well with a number of corporate priorities, including natural resource use, biodiversity heritage, the appearance of an area, jobs, services and facilities; rural proofing and rural economy.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

No implications.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

It is not anticipated that the Council will have to contribute any more to implementation of the Plan than the £5705 it has already allocated annually. Natural England contributes £146,060. The other 4 Districts fund the balance of the AONB Unit's core income of £203,837.

Legal Implications:

The preparation of a Management Plan for the Surrey Hills AONB, and its review within 5 years, is a statutory requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Local authorities are required to have regard to the Management Plan and the purposes of the AONB in carrying out their functions.

The Management Plan Review

1. The first Management Plan for the Surrey Hills was produced by the Surrey Hills Board and it was published in April 2004. It covered the period to 2009. The Plan was endorsed by this Council. There are no major changes from the current Management Plan but the new Plan (2009-2014) does deal in addition with the following items:
 - Climate change.
 - The EC Water Framework Directive placing greater emphasis on the water environment .
 - The delivery of agri-environment.
 - Woodland management programmes.
 - A greater emphasis on spatially targeted policies.
2. The plan can be viewed in detail at www.surreyhills.org. Section 1 describes the AONB designation and the purpose and preparation of the Management Plan. Section 2 describes the special features that are the basis of the Surrey Hills being designated as AONB, and the pressures and threats to the landscape. Section 3 sets out the vision and the Management Plan policies and Section 4 sets out how the Plan will be implemented monitored and reviewed over a five year period. Appendix 1 highlights the key AONB features and issues for each of the Landscape Character Areas that were identified in the Surrey Hills Landscape Assessment.

The Vision and the Policies

3. From Waverley's point of view, the most important part of the document is Section 3 on the Vision and the Policies. It covers:
 - Farming.
 - Woodland.
 - Biodiversity.
 - Historic and cultural heritage.
 - Recreation and tourism.
 - Land use planning.
 - Transport and traffic.
 - Community development and the local economy.

Amendments following consultations in 2008

4. The policies were generally supported by the responses received during the public consultation. The main area of debate was over the recreation and tourism policies and these were amended to reflect the AONB designation on providing access to recreation and to protect the rights of users. The Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union want to ensure that the Plan helped farmers to diversify. The plan adopts this approach.
5. Further amendments were made to the Land Use Planning Section:

- Reference to be made to government policy Planning Policy Statement 1 “Delivering Sustainable Development” to emphasis the importance of design.
- Strengthening of the reference to the South East Plan which states the high priority given to the conservation of the AONB.
- Strengthening of the reference to the South East Plan which supports proposals that assist the economic and social well being of the AONB and their communities.
- An additional policy that when determining planning applications weight is given to any adverse impact the proposal may have on the character of the AONB.

Conclusion

6. The existing Management Plan is a significant document that can inform the development control process and has been the source of many enhancement projects in the AONB. It is an authoritative and comprehensive Plan for the AONB. The Review will ensure that the management of the AONB continues successfully, and merits the full support of the Council.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Management Plan be endorsed as a clear commitment to giving due regard to both the AONB designation and the delivery of statutory and other management activities outlined in the Plan.

Background Papers (CEX)

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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