

ALCONBURY AND ELLINGTON INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2015, 10am at Brookfield Farm, Great Stukeley.

PRESENT: H Raby (Chairman); J Sewell (Vice Chairman); C Allen; K M Baker; M G Baker; B Chapman; G Grey; E A Ruston; L M Simpson and R Warrener.

IN ATTENDANCE: F Bowler (Chief Executive/Clerk); J Oldfield (Director of Operations) and R Easom (Committee Clerk)

The Chairman opened the meeting and asked members to observe a minute's silence in remembrance of Mr Douglas Field, a past member who had died. Mr Field had served on the Board for over 36 years.

1 APOLOGIES for absence were received from M Broughton and E K Heads.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 February 2015.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Defra Hedgerow cutting restrictions

The Director of Operations reported that ADA representatives had spoken with Defra and Defra have confirmed that because IDBs have statutory powers of entry and serve notice they can enter land which is in a stewardship scheme, or similar, and trim back hedges in the period when the farmer is not allowed to do so.

There were no other matters arising.

5 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT 2014-15

The Director of Operations presented the Works Progress Report.

Members accepted the Works Progress Report.

Discussion took place:

Watercourse East of A1, North A14

Mr Sewell asked if any works were to be carried out along the stretch of watercourse east of the A1 and north of the A14. He said he had seen two officers from the IDB in that area.

The Director of Operations said the two IDB officers would have been carrying out an inspection prior to formulating the works programme 2015-16.

6 TECHNICAL REPORT

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

Members accepted the Technical Report.

Discussion took place:

RAF Brampton

Mrs Ruston said developers Campbell Buchanan were today (the day of the Board meeting), giving a presentation of the planned development and that she was to attend. She said that the planning application had been changed and she had seen nothing about surface water drainage. She said that in her opinion, Brampton Brook does not have the capacity to take any more surface water and Allen's Orchard could be more prone to flooding.

The Director of Operations said the developers had re-modelled the Brook in agreement with the EA. An experienced EA officer had accepted the re-modelling, although he may not have had local knowledge, and it had been agreed that the site was no longer in a flood plain area. Hence the change from the industrial units to housing would be in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Mr Allen said Cambs County Council would have to make their comments on the surface water.

The Director of Operations said the role of advising on planning application Flood Risk Assessments, which was formally the EA's, was now the responsibility of Lead Local Flood Authorities. Drainage Boards are still a non-statutory consultee. Some local authorities invited IDB comments but generally the Bedford Group of IDBs looks at weekly planning lists, calls for applications and continues as previously; making comments to protect the drainage district.

Cambridgeshire Draft Flood Risk Management Strategy

Mr Allen asked officers if they had commented on the above draft document which was going out for public consultation in the summer. Officers said they had.

7 Water Framework Directive

The Director of Operations presented the report on the Water Framework Directive explaining that the report had been triggered by proposals on the Bedfordshire & River Ivel Board. Quite significant sums of money had been earmarked by the EA for river restoration schemes and there was concern amongst Board members about spending being allocated to such schemes at the expense of maintenance on Main River. The report is intended to inform members and enable them to make representations. The Director of Operations said professional bodies such as the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Chartered Institution of Water and Environment Management were also raising the issue.

Members agreed that this was an important issue and agreed the following recommendation:

The EWG continue to take a proactive approach to ensure that there is the right balance between maintaining existing assets to ensure they function to minimise flooding and conserving the natural environment, and to raise the issue at an appropriate national level.

8 FINANCE

(i) FINANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2014 TO 31 MARCH 2015

The Clerk presented the Finance Report and explained that the surplus of £15,049 was mainly due to the £10,000 being allocated for the Board to carry out works in Brampton Brook which the EA had carried out themselves. Also there was an additional £1,500 received from Defra for Grant in Aid Health & Safety works.

Members approved the Finance Report

Discussion took place:

Investment and Bank Account Balances

The Chairman commented on the low interest rates on the investments and the Clerk said that rates were not expected to improve and may fall further in the near future.

(ii) TO APPROVE THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2015

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts and tabled a replacement sheet for page number 8 – Notes to the Accounts - as there had been an error in Note 2 – EA Highland Water Contributions. The total figure should have been £15,422 and this was correct in the actual accounts.

The Clerk referred to the Balance sheet and said that as part of the External Audit process an explanation has to be given for the funds the Board hold, which at £146,652, are more than twice its rate and special levy income and this is higher than recommended. The Clerk had explained that the Board had recently received money from Highland Water contributions and Defra. Also the high cost of carrying out maintenance work in the Board's urban areas and the potential additional cost of dealing with a flood event justified keeping the balances slightly higher than recommended.

Regarding Current liabilities, the Clerk said there was a retention of £703 due to the Health and Safety works contractor and this would be paid in the current year.

Members approved the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2015.

Discussion took place:

Mr Allen asked why Buckingham & River Ouzel IDB was listed under Current Assets. The Clerk explained that it was money held for the Alconbury & Ellington Board as a joint investment.

(iii) TO APPROVE THE AUDIT COMMISSION ANNUAL RETURN AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2015

Members approved the Audit Commission Annual Return and the Annual Governance Statement (answering questions 1 – 8 in the affirmative) for year ending 31 March 2015 for the Chairman and Clerk to sign.

9 INTERNAL AUDIT

(i) TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2014/15

The Clerk presented the Internal Audit report. He had given his opinion as ‘adequate assurance’ and expected to be able to record ‘substantial assurance’ following the next review.

The Clerk outlined the recommendations in the Management Action Plan.

Members approved the Annual Internal Audit Report 2014/15.

(ii) TO APPROVE THE INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY & AUDIT PLAN 2015-16

The Clerk said the Internal Auditor intended to reduce his visit to the Bedford Group to 4 days per annum and he was satisfied with the systems which were in place. The Internal Auditor asked that members be made aware that he is willing to examine any other audit areas at members’ requests.

Members approved the Internal Audit Strategy & Audit Plan 2015-16.

(iii) TO APPROVE THE REVISED RISK REGISTER

The Clerk presented the risk register which is reviewed annually and highlighted the following new additions:

- ‘Partnership working with Central Bedfordshire Council - providing SuDs advice on major developments’. The Clerk said the Director of Operations had done a comprehensive review.
- ‘To maintain financial records that are correct and comply with all recommended accounting practice – Loss of income through error or fraud’. The Clerk said for several years the Fidelity Cover Guarantee was only £100,000. This had now been increased to £2M.

Members approved the Revised Risk Register dated April 2015.

Discussion took place:

Regarding the partnership working with Central Bedfordshire Council, Mr Simpson asked whether the Bedford Group would be billing the council for its services. The Clerk said they would, at the rate CBC charge for their own engineers, and this would cover the Group’s costs.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Huntingdonshire District Council Maintenance works – use of Lattenbury Services

Officers informed members that HDC has consulted with the Board regarding the procurement of the services of contractors, Lattenbury Services. Mr Allen, Project and Assets Manager from HDC explained that under HDC procurement rules the Council can procure the services of Lattenbury Services at the same rates as the Board is charged for their services as a Flood Risk public authority and thereby avoid the tender process and associated time and expense. HDC wanted to check that the Board had no objection to HDC using Lattenbury Services. He added that the amount of work was not excessive and Lattenbury Services would still be available to carry out works for the Board.

Members agreed to Huntingdonshire District Council using Lattenbury Services at the rates charged to the Board.

Alconbury Brook

Mr Warrener said he had recently taken over some grazing land and had noticed there was a substantial amount of debris which had been cleared from the bed of the watercourse and which was likely to wash down towards Alconbury Weston. The Chairman pointed out that the watercourse to which he was referring was Main River. Mr Warrener asked if it would be possible for the Board's officers to request that the EA clear the potential blockage.

The Director of Operations said he would contact the local operations division of the EA and asked Mr Warrener to show him on the map, after the meeting, where the problem was. The Director of Operations said although the EA seemed to have no budget for general maintenance they may attend on site for specific blockages which are reported.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

2 February 2016 – Board Meeting

The meeting closed at 10.59am.