

## **ALCONBURY AND ELLINGTON INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

### **Board Meeting**

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2014, 11am at Vale House, Stewartby.

**PRESENT:** H Raby (Chairman), J Sewell (Vice Chairman); C Allen, M G Baker; E K Heads; E Ruston; and L M Simpson.

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

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting at the new offices of the Bedford Group.

**1 APOLOGIES** for absence were received from K M Baker; B Chapman; M R Eayres; G Grey and R Warrenner.

#### **2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 February 2014.**

**The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 were accepted as a true and accurate record.**

#### **4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

##### **Environment Agency – Main River Maintenance**

The Director of Operations said he had raised the members' concerns regarding the lack of maintenance on Main River by the Environment Agency with Julie Foley, Area Manager at the Environment Agency. However, officers had not sent the letter to the local Members of Parliament as agreed because the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was due to visit the Boards offices on 9th June 2014 in a visit hosted by the Association of Drainage Authorities. The Director of Operations said it was an opportunity for a good debate and a letter to MPs should probably be considered in six to twelve months' time depending on the outcome of the visit.

Mr Baker asked for clarification as to what Main River was. The Director of Operations said it was a generic and legal term for watercourses which come under the Environment Agency's jurisdiction.

##### **Ellington Road, Brampton**

Mrs Ruston said her comments on a watercourse on Ellington Road, Brampton had been mis-reported as 'Stukeley Meadows, Huntingdon'.

It was agreed to change the wording of the minutes to:

**‘Ellington Road, Brampton**

Mrs Ruston said a watercourse adjacent to A14 in the vicinity of Brampton Hut, which was not an IDB watercourse, had been filled in. She said Alexanders surveyors were investigating’.

**5 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT 2013-14**

The Director of Operations presented the Works Progress Report adding that that despite the extremely wet weather the majority of the programme was completed. The works marked in orange on the plan will be carried forward into 2014/15.

**Members accepted the Works Progress Report.**

Discussion took place:

**Watercourse adjacent to Brampton Golf Course**

The Chairman reported a large tree trunk was in the watercourse adjacent to Brampton golf course. However it was not impeding the flow of water. The Director of Operations said as it was not impeding the flow the Board would not be taking any action.

**Watercourse No 1**

Mr Sewell commented on the works still to be done on this section. The Director of Operations said it was handwork which remained and light clearing was being carried out due to birds nesting.

**Watercourse towards Buckden adjacent to sand and gravel pit**

Mr Allen said that Huntingdon District Council were planning to clear this.

**Brampton Brook**

Mr Allen asked whether there had been any contact from the Environment Agency regarding maintenance works on Brampton Brook. The Director of Operations said not in terms of working in partnership. He said the EA have carried out weed raking and spraying in the section near the bridge close to the Dragon public house.

Mrs Ruston said the whole section needed clearing, with autumn being the best time. She said there were a lot of concerned people living in the vicinity. The Director of Operations said the Board have made an offer to EA to clear the watercourse as a one-off maintenance project but agreement has not yet been reached concerning this. The Board has £10,000 allocated for the work and it would also attract highland water contributions.

**A14 Improvement Scheme**

The Chairman said that more water would be going into watercourse no 5 when the new section of the A1/A14 is built. The Director of Operations said it was on the annual maintenance programme.

**Stukeley Meadows Railway Culvert**

Mr Allen asked what works Network Rail had carried out on the railway culvert at Stukeley Meadows. The Director of Operations said it had been de-silted and they were planning to fill in the bed of the culvert with concrete to the same level as the downstream channel so that it would not hold as much silt in the future.

Mr Simpson commented on the condition of the ground. The Director of Operations said the Board's contractor had carried out some Health & Safety works to improve access to weed screens and, due to the saturated state of the ground, wheel ruts were created which contractors will be repairing with top soil.

#### **EA Precept**

The Clerk said that according to Julie Foley, the new Area Manager at the Environment Agency, there is now a possibility that the precept which the Board pays to the EA could be spent on specific areas of maintenance requested by the Board. There is a meeting scheduled for September 2014. The Director of Operations said the 'hot spots' were Brampton, Stukeley Meadows, Easton and Ellington.

#### **Allen's Orchard**

Mr Baker asked whether works on the Brampton Brook could aggravate the situation in Allen's Orchard. Mrs Ruston said there was a bottleneck in Allen's Orchard and maintenance works would aid the discharge of water.

#### **Alconbury Brook**

Mr Sewell said Alconbury Brook, beyond the racecourse, was very clogged up with trees and silt. He said the last time he walked it he counted 23 trees in the watercourse. The Director of Operations said the EA presently had no money for maintenance in non-urban areas. Mr Sewell said he would write to the riparian owners: the Church Commissioners and Huntingdonshire District Council.

## **6 TECHNICAL REPORT**

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

### **Members accepted the Technical Report.**

Discussion took place:

#### **A14 Improvement Scheme**

The Director of Operations said he had asked the Board's Principal Engineer to raise an objection to the Highways Authority's scheme in the vicinity of the A1/A14 as it would constrain the watercourse and there was a need for adequate access to maintain.

#### **SUDS Approving Body (SAB)**

Mr Allen said that he had received an email from Cambridgeshire County Council that morning informing him that there was to be a meeting to discuss the way forward due to the delayed legislation. He said he would forward the details on to the Board's officers.

#### **Brampton Sluice**

Mr Baker asked where the Brampton Sluice was. The Director of Operations said he thought it was on the Main River in the Brampton Mill area but he would investigate and let members know.

**Consent 676 – Mick George Ltd**

Mrs Ruston asked to see details of the consent application as she was wondering where the surface water would be going. The Director of Operations said he would show Mrs Ruston the consent after the meeting.

**7 FINANCE**

**(i) FINANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2013 TO 31 MARCH 2014**

The Clerk presented the Finance Report.

**Members approved the Finance Report**

Discussion took place:

**Investment and Bank Account Balances**

Mr Allen commented on the low interest rate of 0.05% on the Reserve Account. The Clerk said the name of the account was mis-leading as it was not used as a reserve account and £60,000 had recently been transferred from that account to pay the Board's outstanding balance to the Bedford Group.

**(ii) TO APPROVE THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2014**

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts and added that the £131,603 balance of funds going forward was higher than that currently recommended by the Audit Commission but the Internal Auditor had agreed that the current level of balances is reasonable given 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.

**Members approved the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014.**

Discussion took place:

During discussion about the balance of funds Mr Simpson asked whether funds for contingencies could be held. The Clerk said it is not considered good practice to do that unless it was for a particular project.

**(iii) TO APPROVE THE AUDIT COMMISSION ANNUAL RETURN AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2014**

**Members approved the Audit Commission Annual Return and the Annual Governance Statement (answering questions 1 – 8 in the affirmative) for year ending 31 March 2014 for the Chairman and Clerk to sign.**

## **8 INTERNAL AUDIT**

### **(i) TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2013/14**

The Clerk presented the Internal Audit report. She said the Internal Auditor had been in the office throughout the year and had carried out testing. 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 2013/14.**

Discussion took place:

Mr Simpson said he was looking forward to the Board achieving substantial assurance. The Clerk said this should be possible due to the new Finance and Rating Assistant being employed as it enabled more segregation of duties.

#### **05.02.01 Market test the supply of engineering services**

The Clerk explained that the extra expenditure with Hannah Reed, Engineering Consultants, had been the result of Defra funded Grant in Aid schemes which will be reducing in the future. It is planned to obtain hourly rate quotations from Hannah Reed and two alternative providers to test the market. Mr Allen asked if the Board had a procurement policy. Officers said the Board had, together with a list of preferred suppliers of which Hannah Reed was one. Members appreciated that market testing and using alternative suppliers could be time consuming and expensive.

### **(ii) TO APPROVE THE INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY & AUDIT PLAN 2014-15**

The Clerk added that the Internal Auditor had 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 2014-15.**

### **(iii) TO APPROVE THE REVISED RISK REGISTER**

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

- The new Office/Depot had now been removed from the register as the project was now satisfactorily completed.
- There was an issue with under resourcing in the Engineering department which was having an impact on planning consultation and asset surveys. However, officers were now looking to recruit.

#### **Members approved the Revised Risk Register dated April 2014.**

Discussion took place:

The Chairman asked if there had been an increase in planning applications since the economy had improved. The Director of Operations said he had not seen a reduction during the recession.

There have been some applications which have been resurrected by second or even third consultants who were then asking for the same information already provided.

The Director of Operations said when the SUDS approval Body (SAB) comes into force attenuation will be looked at in more detail by the local authority and the Board will be a statutory consultee.

## **9 ELECTION**

### **i) To Approve Register of Electors**

The Register of Electors was tabled.

#### **Members approved the Register of Electors**

### **ii) The Election Process**

The Clerk outlined the election process and said she had not been informed of any member wishing to come off the Board.

Discussion took place about membership and the Clerk said the membership of the Board was previously reduced from 25 to 17, as elected by the Board. Also Huntingdonshire District Council does not take up its full entitlement to members. The Clerk said there are four elected members for each of the three districts, plus 5 HDC members.

## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS:**

4 November 2014 - New Board Meeting  
3 February 2015 – Board Meeting

The Chairman offered his office again, at Brookfield Farm, Great Stukeley, as the venue for the Board meetings, subject to his election to the Board.

## **11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**There was no other business.**

The meeting closed.