

ALCONBURY AND ELLINGTON INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2016, 10am at Brookfield Farm, Great Stukeley.

PRESENT: H Raby (Chairman); J Sewell (Vice Chairman); K M Baker; M G Baker; M R Eayrs; G Grey; E K Heads; E A Ruston; R Warrener and J White.

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

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Mr J White, Huntingdonshire District Councillor representative, to his first meeting of the Board.

1 APOLOGIES for absence were received from C Allen; M Broughton; B Chapman; and L M Simpson.

The Committee Clerk informed members that Mr K Roe had resigned from the Board.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 February 2016.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2016 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Allen's Orchard, Brampton

The Director of Operations clarified the situation regarding the maintenance on the Main River in Allen's Orchard and beneath the B1514 which had been carried out at the end of 2015. He had spoken to Lattenbury Services and they had confirmed they had carried out flailing and had removed blockages between the houses at Buckden Road area for the EA's limited budget. They now have a rake for their work boat, should they be asked to weed rake this area in 2016/17. The Director of Operations said the EA may have a budget to carry out further works.

New Development, SE Brampton Hut

Mr Sewell said he had been unable to forward on to the Director of Operations copies of letters he had received regarding the development, but would forward them as soon as possible.

The Director of Operations said the Board's officers had now made comments on the planning application for the development. All properties will be draining to soakaways which will need to be designed to the required standard. The Board maintained watercourse runs alongside the development and the Board's byelaws will need to be complied with. In addition, the developers will be required to provide a flood risk assessment.

5 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT 2015-16

The Director of Operations presented the Works Progress Report.

Request for work for 2016

Included in the report was a request for work for 2016. A landowner at Ellington Thorpe had requested that a short section of watercourse no. 15 be flailed, cleared and dredged to alleviate a flooding problem in the vicinity of the nursery grounds.

Members accepted the Works Progress Report and agreed to the additional works associated with the request from the Ellington Thorp landowner to carry out flailing, clearing and dredging on a short section of watercourse no 15.

6 TECHNICAL REPORT

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

Alconbury Flooding on 9th March 2016

The Director of Operations advised members of a correction to his report on the meeting which had taken place on 13th May 2016 to review the flood warnings and emergency responses. The EA Flood Event Summary Newsletter had reported that water levels were higher than in Easter 1998: the EA later clarified that this was an error, and they believe that water levels were in fact 200mm lower than Easter 1998. However, at the Alconbury Flood Review meeting, chaired by Jonathan Djanogly, MP, the Director of Operations learned that Alconbury Weston Parish Council had a record of rainfall of 91mm in 1998, as opposed to the 36-38mm which fell on 9th March 2016. The Director of Operations said he was concerned that noticeable flooding took place this year when only 36-38mm of rainfall had taken place and there must be a reason. The Director of Operations said the EA appeared now to be concentrating on the flooding response and whether emergency procedures were adequate rather than the cause of the flooding and the need to reduce the flood risk.

Mr Warrener said that in 1998 the flooding was caused by debris accumulating against scaffolding for the construction of a bridge over the A1. It was thought that this debris caused a blockage in the Alconbury Brook. Mr Warrener also believed there was significant debris in the river in 2016, which was washed downstream in the flood. Mr K Baker and Mr Warrener said that the flooding in March 2016 was less severe than Easter 1998, based on water levels observed at the former butchers shop in Alconbury Weston.

Members accepted the Technical Report.

Members agreed with the Chairman's recommendation that officers should contact the EA, raise concerns about the flooding which had taken place on 9th March 2016 with much less rainfall and reiterate Mr Warrener's account of the cause of the flooding in 1998 resulting from blockages.

Further discussion took place:

A14 Road Improvement Scheme

The Director of Operations said there were several issues with the development of the A14 Road Improvement Scheme. The Board's Land Drainage Consenting function was not included in the

protected provision order as the developer's solicitors failed to reach agreement and submit it in time. However, Highway England appear to be willing to still enter into agreement with the Board to administer the watercourse and flood risk works.

Also, works have been carried out on a watercourse on a Board member's land without the consent of the Board. The Principal Engineer of the Board has met with joint contractors, Costain / Skanska to discuss issues but the Director of Operations has met with other joint contractors, CH2M / Atkins. It seemed there was a lack of coordination. Members agreed there seemed to be many issues regarding the development.

RAF Brampton

Mrs Ruston queried the revised drainage strategy developed by the consulting engineers to reduce the impermeable area and to discharge into the watercourse via two outfalls being acceptable to the Board. She asked what was 'acceptable' to Allen's Orchard. The Director of Operations said the run off was being attenuated. The housing would have soakaways. Rainfall from the roof area comes down the gutter to designed soakaways which allow the water to percolate into the ground. BRE 365 is a standard soakaway test. The roads would discharge into the watercourse, via existing outfall structures, and hence, the site already drains into the watercourse.

Mrs Ruston was concerned that this would only work until the ground gets saturated and asked where water would go during a flood event. The Director of Operations said the flood risk element was still being negotiated with the EA.

7 INTERNAL AUDIT

(i) TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2015/16

The Clerk presented the Internal Audit report. The internal auditor 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, both of which had been dealt with.

Members approved the Annual Internal Audit Report 2015/16.

(ii) TO APPROVE THE REVISED RISK REGISTER

The Clerk presented the risk register which is reviewed annually and highlighted the risk on page 3 – Loss of income through fraud. The cover is now increased to £2M and the risk level is to remain at 6 to indicate the need for insurance.

Members approved the Revised Risk Register dated March 2016.

(iii) TO APPROVE THE INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY & AUDIT PLAN 2016-17

The Clerk said the Internal Auditor intended to reduce his visit to the Bedford Group to 3.5 days per annum as 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 2016-17.

8 FINANCE

(i) FINANCE REPORT AS AT 31 MARCH 2016

The Clerk presented the Finance Report and due to an error, tabled a replacement sheet for the Receipts and Payments through the Board's Individual Bank Accounts with NatWest from 1/4/15 to 31/3/2016. There had been an additional £10,000 payment to the Group making payments to the Group a total of £101,777 and a net deficit of £31,945 for the period.

Investment and Bank Account Balances as at 31 March 2016

The Clerk presented the report on Investment and Bank Account Balances. She commented that interest rates were still low and it was unclear what would happen to them after the EU referendum on 23rd June.

The joint investment with Lloyds had been re-invested for an additional 6 months.

The Chairman commented that the reserves were more than the external auditors' recommend for a public authority but an unforeseen event which necessitated serious maintenance works would quickly reduce funds and, therefore, in such circumstances the level of reserves was acceptable.

Members approved the Finance Report, including Investment and Bank Account Balances.

(ii) TO APPROVE THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2016

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts.

The Clerk said the deficit of £5,567 on the Income and Expenditure Account had been allowed for. The Balance Sheet showed £141,085 as the general reserve and the Clerk reiterated the comments of the Chairman regarding the fact that the higher than recommended reserves, being more than twice the Board's rates and special levy income, would soon be depleted if 1 or 2 serious unforeseen events were to occur.

Members approved the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2016.

(iii) TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2016

Members approved the Annual Governance Statement for the year ending 31 March 2016, answering questions 1-8 in the affirmative for the Chairman and Clerk to sign.

(iv) TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL RETURN ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2016

Members approved the Annual Return Accounting Statements for year ending 31 March 2016, for the Chairman to sign.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Alconbury & Ellington Board Policy Statement

The Clerk said the Board's Policy Statement was due for review, however, Defra has been writing a revised, model statement for drainage boards, to take account of recent legislation, and this has not yet been released. Defra is aware that the Boards' Policy Statements are due for review.

Newsletter

Officers explained that there had been requests, from another Board in the Group, for a newsletter to be produced. Newsletters have, therefore, been produced all three Boards in the Group and a draft copy of an Alconbury and Ellington Board Newsletter for April 2016 was distributed to members. Members were asked for any comments within the next week as it was planned to distribute the newsletter to rate payers with the drainage rate demand notes which were due to be sent out. Copies will also be made available to local authorities, including parish councils. The Director of Operations pointed out that the draft had two photographs where the titles had been transposed and this would be corrected.

Discussion took place:

Mrs Grey asked whether the Board were planning on weedcutting watercourses on her land during the current year's programme as there was a lot of growth. The Director of Operations said the Board would be clearing the section which was in the drainage district, as part of the Board's works programme, but part of the watercourse was EA responsibility.

Mr Warrener commented on the section in the newsletter concerning Asset Inspections and asked whether Board personnel really walk all the drainage ditches. Officers said that ditches were walked and that it was a Defra requirement following the review of IDBs in 2006. The Clerk added that information about asset inspections is enclosed with the annual drainage rate demand notes together with a slip to return if the landowner is aware of any special issues which may affect access, such as livestock.

Alconbury Brook

Mr K Baker said he had recently been in contact with the EA and had been told that they are only responsible for the bed of a watercourse and not the sides, as the sides were the responsibility of the landowner. The Director of Operations said the EA, as is the case with drainage boards, have powers but not duties. The ultimate responsibility for the maintenance of a watercourse lies with the riparian owner. However, the EA or IDB would use their powers to maintain the channel for the common good of flood risk management and obstructions are sometimes removed if the flow is impeded. As part of

Local Choices, an initiative whereby the Board can request certain maintenance works are carried out by the EA, funded by the Precept money paid by the Board, the Board has been able to request additional works on the Alconbury Brook. In 2015-16 the EA spent approximately £41,000 on maintaining the channel. For 2016-17 the Board has requested that all of the Board's precept, approximately £15,000, is spent on channel maintenance.

North of Ellington Brook

Mr Sewell said he wished to thank the Board for the excellent work recently carried out by Lattenbury Services, north of Ellington Brook.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 31 January 2017 – Board Meeting

The meeting closed at 10.55am.