

ALCONBURY AND ELLINGTON INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2017 10am at Brookfield Farm, Great Stukeley.

PRESENT: H Raby (Chairman), M Baker, M R Eayrs, G Grey, E Ruston, J Sewell, and R Warrener.

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

1 APOLOGIES for absence were received from Messrs K M Baker, B Chapman and J White.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTEREST
There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2016

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign.

4 MATTERS ARISING

EA Main River Maintenance - Alconbury Brook

Miss Grey said maintenance work had still not been carried out on the Main River section of Alconbury Brook, near her property.

The Director of Operations said he understood that the Environment Agency had budgeted for, and commenced maintenance works in that vicinity but water voles had been discovered and it had been deemed necessary to carry out a water vole survey and this had resulted in the maintenance works being delayed.

Mr Sewell said the section of Alconbury Brook, beyond the racecourse, which he had previously reported to the Board as being very clogged up with trees had recently been cleared and was very much improved.

The Director of Operations added that officers of the Board had pursued the issue with the EA.

The Chairman added that the section of Alconbury Brook which runs through Hinchingsbrooke Country Park was in dire need of maintenance and water needs to be able to get away downstream if maintenance works are carried out upstream.

5 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD APRIL TO DECEMBER 2016 AND PROPOSED WORKS PROGRAMME FOR 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20

The Director of Operations presented the Works Progress Report together with an A3 plan showing maintenance works completed.

Officers explained MD Contracting Services had been awarded the tender for machine work for 2016/17 maintenance works as they were extremely competitive and below the budget. As a new contractor to the Board they had required extra supervision to become familiar with the Board's requirements.

Members accepted the Works Progress Report for the period April to December 2016.

The Director of Operations presented the proposed Works Programme together with an A3 plan showing the maintenance works proposed.

Members approved the Works Programme 2017/18.

The Director of Operations also tabled a two page document entitled 'Glyphosate (Roundup) the future?' which was a document produced by the Association of Drainage Authorities Technical and Environmental Committee and explained the current situation highlighting paragraphs 3.2 and 2.2.

Discussion took place:

MD Contracting Services

The Chairman said MD Contracting Services had carried out some watercourse maintenance on his land, on behalf of the Board. It was acceptable, although not to the high standard of previous years.

Easton

Mr M Baker said he had seen MD Contracting Services carrying out maintenance works on a watercourse in Easton and complemented the driver on his work. He said the following day, in his capacity as Chairman of Easton Parish Council, he had received a letter of complaint about the arisings left on the bank of the watercourse. However, some weeks later he had received a second letter, praising the watercourse maintenance works to reduce flood risk. He asked the Director of Operations whether the Board was required to take away arisings from the watercourse. The Director of Operations said the Board were not required to; they had an exemption. Also, depositing of arisings on the bankside allows invertebrates to return to the water, the land soon recovers and it would be extremely costly to remove all arisings.

Brampton

Mrs Ruston referred to the watercourse shown green in Brampton and said that Highways England had been taking down trees in the vicinity. The Director of Operations said the Board's officers were involved in extensive discussion with Highways England in relation to the A14 works.

Mrs Ruston said there were also works being carried out along the watercourse shown in purple at Brampton Hut and asked whether it was being diverted. The Director of Operations confirmed that the watercourse was being diverted and whether or not it would continue to be a Board maintained watercourse would be under review.

The Director of Operations added that the Board had tried to gain access on to Miss Grey's land in order to carry out maintenance works but had been unable to satisfy Highways England site requirements and as a result Highways England's contractor had agreed to carry out the works with their own flails.

6 TECHNICAL REPORT (INC SCHEDULE OF CONSENTS) FOR THE PERIOD JUNE – DECEMBER 2016

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

Members accepted the Technical Report.

Discussion took place:

A14 Road Improvement Scheme

The Director of Operations said a lot of effort had been made by the Board's officers to get Highways England to recognise the need for them to communicate with the Board. They were in the process of applying for land drainage consents and there would be approximately 60 in the next few weeks amounting to £3,000 in consent application fees for the Board. He said officers were hopeful that the Board would be able to enter into a legal agreement which would provide the framework for consents being issued and would better cover costs as regards officer time taken up with the consenting process.

The Clerk added that the Board was not directly affected by the cost of increased officer time as this was a Group administration cost and the Board pays a fixed sum for the administration.

Huntingdon Racecourse

Mr Sewell asked about the Holiday Inn hotel extension and how it was being constructed to avoid increased flood risk. The Director of Operations said he believed it was to be built on stilts. He said officers of the Board had looked at the planning application and had been content that there was no extra flood risk.

Alconbury and Alconbury Weston

Mr Raby asked who was part of the EA established Alconbury Brook Management Group and asked whether representatives of environmental bodies were part of it. The Director of Operations said the EA, IDB, local authorities, parish councils and possibly the emergency services. He said environmental bodies would probably be involved on specific sites. The issue was certainly not being ignored and the flood risk was being investigated.

Mr Warrener said he had seen people visiting the sites and there had been talk of digging a lake out but that was an idea which was floated many years ago and had not proved viable due to cost. He and Mr Sewell were of the opinion that there was still a need for more maintenance on the watercourse. Mr Sewell said those investigating should visit during a flood event so that they could better understand the situation.

The Director of Operations said the £100,000 allocated under the Natural Flood Management initiative was to fund the investigation into the flooding and would not be sufficient for a drainage scheme.

7 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS 2017/2018

Members approved the report and the following recommendations:

- (i) The general development contribution should be increased to £4.75 per impervious square meter from 1st April 2017;**
- (ii) Where the outfall flows into a Board watercourse the Board take a development contribution and/or where the outfall flows into a tributary, the developer will fully fund any necessary adoption;**
- (iii) The Clerk should be authorized to negotiate appropriate commuted sums from developers when the Board agrees to adopt new works.**

Discussion took place:

The Director of Operations said the rate for smaller developments was the rate always used by the Boards and was indexed each year to take account of not only RPI (retail price index) but construction industry costs also. Other drainage boards had similar rates. Some other Boards base the rate on increased pumping costs.

The Clerk said a previous payment using this formula was approx. £3,000 for the new Lidl supermarket.

8 REVIEW OF ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE, TO SET THE DRAINAGE RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2017/2018 AND TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SEAL THE RATE

The Clerk presented the General Estimates for 2017/18 which recommended a zero percentage increase in the rate and special levy for the 2017/18 financial year.

She said her recommendation to keep the rate at 3.95 pence in the pound, a zero percentage increase, was mainly due to the fact that the maintenance costs had been much lower than estimated, leaving a higher occupiers rate fund balance. Also, she had estimated receipt of consent fees in the sum of £1,000 prior to learning of another £3,000 which was due to be received from Highways England relating to the A14 improvement scheme and this will increase balances. There will also be a small increase in the amount of special levy charged to Huntingdonshire District Council due to agricultural land passing into development. The Board's Engineering and Administration costs paid to the Group have been increased by 1.2% and will be £16,732 in the forthcoming financial year. The Clerk added that the Board's balances were now estimated to be over twice that of the rate and special levy income which was more than the external auditor's recommendations. She said she had calculated an indicative increase of 1% for the following two financial years but the Board may not need the increase, it will probably depend whether maintenance costs stay at the current level.

The Board agreed the to a zero percentage increase in the rate for the financial year 2017/18 of 3.95 pence in the pound of Annual Value giving a rate and special levy income of £70,574 and authorised the Chairman to sign and seal the rate.

9 FINANCE REPORT for period 1 April to 31 December 2016

The Clerk presented the Finance Report which included individual Board income and expenditure; cheque list; investment and bank account balances; income and expenditure through the Group account and balance sheet.

The Finance Report was approved.

10 (i) EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2015/16

The Clerk presented the report of the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP, for the financial year 2015/16 and reported that an unqualified opinion had been given with no issues arising.

Members accepted the External Audit report for 2015/16.

(ii) INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2016/17

The Clerk presented the internal auditor's Interim Internal Audit report dated December 2016 and reported that Adequate Assurance had been given with no recommendations arising from the audit. She added that the main reason that the Group does not achieve Substantial Assurance is due to the small number of staff employed in the finance department. Mr Gowing audits other drainage boards in the Lincolnshire Group and most of them have the same issue.

Members accepted the Internal Auditor's Interim Internal Audit Report dated December 2016.

(iii) TO RE-APPOINT THE INTERNAL AUDITOR

Members approved the re-appointment of Gowing Internal Audit Services Ltd to the Board.

11 To approve the Revised Financial Regulations

The Clerk presented the revised Financial Regulations, showing the revisions in red, and said that following the Bedfordshire & River Ivel Board meeting the previous day it had been agreed to add that purchase orders over £500, signed in the absence of the Responsible Finance Officer or the Director of Operations, should be countersigned on their return.

Members approved the revised Financial Regulations as presented and also the addition of the following sentence, to be included at the end of the 'Ordering of Goods and Services' paragraph:

‘The RFO or the Director of Operations should countersign all purchase orders, exceeding £500, which have been authorised in their absence.’

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 6 June 2017 – Board Meeting

The meeting closed at 10.59 am.