

BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 16 June 2014 at 2pm at Vale House, Stewartby.

PRESENT: R O Bennett (Chairman); J Davison (Vice Chairman); L Birt; A D Brown; I Clifton; A Foster; D Hodgson; B Huckle; D Lawrence; D McMurdo (*arr. 2.58pm*); J Ream; J Scott and T Wootton (*left 3.22pm*).

IN ATTENDANCE: F C Bowler (Clerk); J J Oldfield (Engineer) and R C Easom (Committee Clerk).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from G Barrell; M Egar; J Franklin; C Maudlin; R C Odell; D R Osborn and M Weeks.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Mr McMurdo and Mr Lawrence declared that they were members of the Bedford Borough Council Bedfordshire Pensions Committee.

3 MINUTES OF GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AND BOARD MEETINGS HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2014

The minutes of the General Purposes Committee and Board meetings held on 3 February 2014 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Flood and Water Management Act 2010

The Chairman explained that the letter to Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs about the lack of maintenance works carried out by the Environment Agency in the Upper Ouse catchment had not been sent due to his visit to the Boards' offices on 9th June 2014. (*This was discussed in more detail during the presentation of the Director of Operations Technical Report.*)

5 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL 2014

The Chairman presented the minutes which were noted.

6 PROGRESS OF WORKS PROGRAMME AND WORKS PROGRESS REPORT 2013/14.

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Work for the Works Programme 2013/14.

Members accepted the Works Progress report.

Discussion took place:

Shefford

Mr Brown raised the issue of maintenance works not completed in the previous year's programme. The Director of Operations said the plan shows progress of work for the 2013/14 programme. At the February Board meeting the 2014/15 programme was approved. The 2014/15 programme includes not only work carried forward at Shefford but additional works on both sides of the river Flit at Shefford.

Mr Brown asked for confirmation that the orange marked works, which were carried over, would all be completed as he considered that the rivers Hit and Flit both needed attention. The Director of Operations confirmed that flailing works would be carried out and noted that the watercourses were fully maintained approximately 3 years ago.

The Chairman reminded members that machines were currently inactive due to the statutory limitations regarding nesting birds. He added that the Secretary of State had seen the machinery standing idle on his visit and was fully briefed on the restrictions imposed by environmental regulations.

Mr Ream asked when works could re-commence. The Director of Operations said it was planned to start maintenance works again on 15th July as it is deemed that the risks are acceptable after that date but drivers will need to do a daily 'walk through' prior to commencing works whilst there remains a risk of a late nesting bird. It is a criminal offence to disturb a bird's nest.

7 TECHNICAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MAY 2014

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

Members accepted the Technical Report.

Discussion took place:

A421 Dual Carriageway

Mr Wootton asked for more information on the emergency maintenance works carried out to unblock the hydro brake. The Director of Operations said the Board had adopted two ponds at Marsh Leys which the Highways Agency had built and the Board are responsible for their maintenance.

The legal agreements are currently being sent to the various parties for signing for the other developer built attenuation reservoirs in this area. Other ponds have been retained by the Highways Authority.

East of Ampthill Road, Kempston

The Director of Operations elaborated on the problems encountered with the developer, HPG Bedford concerning the new development between Ampthill Road and the railway line, opposite Interchange Retail Park. There had been problems concerning ownership of the site which had delayed the legal agreement. Mr Hodgson added that, due to the delay, the planned development was almost withdrawn which would have had implications for Bedford Borough Council with regard to the loss of income from non-domestic rates. The Director of Operations said the Board had not been responsible for any of the hold ups on the project.

Pix Brook, development land south of Stotfold

Mr Brown referred to the final payment of the commuted sum which was due on 30th January 2014 and still awaited. He asked how much the payment was. Officers said it was £25,000 and interest was being charged

Communications with Members of Parliament - Visit to the Boards' offices on 9th June 2014 by Owen Paterson, MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Director of Operations gave members a verbal update on the visit to the Boards' offices. The Association of Drainage Authorities had arranged the visit and Lord de Ramsey, President; Henry Cator, Chairman and Jean Venables, Chief Executive of ADA attended. Also in attendance was an officer from Defra and Julie Foley, the Environment Agency's Area Manager. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board and the Vice Chairman of the Buckingham & River Ouzel Board had also attended together with the Clerk and Director of Operations. The visit comprised of a presentation on the IDB's function, including the work to accommodate the significant development in the Drainage District in Bedford and Milton Keynes; discussions on key issues in land drainage and flood risk management; and a tour to several Sustainable Drainage System sites and watercourses to illustrate the importance of maintenance of the whole system.

The Director of Operations felt that the Minister had noted the views of members and officers about lack of maintenance on Main River and the concerns about the significant restrictions during the bird nesting season but it was unlikely that there would be any significant changes to the lack of investment in maintenance. However, the Minister had invited the Bedford Group of IDBs and ADA to submit a business case for projects for consideration in the Autumn Spending Review.

Mr Wootton suggested that relationships be built up with the civil servants who may stay after the Minister has moved on. He suggested inviting the officer from Defra who had accompanied the Minister to a tour of the Boards' area and provide her with an annual briefing. The Chairman said that ADA were operating in this way at present.

Catchment Partnership Funding – Water Framework Directive (WFD)

Mr Scott asked if projects were being funded elsewhere and whether the Board was represented. The Director of Operations said there was another project for the Ivel corridor. Also, he considered the funding mechanism bizarre if charitable trusts were being given money. If funding goes to a public body then statutory powers can be used. The five WFD funded catchment partnerships are: Milton Keynes Parks Trust; Bedford Rural Communities Charity; the Marston Vale Trust, the Greensands Trust and the Great Ouse Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Request for Adoption & Works

- i. Request from Mr P Cooper to adopt the watercourse adjacent to Mill Lane, Hexton.
- ii. Request from Central Bedfordshire Council to adopt a watercourse between Ampthill Road, Shefford and the River Flit.

Members agreed to the Board's adoption of the above stretches of watercourses, as shown on the plans in the Technical Report, subject to them being in good order prior to adoption.

8 FINANCE

i) Finance Report for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014

Members approved the Finance Report for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

(Mr McMurdo arrived at 2.58pm)

ii) To approve the Statements of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014

Members approved the Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2014 for the Chairman to sign.

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.

9 INTERNAL AUDIT

(i) To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report

The Clerk said that Adequate Assurance had been given. Substantial Assurance was expected in the future due to the employment of the apprentice Finance/Rating Assistant and the resulting greater segregation of duties.

The only outstanding recommendation was the market testing of Civil Engineering Consultancy services. Hannah Reed are on the Group's Preferred Supplier list and the Board does obtain preferential rates. Also, the last two years has seen an increase in expenditure with them due to Defra schemes and this was due to reduce as the schemes are completed. However, it was planned to put together a couple of packages for market testing and to carry this out within the year.

Members approved the Internal Audit Report dated April 2014.

(ii) To Approve the Internal Audit Strategy & Audit Plan 2014/15

The Clerk added that Mr Gowing, the Internal Auditor, had asked that his contact details be made available to any Board member who required them.

Members Approved the Internal Audit Strategy & Audit Plan 2014/15.

iii) To Approve the Revised Risk Register

The Clerk drew members' attention to the changes to the Risk Register:

- i. The protection of physical assets owned by the Board – these should be checked annually and the on-going programme of Asset management will restart once the new GIS Technician/Engineer post is filled.

- ii. The Fidelity Guarantee insurance cover currently stands at £100,000 and both the internal and external auditors have recommended it is increased. The Clerk is in the process of increasing this cover.
- iii. The new Office/Depot has been removed from the risk register as the project has been completed on time and within budget.

Members approved the Revised Risk Register dated April 2014.

Discussion took place:

Mr Brown asked how often the Risk Register is reviewed. The Clerk said it is reviewed annually, and throughout the year if a significant risk is identified. The Executive Working Group meet quarterly and they would be made aware of any concerns.

(Mr Wootton left at 3.22pm)

10 TO APPROVE THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME 2014 EMPLOYER'S POLICY STATEMENT

Mr Lawrence said that the Board should keep to the previous policy where possible and follow the minimum cost route. The Clerk agreed that this was the general idea behind the various discretions – that there should be no extra cost to the Board.

Mr Lawrence proposed acceptance of the EWG recommendations, which was seconded.

Following discussion of all of the EWG recommendations in the Postscript to Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 – Employer's Policy Statement, members agreed with the recommendations and for these recommendations to be incorporated into the Bedford Group of Drainage Board's Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 – Employer Policy Statement.

Discussion took place:

Mr Birt said that the pension regulations can be difficult for some employees to understand. Mr McMurdo said that the Bedfordshire Pension Scheme website was very useful for employees to gain further explanation of the scheme.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

River Hit

Mr Brown asked who was responsible for the banks of a river as there was a problem with rats on the River Hit. The Director of Operations said the landowner was responsible as the landowner owns the banks. The Board has powers to police the watercourse system. If the rats are in a public area it may be a public health issue and the Local Authority should be contacted.

General Purposes Committee Meetings

Members discussed the annual General Purposes Committee meeting which has, in previous years been held to discuss the forthcoming years works programme and estimates, with meeting minutes and recommendations then going to the Board Meeting. As there is a lot of duplication of papers and discussion the Clerk suggested that no General Purposes Committee be scheduled for January 2015 and that all matters would be discussed by the full Board.

Members agreed that there should be no General Purposes Committee in January 2015.

12 DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING: 2 February 2015

The meeting closed at 3.28pm.