

BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2016 at 2pm at Vale House, Stewartby.

PRESENT: D McMurdo (Chairman); J Davison (Vice Chairman); R O Bennett, L Birt (*arr. 2.25pm*); A Brown; M Egar; F Firth; D Hodgson (*left at 3.30pm*); B Huckle; R Odell; J Scott; M Towler (*arr. 2.35pm*); M Weeks; and T Wootton.

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from J Ream; B Spurr; and T Turner.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

During discussion of the Works Programme 2016/17 and requests for work, Mr Egar declared an interest in watercourse B34 in Cotton End.

3 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 9 November 2015

The minutes of the Board meeting dated 9 November 2015 were approved as an accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER 2015.

Workforce versus Contractors

Mr Egar asked if any further discussion had taken place regarding his concerns of perceived poor productivity amongst the workforce. The Director of Operations said the assessment had shown that the productivity of workforce and contractors was similar. The Executive Working Group had discussed the subject at its meeting on 11 January 2016 and officers had reported that praise had been received for good work carried out by the workforce at Ravensden and Gamlingay. The EWG had concluded that it was a staffing issue for management to address, if necessary. The Chairman said he would discuss the issue further with the Clerk.

West of Bedford Growth Area – Fields Road (north)

Mr Brown asked whether there was anything more to report regarding the outstanding drainage works to be carried out by the developer.

The Director of Operations said the outstanding works were still not completed but progress had been made. A contractor has been appointed by the developer and they were trying to put the necessary works in motion. They have spoken to Interlec, the telemetry monitoring provider, although an order has not yet been placed.

Wixams

Mr Brown asked whether the commuted sum stage payment for 2015 was still outstanding. The Director of Operations said it was. A formal letter has been sent to Gallagher Ltd requesting payment but so far there had been no response. The next stage will be to get the Boards' solicitor involved.

The Chairman added that the fact that the issue of interest on late payments had not been written into the agreement should be a lesson learned for the future.

Pix Brook, Flooding in Stotfold

Mr Weeks asked whether the police authority had clarified why they had requested the removal of the trash screen.

The Chairman said he had visited Stotfold with the Director of Operations and was now better acquainted with the area and its problems. He said that at this stage, and with advice from the Board's officers, he did not want to take the police to task. Firstly, because there is an on-going insurance claim and secondly, the removal of the trash screen had demonstrated that properties would still flood, as this had occurred downstream in a subsequent incident. The trash screen remained out of the watercourse.

The Chairman added that he would be attending a meeting at Stotfold together with the Board's Vice Chair and Officers; Alistair Burt, MP; members of Stotfold Town Council and officers of Central Bedfordshire Council on Friday 12 February 2016. It was planned to discuss riparian responsibility and Central Bedfordshire Council's involvement as a highways authority, as the structures in question are Highways Department responsibility.

Mr Bennett added that Anglian Water have had freedom to discharge water any time from Letchworth sewage works. Also, he has known of problems in this area for the past forty years. The Chairman said it may be useful to discuss the issue with Anglian Water.

The Director of Operations said he had found documented evidence of problems over the past sixty years. During this time various schemes have been tried to reduce flood risk. The Standalone Flood reservoir was built by the former Urban District Council. This eventually fell into disrepair. The Board adopted it in 2005 and enlarged it to provide attenuation for the Fairfield development. Various other parties have carried out works over the years in order to try and alleviate the flood risk.

Later in the meeting Mr Birt made reference to an article in the Biggleswade Chronicle about the police having reservations regarding the trash screen. The Chairman said he would talk to Mr Birt after the meeting.

IDB Schemes funded with EA/Defra Grant In Aid under the Medium Term Plan (MTP) – Kings Ditch

Mr Brown asked about the current situation and whether the £50,000 contributions from each Risk Management Authority Partner had been received. The Chairman said that Bedford Borough Council had written to confirm their commitment and the business plan will be commenced.

Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2015 – Fund Balance and Reserves

Mr Brown raised a query regarding the final payment to builders, SDC Ltd and the remaining £55,000 (approx.) which was to go back into the Board's Occupiers' Rate fund. The Clerk said she was unclear on what Mr Brown was asking. She said in the Estimates (Agenda item 10(iv)) there is a small amount being allowed for CCTV and fencing. A sum of £13,000 had been allocated but only £10,000 had been spent. On 30 September 2015 only £2,000 of the allocated £13,000 had been spent.

Public Perception of Drainage Board

Mr Huckle asked whether there had been any progress with the production of a newsletter. The Chairman said there had not.

(2.25pm Mr Birt arrived)

5 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2015

Members accepted the Joint Management Committee minutes.

6 WATERCOURSE SURVEYS REPORT

Members approved the Watercourse Survey Report including the budget of £5,000 for incidental survey work and agreed that the Clerk should be empowered to negotiate and approve expenditure by the Board from this budget.

7 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

The Director of Operations presented the Review of Development Contributions report.

Members approved the report and the following recommendations:

- (i) The general development contribution should be increased to £4.52 per impervious square metre from 1st April 2016;**
- (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:

Mr Huckle again raised concern about developers not paying agreed commuted sums and asked whether the 30 year period for maintenance of the asset should only commence once payment is received. The Director of Operations said generally the maintenance period does not commence until payment is received. The Board will not commence maintenance until the end of the defects correction period. Each agreement is negotiated on a case by case basis. The Clerk said the Wixams development was the only one there had been problems with and in the past interest for late payment has been part of the legal agreements. The Chairman reiterated that future agreements should include the charging of interest on late payments.

Mr Huckle said development within the area is set to continue. The Director of Operations said it would be preferable to insist that there was no development until the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) ponds are built. However, the Board's position is now weaker given the reluctance of Defra to bring in the SUDS Approval Body (SAB) and SUDS are now part of the planning process. Commuted sums are the Board's favoured option but many developers can be reluctant to pay. Mr Huckle asked whether the Association of Drainage Authorities could offer any advice on the situation. The Clerk said there were not many other urban boards with the same degree of development.

Mr Wootton said it would be useful if Lead Local Flood Authorities could work with the Board in order to force developers to get the SUDS in place first.

The Chairman said he would do some work on the background to the issue and report back to members.

(2.35pm Mr Towler arrived)

8 PROGRESS OF WORKS REPORT 2015/16

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Works Report comprising the report and A3 plan. He said the programme was generally progressing well. Since the end of December there has been more problems with waterlogged ground particularly in the Sandy, Biggleswade and River Flit areas. He added that since the plan was completed more works have been carried out in the Arlesey and Shillington areas and approximately a third of the area shown as not completed is now complete. Also, Toddington was virtually complete.

Members approved the Works Progress Report for the period April to December 2015.

Discussion took place:

Mr Firth said he was concerned that the table of works completed showed only 25% of the dredging had been carried out and asked whether the outstanding work would be carried forward. The Director of Operations said certain works were carried out at different times of the year due to bird-nesting season restrictions. The period when the most dredging is carried out is from November to March. The Director of Operations said work can be carried over and in the current year the Board has invested heavily in the use of contractors to carry out work carried forward due to previous wet years.

Mrs Davison commented on the increased amount of money spent on fencing compared with previous years. £17,000 had so far been spent in the current financial year compared with £869 for the whole of 2014/15. The Director of Operations said sometimes fencing gets damaged during maintenance works and needs replacing. When the Board carries out work on lower risk areas, areas which are maintained less often there can often be overgrown fencing which requires removal and replacement. Mrs Davison suggested that landowners be encouraged to use fencing which does not obstruct.

Mr Odell said the plan showed works on the Flit had been completed but there had been no dredging carried out and he was concerned because the watercourse had quite a lot of silt in it. The Director of Operations said it was probably the case that in the current year the maintenance planned was only flailing to tackle the vegetation. However, the Clophill area was down for flailing, dredging and clearing in the following years' programme.

The Chairman said if members would like to raise any issues concerning risk they should contact the Director of Operations.

9 REVIEW OF WORKS PROGRAMME 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 AND WORKS PROGRAMME COMMENTARY

The Director of Operations presented the Works Programme. He apologised for not providing a separate plan showing the categories of watercourse and said that the information would be made available to members electronically after the meeting.

Members approved the Works Programme for the year 2016/17.

The following Requests for Work were detailed in the Works Programme Commentary

- (i) Cotton End watercourse B34 – request from landowner to maintain 1850 metres of medium risk, category 2 watercourse. Approximate cost to the Board £3,000-£5,000.

- (ii) Beeston/Hatch watercourse 88a – request from landowner to maintain 1000 metres of low risk category 3 watercourse. Heavy clearance required at an approximate cost of £9,000-10,000.
- (iii) Hardwick Hill (Supreme Concrete) un-adopted watercourse – request from Local Authority to maintain 900 metres of watercourse. Working in partnership, the highway authority is to provide the traffic management. Approximate cost to the Board £10,000. This work will only be carried out if Bedford Borough Council agree to work in partnership with the Board and provide the traffic management.

The Director of Operations said the following request for works was received after the papers had been distributed:

- (iv) Charlton 100m un-adopted watercourse a request from a rate payer. Approximate cost £1,500.

Members approved all of the above requests for work subject to written undertaking from Bedford Borough Council to provide the traffic management for the works at Hardwick Hill.

Discussion took place:

Mr Huckle pointed out that ‘Cardington Hangers’ should be referred to as ‘Cardington Sheds’.

10 ESTIMATES

The Clerk presented the estimates.

Members approved the following estimates:

- (i) **Joint – Group Account – Engineering and Administration, Labour on cost and Plant Purchases and Funding**
- (ii) **Capital and Maintenance Development Fund; Capital Works – Grant in Aid capital Programme Funding.**
- (iii) **Maintenance Estimates.**
- (iv) **Occupiers’ Rate Fund/General Estimates**

Discussion took place:

Joint – Engineering and Administration

Mr Hodgson pointed out that telephone, broadband and mobile expenditure had increased. The Clerk said it was because new mobile phone contracts had been taken out with new mobile phones and extra data. Mr Hodgson said he imagined that increased data should result in reduced printing costs. The Clerk said she would breakdown some of the individual estimates and report back.

Capital and Maintenance Development Fund

The Clerk said interest is added each year but rates were currently very low.

Occupiers’ Rate Fund/General Estimates

The Clerk said although she was proposing a zero percentage increase in the rate, there would be an increase in Special Levy charged to Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council due to increased development.

The Clerk added that the Board was in a better position for the forthcoming financial year as there was no requirement to add to the plant fund and the repayment of the Public Works Loan Board loan for Great Barford Flood Relief Scheme was completed.

Discussion took place:

Regarding expenditure under Capital works, Mr Brown queried the difference in figures between the revised estimate 2014/15 of £757,500 and the actual expenditure of £439,440. The Clerk said this was due to timing differences in the expenditure on Grant in Aid Health and Safety works and apologised for not including an explanation in note 8.

11 TO SET THE DRAINAGE RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2016/17 AND TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SEAL THE RATE

Members agreed a zero percentage increase in rate and special levy income for 2016/17 resulting in the rate of 3.95p in the pound and rate and special levy income of £906,166 and authorised the Chairman to sign and seal the rate.

(3.30pm Mr Hodgson left)

12 TECHNICAL REPORT (INCLUDING SCHEDULE OF CONSENTS) FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2015

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

Members accepted the Technical Report.

Discussion took place:

West of Bedford Growth Area – Field Road (north)

Mr Bennett said he had noted that the developer's preferred maintenance regime would be a private management company and wondered how developers could guarantee this would be maintained.

Pix Brook, Land South of Stotfold

The Director of Operations reported on the findings of the investigation by Woods Hardwick, the developer's consultant. The more detailed report had shown a net gain in additional attenuation. Officers have asked for the report to be formalised.

Biggleswade, Kings Reach

Mr Bennett reported that he had seen where the Board had carried out works and there seemed to be no problems regarding drainage. Also, the developer appears to have created proper access roads for the landowners. Mr Bennett asked what the three small ponds were on the site. The Director of Operations said they were environmental dipping ponds, part of a linear park.

Public Sector Cooperation Agreements

Mr Brown expressed concern that the Board were planning to take on more work as a result of this partnership working when the annual maintenance programme is not usually completed within the year. The Director of Operations said the Bedford Group of IDBs was one of the few Boards which had asked for reciprocal agreements and he was hopeful that work would also be carried out on behalf of the Board.

13 (i) INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – INTERIM REPORT ON 2015/16 AUDIT

The Clerk presented the report of the internal auditor, David Gowing, which was a follow up of the 2014/15 audit. In Mr Gowing’s opinion the Board continues to have good controls and he provided Adequate Assurance. The Clerk said Mr Gowing had visited the Boards’ offices in November 2015 and his recommendations were shown on page 5 of the report. All recommendations had been implemented except the schedule showing all individual salaries or wage rates which will be produced annually for Joint Management Committee approval commencing at the JMC meeting on 25 April 2016.

Mr Gowing will return to the Boards’ offices in March 2016 to complete the 2015/16 audit.

Members accepted the Internal Audit Report.

Discussion took place:

Mr Huckle drew attention to some inconsistency in the Internal Auditor’s report:

Page 2 – Contractual allowances (excluding travel) paid to staff are treated as non-pensionable. My understanding and that of **some** other IDBs are these allowances should be pensionable.

Page 4 – With the exception of car allowances, other contractual allowances paid to staff are not pensionable. My understanding and that of **other** IDBs are these allowances should be pensionable.

13 (ii) TO RE-APPOINT THE INTERNAL AUDITOR

Members approved the re-appointment of Gowing Internal Audit Services Limited as Internal Auditor to the Board.

14 FINANCE REPORT for the period to 31 December 2015

The Clerk presented the Finance Report adding that following a resolution of the Executive Working Group which met in January 2016, she was looking to move some of the investment funds to another bank in order to spread risk but had not progressed this yet.

Regarding Office/Depot reserve stated as £79,500 on the balance sheet as at 31 December 2015. It was likely that expenditure would only be in the region of £40,000, which would include extra security fencing, lighting and improved CCTV, and the remaining £39,500 would be credited back to the Occupiers Rate Fund account.

Members approved the Finance Report.

15 (i) TO APPROVE PROPOSALS TO CHANGE MEETING STRUCTURES, REMIT AND FREQUENCY

The Clerk presented the report which had been discussed at the Executive Working Group meeting on 11 January 2016. It outlined the background which was driving the proposal to change meeting structures, remit and frequency, it included details of the Bedford Group’s existing committees and membership, the Board’s existing individual Board meetings and committees and the alternative options.

Members agreed the following Executive Working Group resolution:

- (i) The Bedfordshire & River Ivel and the Buckingham & River Ouzel Boards to hold Board meetings three times a year in February, June and November.**
- (ii) The Alconbury & Ellington Board meets twice a year in February and June except election year when an additional meeting is held in November.**
- (iii) Joint Management Committee to hold three meetings per year – January, May and October – with the unconfirmed minutes of those meetings going to the next Bedfordshire & River Ivel and Buckingham & River Ouzel Board meetings.**
- (iv) The Executive Working Group will be dissolved and the next scheduled meeting on 11 April 2016 will not take place.**
- (v) The General Purposes Committees will cease to exist.**
- (vi) The Joint Management Committee representation will, as previously, be based on a 60/40 percentage split as in the administration of the Bedfordshire & River Ivel and the Buckingham & River Ouzel Boards:**

**Beds & River Ivel – Chairman, Vice Chairman, plus three members
Bucks & River Ouzel – Chairman, Vice Chairman, plus two members
Alconbury & Ellington – Chairman or Vice Chairman
(Total of 10 members)**

These proposals, together with an updated scheme of delegation and standing orders for the Joint Management Committee, will be an agenda item at the February 2016 Board meetings and, if approved by the Boards, will come into effect in April 2016. The next JMC meeting scheduled for 25th April 2016 would, if approved, be the first meeting under the new regime.

15 (ii) TO APPROVE THE REVISED JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

Members approved the revised Joint Management Committee Resolution.

Members agreed that Bedfordshire and River Ivel Board membership on the JMC should be:

D McMurdo, Chairman (ex officio), J Davison, Vice Chairman (ex officio), R O Bennett, L Birt and J Scott.

15 (iii) TO APPROVE THE REVISED SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Members approved the revised Scheme of Delegation.

Discussion took place:

Mr Bennett said although he was part of the old regime he believed the new proposals were a better use of time and avoided a lot of duplication. He added that the section of the JMC Resolution which allows officers to nominate substitutes with no loss of voting rights was an important inclusion.

Mrs Davison said she thought the proposals were comprehensive and agreed with the JMC having a greater input.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AT THE CHAIRMAN'S DISCRETION

There was no other business.

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 6 June 2016 – Board Meeting

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.