

BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 June 2013 at 2pm at Elstow Playing Field Hall.

PRESENT: R O Bennett (Chairman); J Davison (Vice Chairman); G Barrell; L Birt; A D Brown; I Dalgarno; M Egar; A Foster; D Hodgson; B Huckle; D McMurdo; P Olney; D R Osborn; J Ream and J Scott.

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

The Chairman welcomed to the Board new members; A Foster, a Bedford Borough Council representative and I Dalgarno a Central Bedfordshire Council representative.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from I Clifton; J Comont; J Franklin; S Hunt; D Lawrence and C Maudlin.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any interests by Members of the Board.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 28 JANUARY 2013

The minutes of the Board meeting dated 28 January 2013 were approved as an accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

5 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2013

The Chairman presented the minutes which were noted.

The Vice Chairman pointed out an error under 'Matters Arising from the EWG report of meeting 9 April 2013': The visit by Gavin Shuker, MP was to take place on Thursday 11th July and not Tuesday 11th July as stated.

Discussion took place:

Internal Audit Report

The Clerk added that all outstanding items were now completed. The Internal Auditor was not present at the meeting as he had felt there was nothing of concern to discuss. However, he had asked the Clerk to make available his email address to any Board member who required it so that they could email him directly with any concerns. He is planning to attend the February 2014 Board meeting.

Kings Ditch, Bedford

Mr Huckle asked whether officers of the Board had approached the Bedford Charity (Harpur Trust) to ask for a contribution towards a permanent pump.

The Director of Operations said he had not approached the charity yet. He had, however, put in a Grant in Aid funding application to Defra and a proposal for partnership funding from Anglian Water Services Price review 14 Business plan for a scheme to install a permanent pump. This could mean that four parties, Bedford Borough Council; Environment Agency; Anglian Water and the Board could deliver a joint scheme. He added Defra funding favours the principle of beneficiary contributions. Once these avenues are explored the Director of Operations said he would then contact the charity.

Mr Hodgson pointed out that the school near the site is Bedford School for Girls and not Bedford Modern School for Girls.

6 PROGRESS OF WORKS PROGRAMME AND WORKS PROGRESS REPORT 2012/13.

The Director of Operations explained that this was the first time the new progress report which directly compares progress with what was originally proposed had been presented to the Board.

Members accepted the Works Progress report.

Discussion took place:

Mr Egar asked whether the watercourse highlighted green would have any maintenance works carried forward and completed during 2013/14. The Director of Operations said he hoped works would be carried out in the coming year as the current programme was being developed for implementation.

Kings Ditch, Bedford

Mr McMurdo said he was pleased to see the Kings Ditch was part of the annual programme and asked when the works would be carried out as the watercourse was littered. The Director of Operations said the works would be carried out once the workforce start back after the bird nesting season, on 15th July. However, he pointed out the Board would only be concerned with clearing debris which was causing or likely to cause a flood risk blockage.

Development Areas

Mr Brown made reference to the development areas such as Wixams, Kings Reach and West of Kempston/March Leys asking whether there was a problem with negotiating with developers and if anything could be done to help the situation.

The Director of Operations said that negotiations with every developer were a challenge. Once consent for the works is issued developers were often slow to 'come to the table' and negotiations for commuted sums for maintenance can often take years. He said strategic attenuation was very rarely tied in, hard and fast, with planning. The Board now index links commuted sums, however, it is felt that retrospectively indexing commuted sums for West of Kempston, for example, could cause negotiations to fall through. Wixams in particular was very challenging and officers have agreed to start routine maintenance prior to the developers defect correction. This compromise should enable the Board to receive some of the commuted sum and it could be a good test to ensure that the Board has adequate access. Good photographic evidence will be kept.

Sickness

Mr Hodgson asked about the high rate of sickness amongst the workforce. The Clerk said the workforce consisted of only 7 men and during 2012/13 two members of the workforce had been off work with sleep apnoea; one for 42 days and one for 6 months. The latter is now off with shoulder pain and is pursuing an injury claim against the Board. The majority of the sickness was attributable to those two workmen.

7 TECHNICAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MAY 2013

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report which was accepted.

Discussion took place:

Pix Brook, development land south of Stotfold

The Director of Operations added that the Board had received correspondence from the local Member of Parliament on behalf of residents in the Hazel Grove area.

Mr Brown asked if the Board had been consulted on a planning application for expansion of a traveller site at Arlesey as there was an issue concerning the cemetery flooding. The Director of Operations said if the issue was ground water this was not the Board's remit. The Board had commented on the gypsy and traveller consultation and he said he would need to ask the Principal Engineer at the Boards' offices.

Taylor's Road, Stotfold

Mr Osborn asked why the Board had been involved in the culverted ditch. The Director of Operations said that as it was in the Drainage Board District the Board had a duty to ensure that the riparian owner will maintain it.

Brookside/Brook Lane, Renhold

Mr McMurdo asked if the issue of flooding and residents concerns regarding the sluice gate at Thurleigh had been brought to the attention of Nicola Wilson of Bedford Borough Council. The Director of Operations said the Principal Engineer had visited the site with a Bedford Borough Council Engineer. Last year was an exceptionally wet year; the houses were built on a flood plain some 20 or 30 years ago and some gardens have a flood channel but unfortunately current occupants may not always be aware of the history of the site.

Flood and Water Management Act 2010 – Local Flood Risk Strategy

Mr Barrell asked for an update on the situation regarding the Local Flood Risk Strategies. The Director of Operations said the Board had had a preliminary meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council officers and consultants. He said he was not sure what the latest situation was regarding Bedford Borough Council as the last meeting was last year. Mr Hodgson said he would request that the information be provided to the Board.

8 FINANCE

i) Finance Report for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013

The Clerk apologised for an error in the Investment and Bank Account Balances on page 29 – the top two investment items had the details transposed and should have read as follows:

	Term	Start Date	Maturity Date	Rate	Amount
Co-op Joint	6 months	15/10/12	15/04/13	1.81%	£330,601
Lloyds Corp Joint	85 days	14/03/13	07/06/13	1.00%	£165,103

Members accepted the Finance Report for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

Discussion took place:

Mr Brown asked when repayment of the Public Works Loan Board loan would be completed. The Clerk responded that it was taken out in two parts to help finance the Great Barford Flood Attenuation Scheme; the first one finishes in 2015 and the second in 2016. A total sum of £160,589 is outstanding.

ii) To approve the Statements of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2013

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts and asked members to note that the surplus of £462,271 showing on page 9 mainly related to capital development income which was ring-fenced money for long term maintenance/replacement of capital development projects.

Members approved the Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2013 for the Chairman to sign.

Discussion took place:

Mr Brown queried what the ‘Admin charge’ was for Capital income and why it had increased compared with the previous year. The Clerk explained that 16% of commuted funds received for long term maintenance of capital developments is deducted to cover the Boards’ costs for the engineering and administration involved. The reason for the fluctuation was that it was dependent upon the amount of capital commuted sums which are received during the year. However, if there are only legal fees involved then that is all that would be deducted.

iii) To approve the Audit Commission Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement year ending 31 March 2013

Members approved the Audit Commission Annual Return and the Annual Governance Statement (answering questions 1 – 8 in the affirmative) for year ending 31 March 2013 for the Chairman and Clerk to sign.

9 INTERNAL AUDIT

The Clerk explained that the Internal Audit covered the Bedford Group of Drainage Boards as a whole.

(i) To receive the Internal Audit Report

Members approved the Internal Audit Report dated May 2013.

(ii) To Approve the Internal Audit Strategy & Audit Plan 2013/14

The Clerk added that the Internal Auditor had not attended the meeting as he had no matters of concern. However, he had stated that members may contact him direct via email if they have any queries or concerns. The Clerk said she would provide his contact details to any member who requested them.

Members Approved the Internal Audit Strategy & Audit Plan 2013/14.

iii) To Approve the Revised Risk Register

Members approved the Revised Risk Register dated April 2013.

Discussion took place:

The Clerk drew members' attention to the recommendation ref A2 of the Internal Audit Report – Elected Board members (not Council Representatives) can claim mileage allowance for attendance at Board meetings.

Mr Dalgarno raised concern about funds invested with the Co-op Bank given the current situation and said he considered that it needed to be reviewed. The Clerk said she had received assurances via email from the bank, however, the investment will be reviewed at the Executive Working Group meeting on 11th July 2013.

10 To Approve the following draft Policies:

i) Employee Code of Conduct Policy

The Clerk reported that although this policy had been approved by the Executive Working Group and the Joint Management Committee, the Buckingham and River Ouzel Board had requested that it be incorporated into the existing Employee Handbook.

Members agreed that the Policy should not be approved at this time and should be reviewed at a later date as part of a new Employee Handbook.

ii) Hospitality and Gift Policy

The Clerk added that there is a book available in the Boards' offices in which members and employees of the Board should record any declarable hospitality or gifts.

Members approved the Hospitality and Gift Policy.

iii) Document Retention Policy

Members approved the Document Retention Policy

Discussion took place:

Mr Osborn asked how reliable the Boards' electronic back up was. The Clerk said that a back up takes place every night and a copy is taken off the Boards' premises every night. However, the Clerk said the possibility of remote storage was being considered as part of the new computer system. Also officers are investigating whether Local Authorities already store plans which the Board holds on file and whether the amount of data which the Boards' store could therefore be reduced.

11 NEW OFFICE/DEPOT UPDATE

The Director of Operations gave a verbal up date on the current situation and referred members to item 9 of the minutes of the Joint Management Committee Meeting on 29th April 2013.

Discussion took place:

Following the concerns raised about security of items of plant in the proposed new, open, depot bays; the Director of Operations reported that he has consulted with the Boards' insurance broker and been advised that fitting doors to the bays would make no difference to the insurance. The items of plant are left locked and are insured whether they are within a depot or out on site. Although the planned security fencing, lighting and CCTV were advisable.

Mr Brown asked how much notice needed to be given on the current two depots and what the cost was. The Clerk said 3 months' notice was required and the cost of the depots was £375 per calendar month for the Wilstead depot and £775 per calendar month for the Hockliffe depot.

Mr Brown asked who was project managing the build. The Director of Operations stated that a project manager from Hannah Reed, Consulting Engineers was employed. In addition the build was reviewed quarterly at the Executive Working Group meetings and the twice yearly Joint Management Committee which was due to meet again in October 2013.

Mr Brown requested that members of the Board be kept informed of the progress of the project via email. The Clerk agreed to do this.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

13 DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING: 3 February 2014

The meeting closed at 3.40pm.