

ALCONBURY AND ELLINGTON INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019, 10am at Brookfield Farm, Great Stukeley.

PRESENT: H Raby (Chairman); M G Baker, B Chapman, 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)

1 APOLOGIES for absence were received from Mr J Sewell.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 February 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign, with the following amendments:

Agenda item 5:

'Members agreed that heavy clearing works should be carried out on Watercourse No. 4 to Brampton Wood in addition to the 2019/20 Works Programme as presented and approved, see Agenda item 8'

Amended to:

*'Members agreed that heavy clearing works should be carried out on **Watercourse No. 5 adjacent to Park Road, Brampton** in addition to the 2019/20 Works Programme as presented and approved, see Agenda item 8'*

Agenda item 8:

'Members agreed that heavy clearing works should be carried out on Watercourse No. 4 to Brampton Wood in addition to the 2019/20 Works programme as approved under Agenda item 5'

Amended to:

*'Members agreed that heavy clearing works should be carried out on **Watercourse No. 5 adjacent to Park Road, Brampton** in addition to the 2019/20 Works programme as approved under Agenda item 5'.*

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Byelaws

The Clerk said the revision of the Byelaw wording, to include Flood risk assets/SuDS, had still to be resolved with Defra, but due to the on-going exit from the EU, this has been delayed.

Alconbury Brook

Mr Warrener reported that the EA appeared to have installed some equipment under the bridge at Holly Lodge to measure the flow of water which is being checked after rainfall. He added that blockages were still in the brook, just upstream of Alconbury Weston.

5 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT FOR WORKS PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Director of Operations presented the Works Progress Report together with an A3 plan showing works completed in black. He reported that in addition to the works shown on the plan, works had included 700 metres of maintenance to watercourse no. 22 at Spaldwick and the section of watercourse 8 at Riverside Park in Huntingdon.

The Chairman mentioned the Board's May 2019 Newsletter, distributed to ratepayers, which had highlighted aspects of the Board's maintenance works. (Copies of the newsletter were also made available to Board members at the meeting.)

Members accepted the Works Progress Report 2018/19

Discussion took place:

Mr Baker asked whether the issue of the foul smell from the watercourse in Alconbury was still on-going. The Director of Operation said he was not sure as it was a matter for Anglian Water and the Environment Agency.

6 TECHNICAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO APRIL 2019

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

He highlighted the issue of fly tipping at Barracks Brook, upstream of Stukeley Meadows. He said he had reported it to Highways England as it is within the highway boundary, they had agreed to remove it, but to date it was still not removed. He added that a piece, on that particular issue, and fly tipping in general, had been included in the Board's newsletter.

The Director of Operations also referred members to page 15 showing EA 2018/19 Maintenance works and expenditure on the Alconbury Brook, Ellington Brook and Brampton Brook. He said quite a lot of work had been carried out. There had been a lot of clearing near Alconbury and also quite a lot of focus in the Brampton area where the Board had carried out grass-cutting works as part of a Public Sector Co-operation Agreement.

Members accepted the Technical Report.

Discussion took place:

A14 Improvement Scheme

Mrs Ruston asked about the new alignment of watercourses due to the A14 Improvement Scheme and whether the Board would be adopting them as their responsibility. The Director of Operations said the Board would be adopting the newly aligned watercourses if they had previously been the Board's responsibility. However, there was currently an issue where a new culvert is proposed under the new A1 and A14 roads but which had no access arrangements so the Board will not adopt it. The officers of the Board have suggested an over-sized pipe is used in order to gain access. It may be necessary to enter into a legal agreement regarding this.

Fly tipping

Mr White said Huntingdonshire District Council had been discussing fly tipping and providing information to residents advising them to check that those who take waste away from their properties are legitimate. He said there was also talk of an initiative to re-energise the Keep Britain Tidy campaign.

Environment Agency Maintenance Works 2018/19 – Brampton Brook

Mrs Ruston asked whether spraying had been carried out. The Director of Operations said it had, with the use of Roundup. Mrs Ruston said it did not seem to have been very effective as the area did not look any different and suggested that the roots are not killed off. She was also concerned about the safety of spraying into a watercourse. The Director of Operations said the work had been carried out on the middle third of the watercourse. Also, it has been scientifically proven that Roundup (glyphosate) becomes inert when it comes into contact with water. He added that the Beds & Ivel Board spray in late summer/early autumn and it then gets taken into the roots as the weeds die back. It keeps the flow of water and causes less silt too. Spot spraying is carried out where roots persist.

Alconbury and Alconbury Weston

The Board's officers had attended the first meeting with the EA's Natural Flood Management pilot project team and reiterated the need to bear in mind arable catchment and encourage the EA to develop arable solutions. A scheme in Pickering, North Yorkshire, is showcased and there is currently pressure from Defra and the EA to adopt Natural Flood Management. Cambridgeshire County Council are also keen. If landowners are willing to take part, the EA will try to come up with a natural flood management solutions and measures will be put in place to gauge whether they are successful.

Mr Warrener asked if compensation would be paid if arable land is taken into a scheme. The Director of Operations said, in Pickering, land was moved into stewardship schemes which can aid with grant applications.

Mr Warrener said there had been talk of building a large lake. The Director of Operations said that scheme, which included shifting earth to build a dam, had been estimated at £30M. He has suggested that £10M would be a better estimate. Mr Warrener said he would lose a lot of land. The Director of Operations said loss of land would be compensated to a set criteria depending on how frequently the land would have been likely to flood.

Mr Warrener queried the spending of millions of pounds as the flooding had not occurred very often. The Director of Operations said Easter 1998 was a very big flood event, and in 2016 there was a lot less rain but flooding was due to a combination of rain and local conditions. With trees fallen into watercourses, bridges could easily get blocked again.

The Clerk said a recent press release regarding the EA's revised Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (FCERM) consultation is moving away from protection to more resilience and not re-building where floods have occurred.

7 INTERNAL AUDIT - TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2018/19

The Clerk presented the report of the internal auditors, TIAA, who had given their opinion as ‘Reasonable Assurance’. The Clerk said once the five actions listed under the Management Action Plan had been implemented she hoped to receive ‘Substantial Assurance’ for the 2019/20 financial year. The first three listed actions had already been implemented, including revision of the Financial Regulations – Agenda item 10. The remaining two were to be agenda items for approval by the Joint Management Committee in October 2019:

- A review of the Risk Management Strategy and Policy
- A review of the Boards’ objectives to be undertaken to provide synergy between the various sets of objectives; ADA’s, the Board’s website and those in the Risk Management documents.

Members accepted the Annual Internal Audit Report 2018/19.

8 TO APPROVE THE REVISED RISK REGISTER

The Clerk presented the Revised Risk Register which had been reviewed by the JMC at its meeting on 15 April 2019. The changes to the Risk Register, already approved by the JMC, were shown in red.

Members approved the updated Risk Register dated May 2019.

9 FINANCE

(i) FINANCE REPORT AS AT 31 MARCH 2019

The Clerk presented the Finance Report which included:

- a) Receipts and payments through the Board’s individual bank account with Natwest for 2018/19;
- b) Cheque list for 2018/19 and
- c) Investment and Bank accounts balances as at 31st March 2019.

Members approved the Finance Report.

(ii) TO APPROVE THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2019

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts.

Income and Expenditure Account

The Chairman said there was again, a significant reduction in maintenance costs and it may need to be considered whether the works being carried out are adequate. The Clerk asked members whether they thought the maintenance work was adequate. Mrs Ruston said there had not been sufficient rainfall to test it. The Director of Operations said the current contractors were always willing to return to remedy any sub-standard works and although that did represent a cost to the Board it was still considerably cheaper.

The Director of Operations said tenders had gone out for the 2019/20 programme and in four weeks' time they will be reviewed.

Mrs Ruston suggested reviewing the contractors' performance in February 2020 Board meeting. The Clerk added that the Board would not necessarily opt for the lowest tender.

Regarding proposed works on watercourse no. 5 at Brampton; the Director of Operations said officers were considering a range of options including base line surveys and also obtaining quotations for a suction dredger.

Balance Sheet

The Occupiers Rate Fund, ie, reserves, was now £206,181. The Clerk said the £127 of rates of rates outstanding at the end of the year was now reduced to approximately £55.

Members approved the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019.

(iii) TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2018/19

Members approved, for the Chairman and Clerk to sign, the Annual Governance Statement for the year ending 31 March 2019, answering questions 1-8 in the affirmative.

(iv) TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL RETURN ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS FOR 2018/19

The Clerk presented the Annual Return Accounting Statements for the year ending 31 March 2019

Members approved the Annual Return Accounting Statements for year ending 31 March 2019 for the Chairman to sign.

10 TO APPROVE THE REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Clerk presented the financial regulations which had been revised following internal auditor recommendations. The changes (shown in red) had been discussed and approved by the JMC.

Members approved the revised Financial Regulations with all changes

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Board Membership - Huntingdonshire District Council representation

Mr White said he had passed on to Huntingdonshire District Council previous comments regarding how much the Board had valued the membership of a HDC officer.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 11 February 2020

The meeting closed at 11.05am.