

# **BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

## **Board Meeting**

**Minutes of the Board meeting held on 13 May 2019 at 3pm at Vale House, Stewartby.**

**PRESENT:** D McMurdo (Chairman), A D Brown, N Costin, F Firth, B Huckle, R Morris, J Ream, M Robins, C Royden, J Russell, J Scott, M Towler, T Turner, M Weeks and T Wootton.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** F C Bowler (Clerk), J J Oldfield (Engineer), R C Easom (Committee Clerk) and Nicole Souter (Accounts Officer).

The Chairman said this would be Mr Costin's last Board meeting as he was retiring from his role as Central Bedfordshire Councillor and, therefore, from the Board. Mr Costin had been a Councillor for Central Bedfordshire, and the previous Mid-Bedfordshire Council for many years. In his role as Councillor he was appointed to the River Ouzel Board which later amalgamated to become the Buckingham & River Ouzel Board. In later years he also served as an elected member on that Board, serving 23 years in total, including as Chairman for 13 years, retiring in 2014.

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from J R Davison, S Dixon, D Hodgson, S Hunt, and M Nawaz.

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

**3 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2018**

**The minutes of the Board meeting held on 11 February 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign.**

**4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

### **Estimates – Maintenance Estimates**

Mr Brown said he did not understand the minutes concerning the Environment Agency maintenance works and he thought that the Ivel Navigation was only in Shefford and not Ickleford. The Director of Operations said the passage referred to the Ivel Navigation to Shefford and also the River Ivel, where the EA undertook maintenance on the Main River system all the way up to Ickleford. He referred Mr Brown to page 27 showing EA 2018/19 maintenance works. Mr Brown said the Ivel Navigation was dry. The Director of Operations said, whether dry or in water, it was Main River and under the jurisdiction of the EA.

### **Environment Agency – Value for Money**

The Clerk said she had not drafted a letter regarding the lack of maintenance carried out by the EA on Main River as details had now been received on the maintenance works carried out by the EA (page 27). The Chairman said members were invited to discuss the issue later in the meeting.

## **5 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 APRIL 2019**

**The Chairman presented the unconfirmed minutes which were noted.**

## **6 PROGRESS OF WORK FROM APRIL 2018 TO MARCH 2019 FOR THE WORKS PROGRAMME 2018/19**

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Works report. He referred to the areas of watercourse shown in purple; Maintenance in Progress and said that machine works had ceased due to the bird nesting season. It will be completed when works resume after the risks of disturbing nesting birds has diminished.

The Chairman said he was delighted to see the high percentages of completed works in the various categories and asked that the Board's appreciation be passed on to the relevant workforce members.

**Members accepted the Progress of Works Report for the Works Programme 2018/19.**

Discussion took place:

### **Network Rail**

Mr Wootton asked the Director of Operation's opinion on the standard of work carried out by Network Rail at Tempsford. The Director of Operations said he thought it was quite a good job and was pleased they had done the works, which had involved a lot of flailing and clearing.

### **Contractors**

Mr Firth asked whether the contractors' work was of a good standard. The Director of Operations said the majority of it was. Although one contractor, who had been awarded a relatively small contract, had been asked to go back and carry out remedial work.

Mr Morris asked about the short section of watercourse shown in yellow, south of Henlow, which was continuing to be carried forward. The Director of Operations said it was a low risk watercourse, there had also been access problems due to crops. However, if on the third year there are still crops adjacent, the Board will consider exercising its powers and enter to carry out the works even if this resulted in affecting the crop.

## **7 TECHNICAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO APRIL 2019**

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

**Members accepted the Technical Report.**

Discussion took place:

### **Stewartby Park**

The Chairman said it had previously been agreed to instruct a solicitor in order to expedite the completion of the legal agreement and he asked whether progress been made or whether it was drifting. The Director of Operations said he was hesitant to instruct solicitors as currently it was the Board's solicitor who was making slow progress.

The Chairman said he understood that the level of attenuation on this site was technically acceptable but the necessary consent had not been granted by the Board. He said he would work with officers regarding this and it should be an agenda item at the next meeting.

### **West of Bedford Growth Area and Planning Authority issues**

Mr Russell referred to West of Bedford Growth Area and the Board's removal of landscaping and asked if, in general, there was something to be gained from talking to planning authorities prior to the commencement of works. The Chairman said the Board had discussed this and, together with officers, he was endeavouring to make presentations to the Planning officers at of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils.

Mr Firth said he was on the Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Committee and asked what more he could do.

Mrs Turner said any Councillor member on the Board could go to the Planning Committee and make representations on behalf of the Board; they were in absolutely the correct position to do so.

Reference was made to the list of objections to planning applications provided in the Board papers.

Mr Brown said it was a bit late to receive the information and advance warning was necessary so that members could then introduce the objections to the Planning Committee. The Chairman explained that drainage boards are not 'statutory consultees'. The Clerk suggested that officers of the Board send copies of planning objections directly to members.

Mr Huckle said he was very concerned about the amount of time developers take to put in place conditions of planning permissions. He asked whether there was any legal requirement to satisfy conditions within a certain period of time. The Chairman said he would consult with the two largest planning authorities regarding this. The Director of Operations said under the Flood and Water Management Act that the Lead Local Flood Authorities are the statutory consultees on flood risk.

The Chairman suggested that ADA be approached and asked to make representations to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs regarding drainage boards not being statutory consultees.

### **It was agreed that:**

- **The Board's officers should make contact with the planning authorities with a view to providing training to planning officers and possibly councillors.**
- **Relevant councillors be 'copied in' on planning objection emails from the Board to the Planning Departments.**

### **Pix Brook Catchment Study**

The Chairman said he was very pleased to learn that the LLFA had recognised it was necessary to replace the culverts as it was confirmation of what the Board had been saying was necessary.

Mr Weeks asked for more information on the Pix Brook catchment study. The Director of Operations said he would send Mr Weeks details once the reports had been finalised. He said it was being developed into a business case and the Board will probably be asked to make a contribution.

### **Kings Ditch, Bedford**

The Chairman said he was planning to meet with the Chief Officer for Resilience at Bedford Borough Council and that the scheme needed to be progressed. The Director of Operations said the EA's agreed contribution was still awaited. He was hoping that Easter 2020 would be when the scheme could be commenced. Bedford Borough Council have the funds allocated and Anglian Water are entering the final year of a five year business plan which included the Kings Ditch scheme.

### **Flitwick Mill Race**

The Director of Operations added that the site was adjacent to land which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Mrs Turner asked how long there had been problems there. The Director of Operations said the bank has continually seeped for many years, from time to time, but the dispute between riparian mill and sluice owners is more recent, and such as the Board has experienced in the past with other mill owners.

### **2018/19 EA Maintenance Works & Spend – Rivers Ivel, Hiz/Purwell, Hit, Flit & Navigation**

Mr Wootton asked whether the works carried out by the EA represent good value for money in respect of the precept paid and made reference to the large amounts of money paid by Councils in addition to the precept paid by the Board. The Director of Operations said he would like to see more maintenance works carried out to improve channel conveyance. Mr Wootton added that, despite the difficult bureaucracy, with climate change making the weather more unpredictable, there was a need for the EA to demonstrate value for money.

**It was agreed that the Chairman would write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Clerk said she would also raise the issue with Innes Thompson, the Chief Executive of ADA and Catherine Wright, Head of Evidence Strategy and Reporting at the EA, when they visit in the autumn.**

**The Chairman said he would also keep raising the issue with the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and give feedback to the Board's November meeting.**

### **8 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 Internal Audit Report 2018/19**

## **9 TO APPROVE THE REVISED RISK REGISTER REVIEWED 31 MARCH 2019**

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

**Members approved the updated Risk Register dated May 2019.**

## **10 FINANCE**

### **(i) To approve the Finance Report as at 31 March 2019**

The Clerk presented the finance report which showed receipts and payments through the Board's individual bank account, a cheque/direct debit list showing payments and investment and bank accounts balances.

**Members approved the Finance Report as at 31 March 2019.**

### **(ii) To approve the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019**

#### **Income and Expenditure Statement as at 31 March 2019**

The Clerk presented the Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

#### **Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

The Occupiers Rate Fund was currently £966,410 and the Board were holding Capital development funds of £2,471,083.

**Members approved the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019.**

Discussion took place:

#### **Group Engineering/Administration Costs**

Mr Brown queried insurance costs showing an increase compared to the previous year. The Clerk said the Board had now taken out a new policy which would show a reduction in the following year's accounts.

Mr Brown said the increase in the internal auditor's fees from £487 to £1,199 was unacceptable. The Clerk explained that this was the first year of a new audit regime, following a new instruction, and she expected the cost would reduce for 2019/20.

#### **Capital Development/Long Term Maintenance Funds**

The Chairman said he and officers were mindful of Mr Russell's previously voiced concerns regarding the effect of inflation on commuted sum money for long term maintenance. The issue had been discussed at the JMC meetings. He said investment opportunities were still being looked at and made more difficult due to that fact that risk is unacceptable.

Mr Russell said he advocated periodic analysis to ensure that funds are still adequate. The Chairman said he agreed and it was a piece of work which needed to be undertaken. The Clerk said ADA were

also looking at the issue. Currently, the Treasury Green Book was used and they may recommend changing to an alternative way on which to base commuted sums.

**(iii) To approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement**

**Members approved the Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 (answering questions 1-8 in the affirmative) for the Chairman and Clerk to sign.**

**iv) To approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2018/19 Accounting Statements**

**Members approved the Accounting Statements 2018/19 for the Chairman to sign.**

Discussion took place:

**Annual Governance Statement – item 4 – We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.**

Mr Firth asked how the opportunity for exercise of electors’ rights was provided. The Clerk said notices regarding the accounts being available for inspection were placed on the Boards’ website and on the main door to the Boards’ offices.

**11 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**

Mr Morris commented that the revision carried out appeared to be thorough. Members agreed.

**12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**ADA Good Governance Training Workshops**

Mr Weeks said he had attended the ADA Good Governance Training and felt it had been very worthwhile. Mr Robins had also attended one of the workshops.

**Regional Flood and Coastal Committee – name change**

Mrs Turner said the RFCC was currently consulting on a proposed name change and asked whether this would have any effect on Board membership. The Clerk said that it would not.

**13 DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING – 11 NOVEMBER 2019**

The meeting closed at 4.19pm.