

BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 at 2pm at Vale House, Stewartby.

PRESENT: D McMurdo (Chairman), J Scott (Vice Chairman), A Brown, J Davison, F Firth, D Hodgson, B Huckle, S Jarvis, C McHugh, M Nawaz, J Ream, M Robins, J Russell, J Sampson, M Towler, T Turner and T Wootton.

IN ATTENDANCE: B Agass (Clerk/Chief Executive); J Oldfield (Director of Operations); A Smith (Committee Clerk) and N Souter (Accountant).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from G Coombes and R Morris,

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 11 November 2019

The minutes of the Board meeting dated 11 November 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2019.

There were no matters arising.

5 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2020.

Members noted the Joint Management Committee minutes.

6 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Members approved the report and the following recommendations:

(i) The general development contribution should be increased to £5.45 per impervious square metre from 1st April 2020;

(ii) The Clerk should be authorized to negotiate appropriate commuted sums from developers when the Board agrees to adopt new works.

7 PROGRESS OF WORKS REPORT 2019/20

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Works Report comprising the report and A3 plan. Progress is slightly off track due to the wet conditions experienced over recent months. This has restricted the type of maintenance that could be undertaken due to ground conditions.

The Chairman noted that also during this period the workforce was not at full complement due to vacancies and that further analysis would be undertaken regarding the proactive vs reactive use of contractors going forward. The bird nesting period this year is elongating which also reduces the window of opportunity for certain works to be completed.

It was raised that the Board has sometimes encountered quality issues when using contractors previously and members wished this to be taken into consideration when evaluating future options. The Chairman explained that these problems were faced when using contractors on a more ad hoc basis, however when using long term hoped this would be reduced.

Fencing

Members were presented with a variety of photographs detailing the challenges the Board increasingly faces with fencing positioned within the byelaw strip.

The Chairman expressed his concern as this causes issues not only with access but also potentially health and safety. The use of drones should be considered to assess these issues in advance of being on site as well as aid watercourse surveying.

Members asked the Director of Operations the following questions:

- Who pays for the reinstatement of fences? – The Board was advised that currently the board has covered the cost, and on occasions a contribution from the landowner is received for materials depending on the type of fence/structure.
- How frequently is this happening? – members were advised that this issue is being encountered more and more frequently as more development is undertaken within the catchment area

Several members voiced the opinion that the Board will need in future to adopt a firmer stance in relation to applying the bylaws in order to reduce the number of potential structures being erected within the working margin. Any unconsented structures may need to be removed.

The updated byelaws are currently awaiting approval from DEFRA, it was hoped that these would have been approved however the timeline has been impacted upon by recent parliamentary elections and Brexit preparations.

The Chairman requested the Chief Executive to follow up on progress and approach the new minister if necessary post the expected cabinet changes.

Members accepted the Works Progress Report for the period April to December 2019.

8 WORKS PROGRAMME 2020/21, 2021/22, AND 2022/23 AND WORKS PROGRAMME COMMENTARY

The Director of Operations presented the Works Programme, including the commentary and the separate document with schedule and map.

One member asked if most of the work was single or double bank work, the Director of Operations explained that its mainly single bank work. The member expressed the concern of trees being allowed to grow on the opposite side. This is allowed for the purpose of the balance of function and provides a good aesthetic wildlife corridor. The Chairman explained that the investment of longer reach machines now means that we can easily access both sides of the watercourse.

Clarification was asked regarding the watercourse categories, it was explained that 1 and 1a are done annually, however 1a is used for watercourses in urban areas where it is critical the watercourse is kept in good order.

Members approved the Works Programme for the year 2020/21.

9 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;**
- (iii) Maintenance Estimates**
- (iv) Occupiers’ Rate Fund/General Estimates**

Discussion took place:

Training – The Chief Executive explained to members that the increase in the training budget for the forthcoming year is in part to allow for refresher training for members of the workforce in key areas, to train new employees in some essential skill and to allow the a team member to undertake a NEBOSH qualification

Capital and Maintenance Development Fund - The Chief Executive highlighted the fact that the estimated expenditure for the Kings Ditch project is an indicative figure until partner contributions are finalised and the full cost of the work identified. The Chairman explained the project and gave an update regarding the current dialogue with Bedford Girls School regarding a contribution towards the project.

One member questioned how the Board would control a private company as stated in another area of the report– *“It is therefore critical that the Board ensures all assets are readily maintainable, whether by the Board or a private company, so that flood risk in the Drainage District is not unduly increased.”*

The Director of Operations explained a Deed of Covenant would be drafted or add some other additional assurance to the land drainage consent which applies a restriction on the title. Therefore if the land/property is sold the restriction are transferred to the new owner.

Occupiers’ Rate Fund/General Estimates

The Accountant presented the general estimates. The estimates had been based on 1.2% increase in rate and special levy income for 2020/21 and for the following two years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Some Councils will again see an increase in their special levy due to land in their district moving from agricultural to urban/developed.

A rate of 4.050p in the pound, giving rate and special levy income of £987,074 was proposed.

10 TO SET THE DRAINAGE RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2020/21 AND TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SEAL THE RATE

Members agreed a 1.2% increase in rate and special levy income for 2020/21 resulting in the rate of 4.050p in the pound and rate and special levy income of £987,074 and authorised the Chairman to sign and seal the rate.

11 TECHNICAL REPORT (INCLUDING SCHEDULE OF CONSENTS) FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2019

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

Stewartby Park – The Chairman reminded members that at the previous meeting it was agreed to pursue this matter with the Board’s legal representatives. The Director of Operations informed members that officers met with Solicitors before Christmas, and he will now look to progress issues with the two developers concerned. The Chairman asked that if a positive response wasn’t received by the end of March, that the Board would need to escalate an alternative approach.

Members accepted the Technical Report.

12 TO RE-APPOINT THE INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2020/21

Members approved the re-appointment of the Internal Auditors, TIAA, to the Board for the 2020/21 financial year.

13 FINANCE REPORT for the period to 31 December 2019

The Accountant presented the Finance Report which included:

- Receipts and Payments through the Board’s individual bank account with Lloyds from 1 April to 31 December 2019;
- Cheque/Direct Debit list;
- Investment and Bank Account Balances as at 31st December 2019;

Members approved the Finance Report.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AT THE CHAIRMAN’S DISCRETION

Environment Agency attendance-

The Chief Executive advised that the recently appointed Operations Manager at the Environment Agency, had indicated that they would be pleased to attend future Board meetings if required. Members welcomed this suggestion. The Chairman suggested that this should be also extended to other partners including local authority partners. Members felt this would be beneficial and agreed to his proposal.

Risk Management Workshop-

The Chief Executive canvassed members for their views on holding a risk management workshop for Board Members prior to reviewing the Risk Management Strategy. Members were advised of the provisional date for the training being held at the Board offices on 21st April. The workshop will be open to all members, an electronic invitation will be sent to all members.

Post meeting note: This workshop has now been postponed due the restrictions in place as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak

Data protections policy-

At the previous Board meeting one member raised the potential of some amendments to the policy. They agreed to put these in writing for ease of reference and clarification. The Board were advised that no suggested changes had been received from the Board member. Therefore the Chairman requested that the policy be brought to the next meeting for approval.

Electronic Board Papers-

The Chief Executive reminded members that at the previous meeting it was agreed that Board papers would be sent electronically unless members had opted to receive a paper copy. Members will also be sent forthcoming meeting dates electronically as calendar invitations for their acceptance. Members requested that enclosed documents & plans are not embedded in the document and are instead attached as additional PDF's.

Meeting arrangements- The Chief Executive highlighted that as board membership can fluctuate between periods of election it may be more appropriate to consider incorporating into the model standing orders a %age of Board membership for attendance purposes (which may be subject to change) rather than a fixed number of members.

Members agreed to seek to engage with DEFRA regarding changes to the current Standing Orders to reflect a percentage of Board membership.

MK Flood independent report-

The Chief Executive advised that the Independent Flood Review into the May 2018 Milton Keynes flood event had now been published.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday 1 June 2020

The meeting closed 2:52pm.