

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

## **Board Meeting**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2019 at 2pm at Vale House, Stewartby.**

**PRESENT:** J Scott (Vice Chairman), J Davison, F Firth, R Morris, M Nawaz, J Ream, M Towler, T Turner, M Weeks and T Wootton.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** F C Bowler (Clerk/Chief Executive); J J Oldfield (Director of Operations); R C Easom (Committee Clerk) and N Souter (Accounts Officer).

In the Chairman, Mr McMurdo's absence, the Vice Chairman, Mr Scott, chaired the meeting.

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from D McMurdo, B Huckle, S Hunt, J Mingay, M Robins and J Russell.

### **2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 5 November 2018**

**The minutes of the Board meeting dated 5 November 2018 were approved as an accurate record.**

### **4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2018.**

#### **Bank Mandate**

The Clerk pointed out that following the election of the new Board there would need to be a change to the bank mandate.

**Members agreed that the bank mandate should be updated.**

#### **Member Training – IDB Good Governance Guide - 12 December 2018**

Mr Firth said how worthwhile and interesting he had found the above ADA training session at the Boards' offices on 12 December.

The Clerk said ADA were holding additional workshops on IDB Good Governance at various venues; Peterborough and London being the nearest to the Boards' districts. These were for members who had been unable to attend in December 2018 or those who had attended but wished to explore the subject further. Further information would be emailed to Board members.

## **5 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2019**

**Members noted the Joint Management Committee minutes.**

Discussion took place:

### **Government SuDS Review**

The Clerk said the supplementary planning guidance was still awaited and she would send out an email to members when it was received.

### **Personnel – Engineering Staff**

Mrs Davison asked if there had been any success with the recruitment of the Assistant Engineer/Senior Technician post following the interview on 1 February 2019. The Director of Operations said the applicant had been given a job offer but he decided not to accept it. The Clerk said there were other options which officers were following up.

### **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Bill**

Mr Morris recommended that members did attend the training which was taking place on 26 February 2019, particularly if they have not attended any other GDPR training courses.

## **6 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Director of Operations presented the Review of Development Contributions report. A replacement page was tabled which had a change of wording to the paragraph setting out the increase to the impervious square metre, as follows:

*During 2018/19 the rate has been £5.00 per impervious square metre. The area of the site used to calculate the payment would be the total impervious area plus 10% or the whole site area whichever is smallest. For the year 2019/20 it is believed that **an increase to £5.30 per impervious square metre**, (a 5.9% increase on the previous year), would be appropriate to reflect the annual increase in construction industry materials and labour costs and should provide the required funds for the works described above.*

**Members approved the report and the following recommendations:**

- (i) The general development contribution should be increased to £5.30 per impervious square metre from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019;**
- (ii) The Clerk should be authorized to negotiate appropriate commuted sums from developers when the Board agrees to adopt new works.**

Discussion took place:

Mr Wootton referred to his role of councillor and raised the problem of management companies being set up to deal with SuDS and the assets then not being maintained. He suggested educating local councillors. The Director of Operations said officers were in the process of arranging to have meetings with planning officers in order to work more effectively with them. The Bedford Group's Marston Vale Surface Waters Plan is an excellent model and guide for willing partners but the problem is that it is not enforceable. However, some developers are willing to hand over long term maintenance to the Board. Mr Wootton suggested discounts for developers who pay

development contributions promptly and the Chairman asked if there were fixed rates. The Director of Operations said there were no fixed rates, it would be difficult as sites tend to be different.

Mr Weeks asked if the rates took effect from the start of the financial year and if they were applicable to new applications only. The Director of Operations said the new rates would commence at the start of the financial year and then normally apply to the time the consent application is received. Those charged the impervious square metre rate tend to be the smaller developments. The larger developments, which are subject of legal agreements, can be a number of years in negotiation.

## **7 PROGRESS OF WORKS REPORT 2018/19**

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Works Report comprising the report and A3 plan. He said it had been a good year, weather-wise, there remained works to be finished and contractors were committed to the end of February 2019.

### **Members accepted the Works Progress Report for the period April to December 2018.**

Discussion took place:

Mr Firth said the completed works were looking good and asked about the small areas of carry over work 2017/18 which were marked on the plan. The Director of Operations said these were watercourses in the lower category so not of particular concern and there had been issues regarding access due to crops.

Mr Morris asked how much of the work would be completed by the end of the financial year. The Director of Operations said he expected the vast majority of works would be completed.

Mr Weeks asked about Pix Brook maintenance. The Director of Operations said it had been maintained. The Ivel had not yet been started; there remained quite a lot of flailing which is quite a quick activity, and some mechanical clearing.

Mr Morris asked if the Director of Operations was worried that any works would not be completed. The Director of Operations said the Boards always 'over-programme' to ensure there is continuity of works over the year end and between Board meetings and there was a good balance of the Board's own workforce and contractors.

## **8 WORKS PROGRAMME 2019/20, 2020/21 AND 2021/22 AND WORKS PROGRAMME COMMENTARY**

The Director of Operations presented the Works Programme, including the commentary and the separate document with schedule and map. He said following the elevated maintenance regime of a few years ago, watercourses have generally been maintained more frequently and the vegetation is lighter.

### **Members approved the Works Programme for the year 2019/20.**

Discussion took place:

Mr Wootton commented on the practice of flailing on one bank only saying he disliked it and also that the programme did not say whether it would be one bank only. The Director of Operations said the flailing in the programme is based on 500m of flailing per day. It does, however, depend on obstacles, pony

paddocks, etc and not a straight run. It is an average to base the estimates on. The one bank policy is flexible and the Board aims to balance function and conservation. The job cards will specify whether one or both banks are worked on.

Mr Firth referred to Category 1 watercourses and the wording that they 'are normally maintained annually'. He suggested the programme should state Category 1 watercourses 'should be maintained annually'. The Director of Operations said the Board aims to take a balanced approach and a watercourse may only be inspected if work is not required.

## **9 ESTIMATES**

The Clerk presented the estimates. The Chairman added that the JMC had considered and approved the (i) The Joint – Group Account – Engineering and Administration, Labour on cost and Plant Purchases and Funding.

The Clerk highlighted 'A3-Insurance' and said she was in the process of obtaining quotations from an alternative broker and the estimated figure for insurance may reduce. The Clerk also highlighted 'A12-Computer Equipment/Hardware' stating that new IT equipment was required and it would be a 'one-off' cost and the long term projection would see that cost taken out.

**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:

### **Joint**

#### **Engineering and Administration - Computer Equipment/Hardware**

Mr Morris asked whether the Boards' PCs were currently using Window 7. The Clerk confirmed that they were.

#### **Plant Purchases**

The Chairman asked whether more information had been gleaned from hands on assessment of new plant items. The Director of Operations said there had been a lot of detail to obtain prior to procurement this year. The Chairman said that was good, the information will be taken back to the JMC and the decisions as to whether or not to purchase items will be made.

### **Maintenance Estimates**

Mrs Davison asked whether the EA had started its planned works to carry out blockage removal maintenance along the River Ivel and Ivel Navigation and whether it was the Shefford section. The Director of Operations said they were on the Ivel, in the Ickleford area, working north. He believed they were also planning to work up the Ivel Navigation to Shefford.

Mrs Davison said the lack of maintenance by the EA had been appalling; a whole new channel had been formed and boat owners could not get beyond certain points. The Director of Operations said he suspected the EA would only clear where trees were causing an obstruction in the channel.

### **Occupiers' Rate Fund/General Estimates**

The Clerk presented the general estimates. The estimates had been based on 1.2% increase in rate and special levy income for 2019/20 but no further increase for the following two years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. Some Councils will again see an increase in their special levy due to land in their district moving from agricultural to urban/developed.

The Clerk proposed a rate of 4.0p in the pound, giving rate and special levy income of £956,736.

Discussion took place:

Mr Firth queried whether the consent fees of £50 was enough to cover the work involved. The Clerk said this was a statutory fee set by Defra and was very low, although Defra are currently reviewing the fee. The Clerk added that some consenting for large projects would be carried out under a legal agreement and the Board's actual costs can then be charged.

### **10 TO SET THE DRAINAGE RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20 AND TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SEAL THE RATE**

**Members agreed a 1.2% increase in rate and special levy income for 2019/20 resulting in the rate of 4.00p in the pound and rate and special levy income of £956,736 and authorised the Chairman to sign and seal the rate.**

### **11 TECHNICAL REPORT (INCLUDING SCHEDULE OF CONSENTS) FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2018**

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report. He added that the planning objections enclosed were mainly due to insufficient or conflicting details.

**Members accepted the Technical Report.**

### **12 TO RE-APPOINT THE INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2019/20**

**Members approved the re-appointment of the Internal Auditors, TIAA, to the Board for the 2019/20 financial year.**

### **13 FINANCE REPORT for the period to 31 December 2018**

The Clerk presented the Finance Report which included:

- Receipts and Payments through the Board's individual bank account with Lloyds from 1 April to 31 December 2018;
- Cheque/Direct Debit list;

- Investment and Bank Account Balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018;

The Clerk explained the £60,000 income from the Buckingham and River Ouzel Board was repaid and shown under expenditure.

**Members approved the Finance Report, noting that the final figure in the Receipts and Payments report represented 'Net Surplus' and not 'Net Deficit' funds in Lloyds Bank account for the period April – December 2018: £69,061.**

#### **14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AT THE CHAIRMAN'S DISCRETION**

##### **Board Policy Statement**

The Clerk raised an issue concerning 9.3 of the policy statement. At the Board meeting on 21 May 2018 Mr Russell had queried how gains and losses could be established if there was no initial data. The minute of that Board meeting had stated that members approved the Policy Statement but that the Chairman and Vice Chairman should be consulted on an amendment to 9.3 and members then informed. However, the Clerk said this action had not been carried out due to EA guidelines on reporting gains and losses of biodiversity not yet being received.

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

Mr Wootton asked how much maintenance work the EA had carried out in the Board's area; he did not believe the amount of money paid in precept equated to work carried out by the EA. The Clerk said that a few years ago the EA introduced Local Choices where the Board was able to request the EA carried out maintenance work in areas the Board had chosen. This worked well initially, however, recently the EA has not made Local Choices available.

The Director of Operations said the matter had been raised by the Board's officers at the EA Regional Flood and Coastal Committee with no success, however we are due to attend an EA/IDB liaison meeting where the matter would be raised again.

Mr Towler suggested the Board write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Chairman said the concern about the lack of value for money from the EA needs to be registered.

**It was agreed that the Clerk would draft a letter on behalf of the Chairman, Mr McMurdo, regarding the lack of maintenance carried out by the EA on Main River, which once approved by the Chairman, can then be sent to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.**

**15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 13 May 2019 – Board Meeting**

The meeting closed.