

BUCKINGHAM AND RIVER OUZEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 at 2pm at Vale House, Stewartby

PRESENT: P Hirons (Chairman), V McPake (Vice Chairman), P Bowsher, G Bowyer, A Brown, S Cole, A Dransfield, R Exon, A Gurney, N Hawes, R Haynes, V McPake, N Miles, P Snelling & B Spurr.

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 E Darlington, H J Hunt, D Osborn & D Prosser.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

- Mr Bowsher declared an interest as an employee of The Milton Keynes Parks Trust.
- Mrs McPake declared an interest during the Occupier Rate fund discussion as the Caldecotte Flood Alleviation scheme is within her ward.

3 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 5 November 2019

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 5 November 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway- As stated in the previous minutes the workshops have been held, one in November for Board members and another in December for the EA, LLFA and developers.

Clipstone Park Leighton Buzzard - One member asked for an update on the reservoir, the Director of Operations explained that the Reservoir Engineer Report was distributed by email to all Board members last week.

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

The Chairman presented the minutes which were noted.

Discussion took place:

OxCam- The Chairman asked if anything had come from the workshop. The Chief Executive explained the workshop was relating to Natural Capital Accounting and quantifying the impacts of development on the environment and how this is included in any commuted sum or planning requirements. The group who are looking at this will be producing a report in March, this will be circulated to members.

6 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

The Director of Operations presented the Review of Development Contributions report.

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. However, members also asked that the Chief Executive/Clerk clarify the mechanism of arriving at the percentage increase;**
- (ii) **The Chief Executive/Clerk should be authorized to negotiate appropriate commuted sums from developers when the Board agrees to adopt new works.**

Discussion took place:

It was asked if there is a large extension and increase of impermeable area to a building, which is happening more often now, does the Board put a covenant onto any planning that may be issued. The Director of Operation explained that this has happened at one site in another Boards area however generally this isn't the case. The Chief Executive said this was something which should be explored further,

A member reminded the Board that developments under 10 houses do not attract development contribution although developments of this size do add to the water run off into the Board's watercourse. The Director of Operations explained that although this may be the case developers are required to replicate green-field run-off rates in accordance with national guidance so as not to increase the rate of discharge and if the run off is going into a Board's watercourse they will require the Board's consent and therefore be liable for the fees attached to this process, which if the agreed attenuation rate is greater than greenfield rates then the development contribution would be applicable.

7 PROGRESS OF WORK REPORT FROM APRIL TO DECEMBER 2019

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Work report including the A3 plan showing the completed works in black and blue shows work completed by contractor. As mentioned at the previous meeting progress is slightly behind track due to fuel problems and poor weather conditions; this has particularly affected the flailing and clearing figures. Allowances have been made in the estimates to reflect more carry-over than originally anticipated.

Members accepted the Progress of Work report April – December 2019 and agreed the 50% contribution made towards the cost of works undertaken in partnership with The Parks Trust.

Discussion took place:

The Chairman asked if the expected carry over work could be completed by the end of the year, the Director of Operations explained if weather conditions improved this may be possible.

Members were curious as to why some sections weren't fully completed and had short sections of incomplete works. The Director of Operations explained that this was due to various reasons, including:

- Some areas requiring a long reach excavator
- Different activities being carried out therefor requiring different equipment
- Working with landowners depending on the crop adjacent to the watercourse

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

The Director of Operations presented the Review of Works Programme including the schedule and A3 plan showing the proposed 3 year works programme.

He explained that having invested heavily over the last 5 years to get the watercourses in a good condition, this enables us to go back in with a lighter touch, and therefor has resulted in flailing figures increasing. This has also resulted in less heavy clearing which is more time consuming and involves the workforce operatives being exposed to longer periods of work using the chainsaws.

Members approved the Works Programme 2020/21 and approved the continued partnership working with The Parks Trust.

Discussion took place:

It was questioned how often the Board reviews watercourse categories, it was explained these don't usually change unless a development is built nearby, however if there was an incident then this would be reviewed and schemes would be investigated to see what could be improved. Categories can sometimes be lowered depending on the number of beneficiaries from the work carried out and the opportunities and benefits to conservation that may arise from less intervention.

Members queried why all the Board's watercourse weren't included in the 3-year plan, it was explained that all watercourse have been walked during the recent asset inspections and some deemed not required for work. These will be reviewed annually and added to the programme accordingly.

9 TO REVIEW ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE 2020/21 FINANCIAL YEAR

9 (i) JOINT ESTIMATES

The Principle Accountant presented the estimates of the income and expenditure and reminded members that the JMC had agreed the Group Account estimates at their meeting on 20 January 2020 and explained that the Buckingham & River Ouzel Board contributes y 40% of joint costs.

Joint Budget – Engineering, Finance & Administration – One member raised their concerns with the insurance costs and the allowance for a 5% increase each year, he believed we should be getting a range of competitive quotes from companies who want the business. The Director of Operations explained that it was difficult to obtain numerous

quotations as many insurers don't understand the work we do and therefore won't provide a quotation. The Chief Executive said the current agreement would be considered at renewal

Post meeting note: on further investigation it has been identified that the Boards have previously entered into a 3-year agreement via a joint procurement exercise and framework agreement.

Labour on Cost – Shows a deficit of £40,744 this is mainly due to having one less workforce member, sickness and increased training which has led to an increase in downtime.

9 (ii) CAPITAL AND MAINTENANCE DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Principle Accountant presented the Capital and Maintenance Development Fund/Grant in Aid Works estimates and the Director of Operations highlighted various schemes.

Discussion took place:

It was questioned if the Board's consultancy is put out to tender as the member had noticed PBA/Stantec were used on several occasions. The Director of Operations explained PBA were our preferred supplier due to the long-term relationship meaning they have a greater understanding of the Board's catchment area and the work we conduct. The Auditor raised the query of how we procure them as our preferred supplier and recommended we tested the market for competitiveness. Previously when having used other consultants we were disappointed with their results and this therefore resulted in the Board being able to demonstrate the good quality and acceptable rates of continuing to use PBA.

Broughton Brook/Kingston Weir – officers advised of a correction in the spreadsheet, this should show a figure is 'met from revenue'. A member also questioned why the ownership and responsibility of the weir remains undetermined, the Director of Operations explained that this has been investigated and unfortunately no outcome was achieved.

9 (iii) MAINTENANCE ESTIMATES

The Director of Operations presented the Engineering Commentary and maintenance estimates.

Compensation – It was suggested the landowner could be provided with grass/seed mix and asked to reinstate the bank/byelaw following dredging works as an alternative to sending a workforce member and machine to carry out the work. The Director of Operations explained this would have to be done on a case by case basis as some landowners may find this an acceptable solution although others may wish to seek a payment to cover their costs in relation to diesel and labour as an example. He also reminded members that the Board have no obligation to pay compensation.

Byelaws- Members questioned why the byelaws were still awaited from DEFRA. The Chief Executive explained 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.

9 (iv) OCCUPIERS' RATE FUND/GENERAL ESTIMATES

The Principle Accountant presented the General Estimates and said the estimates were based on a small increase of 1% in rate and special level income for 2020/21 which allows us to maintain the 1x rate in Special Levy income. Members were reminded that last year it increased by 2%.

To be able to afford all estimated expenditure and maintain balances the Accountant was recommending a rate of 4.95p in the pound providing £693,239 rate and special levy income and working balances at the yearend of £764,575.

Discussion took place, members raised the following points:

- Why there was the need for another increase, as previously for many years the rate was held at 4.8 pence in the pound. The Accountant explained that due to the increased costs relating to the Caldecotte scheme the increases is needed to allow the Board to the maintain the level of Occupiers Rate Fund.
- It pointed out to that within the report it was suggested a 1% increase is applied to the next 3 years. As a 3% increase has been identified over this period, not applying a 1% increase may I make this more difficult in the longer term.
- The importance of high standards of work was highlighted and reminded members they earlier questioned why some watercourse weren't within the 3 year programme – which ultimately comes down to the work being financed and the resources in place to continue the level of work being completed.

The Chairman explained the increase was also to ensure an adequate level of reserves is maintained fund potential future capital schemes and in future a greater increase may be required in order to maintain this.

Members voted on the following motion:

It was agreed the Rate in the Pound for the forthcoming year remain unchanged at 4.9 pence in the pound.

A majority of members voted in favour.

The motion was, therefore, carried.

Members approved:

- (i) Joint – Group Account – Engineering, Finance and Administration, Labour on cost and Plant Purchases and Funding;**
- (ii) Capital and Maintenance Development Fund; Capital Works – Grant in Aid Capital Programme Funding;**
- (iii) Maintenance Estimates;**
- (iv) Occupiers' Rate Fund/General Estimates.**

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

Members agreed a zero percent increase in rate and special levy income for 2020/21 resulting in a rate of 4.9 pence in the pound and rate and special levy income of £686,232 and authorised the Chairman to seal the rate.

11 TECHNICAL REPORT (INC. SCHEDULE OF CONSENTS) – OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2019

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report.

Members approved the Technical Report and Schedule of Consents – October to December 2019.

Discussion took place:

Eaton Leys- It was questioned why the Board had accepted 7 meters of unrestricted access rather than the 9-meter byelaw. The Director of Operations explained that this was due to it being a smaller watercourse and the area of development is set at the back of the byelaw strip therefor maintenance would still be possible. This will be subject to the Boards normal conditions and requirements

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.

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.

Members requested that in future more detail is provided when re-appointing an internal auditor.

13 FINANCE REPORT 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 31st 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

Retirement gifts - It was suggested by Board Members that the remaining money from the recent retirement collection be used to purchase a gift for the former Office Manager.

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

Electronic Board Papers-

The Chief Executive advised members that Bedfordshire and River Ivel have now agreed to the issuing of Board papers electronically for business efficiency and to reduce the businesses carbon footprint. It was asked if members could consider this approach and be brought to the next meeting for discussion and decision.

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.

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 made the first agenda item. Members felt this would be beneficial and agreed to his proposal.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Board meeting – Tuesday 12th May 2020

The meeting closed at 4:15pm.