

BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 16 November 2020 at 2pm held remotely via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT: D McMurdo (Chairman), J Scott (Vice Chairman), A Brown, J Davison, S Dixon, F Firth, D Hodgson, S Jarvis, M Nawaz, T Turner and T Wootton.

IN ATTENDANCE: B Agass (Chief Executive & Clerk of the Boards), J Oldfield (Director of Operations), N Souter (Accountant), A Smith (Committee Clerk), T Skelding (Principal Engineer) and T Irwin (Apprentice Engineer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from B Huckle, C McHugh, J Ream, M Robins, J Russell, J Sampson and B Spurr.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Mr Dixon declared an interest as a ward member for Stotfold during the discussion regarding Pix Brook, Catchment Study.

3 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2020

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 1 June 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

5 MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY BOARD MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 23 September 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

7 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2020

The Chairman presented the unconfirmed minutes which were noted.

8 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT 2020/21

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Works report, referring members to the A3 plan showing works programmed, in progress and completed. He explained the Board were making good progress with the

programme for this stage in the year and particularly due to the challenges faced by the workforce and appointed contractors due to COVID.

Members accepted the Works Progress Report.

9 TECHNICAL REPORT

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report and updated members on a number of legal agreements taking place in the west of Bedford Growth Area. He informed members the Board's officer were pursuing our solicitors for an update.

Discussion took place:

Stewartby Park- The Chairman expressed his frustration with the length of time taken to resolve the agreement in relation to Stewartby Park. A number of requests for an update have been sent to the solicitors but a response had not been received at the time of the meeting. The Chairman reassured members officers would continue to expedite the agreements with the Board solicitors.

Pix Brook Catchment Study – One member reiterated his appreciation for the work being carried out in this area and requested a time scale for the work to be completed. The member was conscious of the ongoing development within Central Bedfordshire. The Director of Operations added this was to be progressed by a number of parties as the site crosses county boundaries and although the study has taken longer than originally envisaged, continuous progress is being made.

The member asked the Director of Operations if there was anything he could do as a ward member to progress the project. The Director of Operations asked the member to continue to support the councils flood risk officer to keep the momentum going.

The Chairman requested a working group be formed to allow relevant members from Central Bedfordshire Council and North Hertfordshire Council to come together to discuss the matter and progress the project.

Principal Engineer, Trevor Skelding joined the meeting at the request of the Chairman to aid discussions regarding Pix Brook, Standalone Farm Reservoir.

Pix Brook, Standalone Farm Reservoir- The principal engineer provided members with an update to the fault with the level sensors and PLC control system. He explained this is still to be resolved however to avoid the risk of the gates failing to respond to rising water levels, the gates have been manually fully raised and locked in position. This means that the only flow that can pass the reservoir is restricted to the 'letterbox' culvert until the reservoir is full and flows over the top of the raised gates.

He explained this is being monitored closely by the Board's officers, who are also in discussions with the Reservoir Engineer and the Consulting Engineers to assess the feasibility for further improvements.

One member thanked the Principal Engineer for providing the update and questioned if the gates are permanently raised and operating effectively, why does this need to change? And if it does need changing what is the detrimental effect of it being fully raised all the time? The Principal Engineer explained this operation went back over 20 years when the gates were inherited by the Board and is therefore an inherited historical operation not one decided by the Board's officers.

There have been several attempts made in order to make the gates work correctly on the basis that the reservoir would store a certain amount of water in the lake and allow so much through the gates. Over time

there have become mechanical and electrical issues with its operation. The Board is under no requirement to hold a certain amount of water back for a specific event. With the gates in an upright position, they are going to hold back the storage and only the letterbox amount being allowed through. The Principal Engineer added, in his opinion, during the time he has seen the gates operate, he feels they would be more effective remaining in the upright position.

The Director of Operations added the reason the gates were installed was to optimise how the reservoir is used. With water passing through / over the gates and when slowly raised in increments, they can hold the designed capacity during a 1 in 100-year event. However, with the gates fully raised the reservoir will fill slightly quicker than this, this therefor means there is a slightly lesser ultimate standard and better protection for the more frequent rainfall event. Although if a 1 in 100-year event was to occur the reservoir would be less effective as it would already be full.

Members agreed the temporary solution of leaving the gates fully raised appears to be currently working. It was questioned if this is the permanent solution the Board are suggesting?

One member also felt the gates should be restored to allow the gates to operate as intended and not left in the current state simply because a 1 in 100-year event hasn't taken place.

The Chairman agreed the gates are not currently operating as intended to and this is there for an interim solution, that provides to safety. He advised members this discussion would continue at the working group.

Post meeting note- Following an engineer visit to carry out extensive works on the 10 December 2020 a further issue in relation to the level sensors and PLC control system has been established. The gates remain in a fully raised and locked position.

Kings Ditch, Bedford – The Chairman updated members on the project and advised, himself and officers met with the Programme Manager from Stantec recently to discuss the project drawings and initial draft risk assessments. He credited the work of the of the Programme Manager and the Board's officers involved with the project. The project drawing and draft risk assessment were appended for members information.

The Chairman added when tenders were issued earlier on this year, a full and formal tender process was carried out in accordance with the Board's financial regulations. Four interested parties were issued tender documentation, of which three responded. These were appraised and the Board identified a preferred tenderer. The Boards approval was sought to progress the project by appointing the preferred tenderer.

Members questioned if the additional costs to the project are being funded by the existing contributors? The Chairman explained the Board approved an increased total project cost of £393K at the September Board meeting including contributions from partners. As a result of the tender process this has increased slightly.

The Chief Executive added contributions from other partners are currently fixed at £200K in total once formal confirmation has been received. This leaves the remaining cost to be met by the Board. As the project progresses these estimated figures will be refined.

Members were reminded of the figures approved at the September Board:

Total Expenditure / Cost Estimate	393,000
Additional Budget Cost Expenditure from Tender Returns advised post 10th July 2020	28,000
Revised Total Cost Estimate	421,000
Likely External Income Contributions	-200,000
Total Estimated Board Contribution	221,000
Board Contributions Approved up to Feb 2020	-202,035
Estimated additional Board Contribution	18,965

One member asked for clarification in relation to risk No. 8 on the draft risk assessment – “Electric pumps could pollute the UKPN supply network should excessive harmonics be generated.” The Director of Operations explained this was due to the nature of the pump switching on an off possibly with great frequency.

Members voted to progress and deliver the Kings Ditch project by appointing the preferred tenderer following the outcome of the tender process. (Mrs J Davison abstained from voting).

Planning Applications- One member questioned why planning application objections referred to a 9m byelaw when in other areas of the paper a 7m byelaw is referred to.

The Director of Operations explained the existing byelaws which are approved by the minister, state 7m byelaw distance. At the request of DEFRA the Board, reviewed, advertised and updated the byelaws in 2018 and opted for a 9m byelaw to match the Buckinghamshire and River Ouzel IDB and Alconbury and Ellington IDB byelaws.

The Board are yet to receive approval from the minister and have been informed this delay is due to BREXIT and COVID. At the ADA conference last week, officers raised concerns and asked for clarification when ministerial approval would be obtained. The DEFRA representative advised this would be issued 'soon'.

The Board agreed for the Chairman to write to the minister to chase approval.

Trevor Skelding left the meeting.

10 STAFFING & RESOURCES

The Chief Executive presented the Staffing and Resources report which contained measures being taken by the Board's officers to manage the impact of the pandemic and to look to develop Covid-Secure working practices. Measures continue to be reviewed to reflect Government guidelines / requirements as they are updated and amended. Current working arrangements were detailed to members.

It was added that officers are currently looking at how the Board utilises technology. Many processes as a result of COVID have been digitised to support remote working which has highlighted the need for additional investment to assist with digitising process and this would be included in February estimates for consideration.

Members were reminded that due to the ongoing situation with Covid 19 the Risk Management Workshop is being held remotely in November. An invitation to participate in the workshop via Microsoft Teams on 25th November 2020 has been sent to all members.

Members accepted the Staffing & Resources report.

Discussion took place: The Chief Executive was advised Central Bedfordshire councilors may be unable to attend the risk management workshop due to a development management committee meeting being held. Members were advised an additional session could be held for Board members who are unable to attend the workshop.

11 EXTERNAL AUDIT

The Chief Executive presented the External Audit report for the financial year 2019/20 and reported that an unqualified opinion had been given.

Members noted the External Audit Report.

12 TO APPROVE THE REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Chief Executive presented the Financial Regulations which had been updated to enable the timely approval of orders and payment of goods and services the financial regulations should identify that payments and orders for goods and services of up to and exceeding £5,000 may be authorised by either the Responsible Finance Officer or the Chief Executive.

The changes (shown in red) had been discussed and approved by the JMC.

Members approved the updated Financial Regulations with changes outlined.

13 FINANCE REPORT for the period 1 April to 30 September 2020

The Accountant presented the Finance Report which included:

- a) Receipts and payments through the Board's individual bank account with Lloyds from 1 April – 30 September 2020;
- b) Cheque list for 2020/21;
- c) Investment and Bank accounts balances as at 30th September 2020
- d) Income and Expenditure Account for the period ending 30th September 2020.

Members approved the Finance report for period 1 April to 30 September 2020.

14 CONSULTATIONS, WORK UPDATES, IDB NEWS

The Chief Executive presented the Consultations, Work Update and IDB news report. Members were advised the ADA Conference was held remotely on 11th November 2020 and a progress update report from David Thomas ADA representative on WRE Board was enclosed for members information.

Members accepted the Consultations, Work Update and IDB news report.

Discussion took place:

Members praised the co-operation of WRE however felt the engagement with stakeholders required some improvement. Although the group brings together partners and organisations, the Stratgic Advisory group

contains a large number of participants, which often proves challenging when trying to truly effectively manage and contribute. The Board will have opportunity to provide feedback through ADA when looking to review its membership to the strategic advisory group.

15 SUGGESTED BOARD MEETING DATES

These were shown to members and would be circulated following the meeting.

Date	Day	Time
8 February 2021	Monday	2pm
7 June 2021	Monday	2pm
8 November 2021	Monday	2pm

Members noted the proposed meeting dates.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING – 8 February 2021

The meeting closed at 3:23pm.