

ALCONBURY AND ELLINGTON INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021, 10am held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT: H Raby (Chairman); K Baker, M G Baker, B Chapman, A Lensen, E A Ruston, J Sewell, D M Tysoe and G Warrener.

IN ATTENDANCE: B Agass (Chief Executive & Clerk of the Boards), J Oldfield (Director of Operations), N Souter (Principal Accountant), A Smith (Committee Clerk) and P Lovesey (Senior Operations Engineer).

Action

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE

Apologies for absence were received from I Gardener.

2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

A Lensen declared an interest during the discussion regarding disposal of spoil compensation from 2019/20 programme and refrained from participating in discussion.

M Baker declared an interest during the December 2020 flood discussion, his property was flooded.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign.

HR

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No matters arising from the minutes.

5 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Operations presented the Works Progress Report together with an A3 plan showing works completed in black.

Members accepted the Works Progress Report for the period April to December 2020.

The Director of Operations presented the proposed Works Programme together with an A3 plan showing the maintenance works proposed.

The Board's officers have prepared the three-year programme based on the same principles of the 2020/21 plan where all watercourses are to be flailed where access permits. In addition, following inspection, works have been tailored to accommodate extra necessary work activities such as weed cutting, clearing and dredging.

The Board's officers have visited site to assess the queries raised by Members during the November 2020 Board meeting.

Members were provided with information regarding the additional works identified by officers in relation to watercourse 11a and 11_2 -

Watercourse 11A next to A1307 is heavily silted because there is a steep gradient from the sewage works until it runs parallel to the road, where the gradient is flatter, resulting in a concentration of siltation. There are 3 culverts under the dual carriageway, one low-flow bottom culvert (which is 80% full) and two high-flow round culverts on top. The watercourse has been included in 2021/22 for dredging. The Board could also cleanse the silted pipe by jetting to improve conveyance at an additional budget estimate of £1500.

Watercourse 11_2 along Low Road currently runs to the West of Low Road and operates to serve the Anglian Water Outfall. The Board believe the Watercourse to the East was altered by Highways England with the dualling of the A1307. The watercourse is in good condition apart from a couple of fallen willows. Works could be completed on approximately 360 metres on the East side of Low Road at an estimated budget of £1000.

Members approved the additional works identified above.

Members approved the Works Programme 2021/22.

Request for work, Spaldwick

The Director of Operations presented the following request for works at Spaldwick, on a watercourse in the Drainage District but not one normally maintained by the Board. Members were advised-

The watercourse collects water from the south of the A14, conveys it to the channel system near to the slip-road off the A14 adjacent to Willow House and Spaldwick Service Station.

The watercourse is 795m and required clearing and dredging at an estimate of £8,000.

Members requested additional information and further consultation with the Chairman in relation to works along the watercourse at Spaldwick.

JO / PL

Post meeting note- Senior Operations Engineer is currently in discussions with Highways to discuss proposals, the outcome will be reported to a future meeting.

PL

Disposal of spoil compensation from 2019/20 programme

The Director of Operations advised members of a claim for compensation received by the Board in relations to the disposal of spoil from the 2019/20 programme.

As previously reported, the maintenance works at Great Stukeley on watercourse 11 included clearing that had to be removed away from watercourse for burning due to a large stack of straw bales adjacent to the watercourse. This resulted in the operations activities extending further out onto the adjacent land than normal, causing some damage due to the wet ground condition. Whilst the Land Drainage Act Section 15 permits disposal of arisings without making payment, the Board does normally consider compensation payments for exceptional cases.

Action

The Board's officers, in consultation with the farmer, have calculated that the affected area was approximately 0.57 Ha of winter rape and using the John Nix guidebook have estimated compensation.

Members approved this as a without prejudice compensation payment.

JO / NS

Discussion took place:

Request for work, Spaldwick

The Chairman added the Board had previously carried out work along watercourses in Spaldwick, although not for a number of years. One member highlighted this area was flooded during the December 2020 floods.

It was questioned why this work wasn't being undertaken by the landowner under riparian responsibilities? And subsequently if this work is undertaken, the Board may see an increase in requests for works of a similar nature. The Director of Operations added, historically the Board has considered request for works of this nature, assessed by officers on a case-by-case basis and reviewed by Members for using the Board's Permissive powers to maintain the existing infrastructure for the benefit of the drainage district.

The Senior Operations Engineer added the request came from the owner who has offered to clear and remove the trees personally. The Director of Operations reassured member the additional works are affordable.

Members questioned if a contribution could be taken from the local council and the landowner benefiting from the work? The Director of Operations advised the District Council pay the Board a Special Levy and therefore public body partnerships should be encouraged. It was there for suggested that the Board should undertake the open section of watercourse and the highways undertake the section within the highway boundary as a good example of partnership working.

Members felt moving forward as more requests of this nature are received, a mechanism is needed to help determine, assess and prioritise the works as well as negotiate a contribution. The Chairman requested this is further investigated and proposals brought back to the Board for discussion and approval.

JO / PL

Members accepted the Works Progress Report.

6 TECHNICAL REPORT

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report-

Development Adjacent to Laws Crescent, Brampton

A recent site visits by the Board's officers have confirmed that Bellway Homes still have taken no action to rectify the breaches of consent regarding the footpath and surface water outfall structures. The Board's solicitors have been instructed to serve a formal enforcement notice on Bellway Homes for them to take action on these byelaw breaches. The notice is currently being drafted and will be issued soon.

Conservation and Biodiversity

The Board's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is planned to be updated in 2021/22 by the Board's retained consultant ecologist, in accordance with the new ADA guidelines. The BAP will be drafted in consultation with Members, as the new BAP will be more interactive than the 2010 version, as it is going to require annual reporting and deliverable outcomes. A budget of £3,000 has

been included to draft the BAP and an additional £2,000 for initial implementation.

The Board's consultant ecologist continues to advise and support the Board about the Environment Bill 2020, principally the change in duty from 'to conserve' to 'to conserve and enhance' the natural environment, as well as likely new reporting and recording measures. An indicative annual budget of £5,000 has been included for the proposed 'enhancement' element.

The Director of Operations advised members, the Boards public sector corporation agreement with the Environment Agency, which allows partnership working, is due to expire this Summer. In previous years work has been carried out by the Board along Brampton Brook under this agreement. Member's consideration will be sought to determine if this should be renewed for the next 5 years at the next Board meeting.

JO

December 2020 Floods

The Board undertook post flood trash screen inspections and clearance. Officers will support Flood Risk Management partners as necessary with any flood review 'section 19' investigations and other future reviews and studies.

It was added that the district has seen an increased amount of rainfall on an already saturated catchment. The LLFA, Cambridgeshire County Council, has begun 'Section 19' investigations into the flooding over the Christmas period and the Boards Senior Operations Engineer has been involved in discussions and is assisting with the local flood reviews currently being carried out. The Board awaits the recommendations provided as a result of the reviews. The Director of Operations welcomed comments and advised these would be fed back to the LLFA as part of their ongoing review.

Discussion took place-

It was questioned why a greater expanse of flooding occurred during the December 2020 floods than those of the Easter 1998 floods however an inch less rain fell on the catchment. Members raised frustration with the lack of maintenance being carried out along the main river which is restricting in-channel conveyance and storage and contributing to the flood levels.

Members were informed that the District council is holding an overview and scrutiny meeting to discuss the December 2020 flooding. Members of the public as well as partner agencies such as the Environment Agency and IDB's will be invited to attend.

HDC

One member requested that Easton be included within the flood review, the Director of Operations advised he would ask the LLFA speak directly to Easton Parish Council to obtain all the relevant information required. The member invited the Senior Operations Engineer to meet with the Parish Council following the flood event to provide advice.

JO

Members accepted the Technical Report.

7 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS 2021/2022

The Director of Operations presented the report. He added that the policy was consistent with the Bedfordshire & River Ivel and the Buckingham & River Ouzel Boards.

Members approved the report and the following recommendations:

- (i) **The general development contribution should be increased to £5.50 per impervious square metre from 1st April 2021;**
- (ii) **The Clerk should be authorized to negotiate appropriate commuted sums from developers when the Board agrees to adopt new works.**

8 REVIEW OF ESTIMATES OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE, TO SET THE DRAINAGE RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/2022 AND TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SEAL THE RATE

Income from Rates and Special Levies

The Principal Accountant presented the General Estimates for 2021/22 which had been based on a 0% increase in rate and special levy income for 2021/2022 with no further change in the following two years.

Environment Agency Precept

The Chief Executive added the Environment Agency has confirmed a 0% increase in precept for the forthcoming year. Allowance has also been made for a 5% increase in each of the following two years.

General Estimates

The Principal Accountant presented the General Estimates forecast for the current year showing a revised estimate for the Occupiers Rate Fund Balance at £179,556 compared to the original estimate of £223,580. This increase in cost is due to the increased maintenance work and carry over, and the additional incurred costs relating to the site at Brampton.

Maintenance Estimates

The Principal Accountant presented the Maintenance Estimates showing a revised estimate of £128,387 which includes cost of all watercourses being flailed based on if a higher rate contractor was to be awarded any future work. Members were advised this would draw down on the Board's reserves and a rate increase may need to be considered at this point.

The Chairman highlighted the significant increased costs the Board has faced in relation to Dredging during the current year due to the work undertaken along Watercourse 5 in Brampton. The Director of Operations reminded members of the de-silting works between West End and Park Road was undertaken by ADC Drainage Ltd. between mid-August and mid-September 2020. The works took significantly longer than originally planned due to bank stability and debris problems. More than 150 tonnes of silt was removed using a suction dredger lorry, which de-water the material to minimize waste, before it being disposed of at Buckden landfill as non-hazardous waste. This method of maintenance in an urban environment proved to be successful on an essential watercourse within the Board's network.

The Principal Accountant also advised the Estimates include a cost to upgrade the current telemetry system.

The Board agreed to a zero-percentage increase in the rate for the financial year 2021/22 of 3.95 pence in the pound of Annual Value giving a rate and special levy income of £91,221 and authorised the Chairman to sign and seal the rate subsequent to the meeting.

Discussion took place and members questioned the following-

Watercourse 5, Brampton-

- How often is work of a similar nature anticipated to be carried out? The Director of Operations advised work of a similar nature was carried out around 10 years ago and would suggest a 10-year cycle would be prudent however community engagement is required with the riparian owners as some are unaware of their responsibilities and consents required to carry out the remedial work.
- Why does the silt need to be disposed of at landfill and therefore incurring increased costs? The Director of Operations advised due to the location of the watercourse silt spreading isn't a viable option. In previous years the silt has been transported to a nearby watercourse in a local field under agreement with the local farmer however the silt contains a large amount of urban debris and therefore meant landfill disposal was the preferred option.
- Are the access issues faced along Watercourse 5 a result of large scale developers encroaching on the Board byelaw strip? Members were advised the houses and gardens which are adjacent to the watercourse have been built for many decades.

Dredging & Clearing-

- Does the Board anticipate carrying out less dredging and clearing in future years as flailing is programmed along all watercourses? The Director of Operations advised the Board has invested heavily over the last few years to achieve good order, and if maintained through flailing with vegetation growth minimised, the Board forecasts less dredging and clearing being required.

9 FINANCE REPORT for period 1 April to 31 December 2020

The Principal Accountant presented the Finance Report which included:

- Receipts and Payments through the Board's individual Bank Accounts with NatWest;
- Cheque list and
- Investment and bank account balances

Receipts and Payments-

The Principal Accountant detailed the net movement in the period leaving a net surplus of funds of £64,371.

Investment and bank account balances-

The Principal Accountant advised the Board held balances of £292,669 at 31st December 2020.

The Finance Report was approved.

10 TO RE-APPOINT THE INTERNAL AUDITOR 2021/22

The Chief Executive advised members TIAA were appointed in 2018 as the Board Internal Auditors after completion of a tender process for a period of 4 years with the option of a further two years.

Members approved the re-appointment, TIAA as internal Auditors, to the Board for the financial year 2021/22.

11 TO APPROVE THE RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY & STRATEGY

The Chief Executive presented the report and revised risk management policy which follows the recent risk management workshop held by the Group and reflects current circumstances.

1. Introduction

The Bedford Group has an agreed Risk Strategy and Policy. The policy mirrors the Association of Drainage Authorities(ADA) model IDB Policy which has been widely adopted by IDB's providing consistency and identifies common overarching aims across the sector.

In delivering its functions the Group looks to meet its environmental obligations and commitments and seek opportunities to enhance the environment.

The Group supports the national aims and objectives for the management of flood risk and water levels as outlined in the National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England 2011 (the National Strategy) to ensure the risk of flooding and coastal erosion is properly managed in a co-ordinated way and to the 5 key policy statements/objectives produced by ADA. The Group has confirmed previously that objectives and approach will be consistent with these.

The Group has 3 specific stated objectives to:

- *Provide and maintain an arterial surface water drainage system that is managed to achieve sustainable standards of flood protection.*
- *Conserve and enhance the environment whenever practical ensuring there is no net loss of biodiversity.*
- *Ensure that the Boards in the Bedford Group comply with current UK and EU Legislation.*

2. Context

The Bedford group currently has arrangements in place to manage and monitor risks that may impact on the delivery of objectives. recognises its responsibility for good governance, local accountability, and financial security, achieving value for money from its operations. As an independent public body, the Group is committed to the pursuit of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

An internal audit report in 2019 recommended that whilst a complete rewrite was not required a review of the Group Risk Management Strategy and Policy should be undertaken to update the policy to reflect current circumstances.

To assist with the review a workshop for members and teams facilitated by the Group's Internal Auditor was held remotely in November 2020. The workshop covered a range of areas including:

- *The need for clear organisational objectives*
- *Causes that may trigger a risk.*
- *Identifying genuine risks and the effect of risks.*
- *Risk management controls*
- *Appetite for risk in various circumstances*
- *Dynamic risk assessment and management*

Member feedback indicated that they found the workshop helpful in stimulating debate and contributions. A key topic of discussion during the workshop was that whilst the 5 overarching ADA policy statements outline key aims of the organisation, they are broad statements. Ideally objectives and actions to achieve objectives should be:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Timely

3. Current Approach.

The Group seeks to adopt a pro- active approach to risk management; key risks are identified, and mitigation actions agreed and monitored Risks that could impact on the delivery of objectives are discussed at Board meetings together with lessons learned.

The Strategic Risk Register is formally reviewed annually by members; however, risks can change and fluctuate regularly and there is a need to be agile and responsive to emerging causes of risk which can occur at any time within the business planning cycle.

Whilst risk management is visible and integrated into the culture of the organisation it is appropriate to review objectives from time to time to ensure they remain consistent with the aims of the organisation.

To effectively measure progress on achieving key organisational priorities, objectives need to be clear and measurable, provide focus and clarity, are realistic and provide a timescale for achievement.

4. Future management and monitoring of risk.

Causes of and issues associated with risk are managed a daily basis Whilst this is not formally documented it is undertaken regularly as an integral component of managing organisational activity. This is often referred to as dynamic risk assessment as by their very nature, the status of specific risks can change as risks are mitigated, transferred or removed.

To strengthen the current approach more regular reporting and evaluation of risks could be considered. Adopting a more dynamic approach can help to identify and agree the level of risk that members are prepared to accept in relation to various service delivery activities and priorities, agree appropriate mitigation measures and monitor residual risks.

This approach will enable the reporting of both strategic and relevant operational risk management on regular basis with analysis, management and monitoring of actions by officers can be escalated when appropriate at scheduled Board meetings.

5. Conclusion

To help further integrate risk management into service delivery regular risk management updates should be considered and incorporated as regular item on Board meetings alongside the annual review of the strategic risk register. This will aid effective reporting / monitoring of executive intelligence, where appropriate on some of the key risks facing individual Boards.

It should also be recognised that understanding the appetite for risk appetite', how the organisation "thinks about risk' will be different depending on the context of corporate impact and sensitivity.

Even with good risk management and best endeavours – things can go wrong. When this does happen, it is important to encourage a supportive culture where blame is not attributed but that a culture of a learning from mistakes and continuous improvement is adopted.

Members agreed the following-

- a. **Approved the updated Risk Management Policy**
- b. **Introduce regular reporting of relevant key dynamic risk issues to Individual Board meetings as appropriate.**
- c. **Agreed to undertake a review of the current objectives to develop SMART objectives and relevant actions.**

BA

12 UPDATE ON CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT

The Chairman updated Board members on the outcome of recent Joint Management Committee deliberations regarding approaches to the recruitment of Clerk and Chief Executive following the resignation of the current Chief Executive.

The Chairman advised that as the Alconbury and Ellington Board representative of the Joint management Committee (JMC) whose remit includes staffing and HR matters he had attended and contributed to the JMC meetings that had taken place to consider options available and that it had been agreed that an interim solution should be instigated in the first instance to enable a review of longer-term options.

Members of all three boards had also received communications from the Chairman of JMC to provide updates on this matter and the approach to be adopted.

The Chairman also advised that the JMC Committee had met the day before the A&E meeting and had agreed proposals to initially enter into interim arrangements with another group of IDB's known collectively as the Water Management Alliance for the provision of interim Clerk and Chief Executive services for a period of up to 12 months with a six month review.

A discussion took place:

One member asked for further information regarding options appraisal and the consideration of an interim post solely for the Bedford Group.

He was advised that a number of options had been assessed and the conclusion had been reached that the provision of an interim arrangement with previous experience from within the IDB sector would be beneficial.

After discussion members noted the update and confirmed their agreement to enter into an arrangement with the Water Management Alliance (WMA) for the provision of services including Interim Clerk and Chief Executive for a period of up to 12 months (with a six month review), and that Phil Camamile, an officer of Kings Lynn Internal Drainage Board (a constituent member of the WMA) will be appointed to assume the duties of Clerk and Chief Executive on an interim basis under this arrangement and

RESOLVED that under section 11(5) of the Land Drainage Act 1991 and section 13(4) and (9) of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010:-

- 1. The Bedford Group of Drainage Boards and its constituent Boards (the Bedford Boards) enter into an agreement for up to 12 months with a 6**

months review with Kings Lynn Internal Drainage Board (Kings Lynn) for the provision of the services of an interim Clerk and Chief Executive and such other professional, technical and administrative services as may be necessary for the support of such interim Clerk and Chief Executive, to include the secondment of staff;

2. Staff undertaking functions or services for the Bedford Boards under such an agreement shall remain in the employment of Kings Lynn but may also undertake functions or services for Kings Lynn and constituent boards of the Water Management Alliance;
3. Phillip Camamile be designated the proper officer and Clerk and Chief Executive of the Bedford Boards for the period of the agreement.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Vacancies on the Board-

The Chairman highlighted there are vacancies currently available on the Board and would like to see these filled, members were in agreement. Options for Co-option or advertising a casual vacancy were discussed. The Chief Executive also advised Huntingdonshire District Council did not currently take up the full complement of representation and agreed some years ago that 2 representatives would be nominated as appointed representatives of the Council.

Cllr Tysoe offered to speak with members at the council regarding vacancies on the Board, he felt in light of recent flood events it may be appropriate to review the level of representation.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Tysoe and welcomed any suggestions of suitable candidates for co-option.

Meeting start time-

A member requested at the previous meeting if meetings could start at 9am as opposed to the usual 10am start.

Members agreed the change to the meeting start time, all meetings will now begin at 9am.

AS

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 27 May 2021 *(amended post meeting in consultation with the Chairman to enable the attendance of the Interim Chief executive. The revised date will be circulated to committee members for clarification.*

The meeting closed at 12:40am.