

# BUCKINGHAM AND RIVER OUZEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021, 2pm held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

**PRESENT:** P Hiron (Chairman), V McPake (Vice Chairman), P Bowsher, G Bowyer, A Brown, S Dixon, A Dransfield, R Exon, N Hawes, R Haynes, N Miles, G Perham, M Petchy, P Snelling & B Spurr.

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

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** D McMurdo – JMC & Bedfordshire and River Ivel Chairman

### Action

#### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

#### 2 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Mrs McPake declared an interest during the Capital and Maintenance Development fund discussion as the Caldecotte Flood Risk Management scheme is within her ward.

#### 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2020

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The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign.

#### 4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No matters arising from the minutes.

#### 5 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2021

The Chairman presented the minutes which were noted.

#### 6 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Operations presented the Works Progress Report together with an A3 plan showing works in black having been completed by the Board's workforce, black and white in progress and the watercourses in blue having been completed by contractors with blue and white in progress.

He added the Board has faced a challenging year with COVID restrictions and saturated ground conditions during the autumn and winter; therefor asking members to note the Weed Cutting progress is lower than expected.

Members were also asked to note-

*The Board carry out an average of 70 kilometres of spraying each year. The Board's officers have noted a trend regarding the effectiveness of Roundup (glyphosate), which is the only product approved for use for aquatic vegetation. It took two years of treatment for the weed growth to be reduced such that the centre of the watercourse remained free flowing with water, with a further couple*

*of years of effective control from annual repeat treatment. However, after that Roundup spraying appears to be less effective and weed growth returns even with more treatment. Therefore, to keep watercourses clear of vegetation and keep the risk of blockages on structures to a minimum, the use of Roundup will be phased with more machine works. This is likely to result in a higher maintenance cost in future years.*

Discussion took place-

One member felt it would be beneficial to the Board to promote the work being done during the recent flood event and highlight the partnership work taking place. They felt the Board's involvement isn't currently being recognised. The Director of Operations agreed more could be done to promote the work of the Board.

**JO**

It was questioned if the progress of weed cutting had been impacted as a result of poor ground conditions or if resources had been diverted to deal with flood incidents? It was explained to members this maintenance work had been impacted by both these factors. A supplementary question was raised regarding the impact of work carried over to future years maintenance, the Director of Operations advised a small amount of carry over occurs each year due to over-programming however highlighted extra contractors have been employed to seek to minimise the impacts on the programme.

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

## **7 WORKS PROGRAMME 2021/22, 2022/23, AND 2023/24 COMMENTARY**

The Director of Operations presented the proposed Works Programme together with an A3 plan showing the maintenance identifying the proposed watercourse indicative maintenance programme for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. Members were reminded the three-year plan is established to aid future financial planning both internally and for flood risk partners and drainage ratepayers.

**Discussion took place-**

### **Trash Screen Inspection Regime and Emergency Works-**

A member questioned how often the list is updated? And subsequently how does a structure/location qualify? The Board were informed that this regime is reviewed annually and amended when a new asset is adopted, or a new known hotspot is identified.

Another member questioned why the Board undertake inspections on a number of Anglian Water assets, it was detailed that the Board carry out this work under its permissive powers to ensure the system remains in good working order for the benefit of the Drainage District.

**Members approved the report and 3 year works programme.**

**Members approved the continued partnership working with the Parks Trust.**

## **8 TECHNICAL REPORT**

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report and highlighted the following-

*The Board's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is planned to be updated in 2021/22 by our 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 £5,000 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 £20,000 has been included for the proposed 'enhancement' element.*

It was added that the district has seen an increased amount of rainfall on an already saturated catchment. The LLFA's & Environment Agency have 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 these reviews.

#### **Discussion took place-**

##### **Clipstone Brook-**

Members expressed their disappointment in relation to this ongoing matter and lack of progress. It was questioned if the Board would be liable if the damn were to fail due to the damage caused by the developer and the large amount of water currently within the catchment? The Director of Operations advised members, the Boards reservoir engineer had previously instructed the developer to construct an earth bund wall across the top of the reservoir embankment, such that any flood level would be retained in the upstream pond, therefore not flowing over the damaged section.

Members requested details of the case officers from Central Bedfordshire Council highways who are dealing with the legal consent agreement to ensure this is progressed in a timely order.

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##### **Eaton Bray/Edlesborough Bank Seepage**

Members requested a copy of the Eaton Bray report which was provided to the Parish council containing options for sealing the leakage.

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#### **Members accepted the Technical Report.**

## **9 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 Alconbury & Ellington 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021;**
- (ii) The Chief Executive/Clerk should be authorized to negotiate appropriate commuted sums from developers when the Board agrees to adopt new works.**

## **10 ESTIMATES**

The Principal Accountant presented the estimates-

## **Joint – Group Account**

### **A1 – Engineering, Finance and Administration Staff Costs**

Members were asked to note the post meeting adjustment which had been made to reflect the JMC's decision at their meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> January.

*It was agreed that the pay increase should move in line with the Local Government pay award. Staff costs are now based on a 2.75% increase; a middle ground of the options provided. The JMC agreed they would meet again if a figure is not established before 1st April 2021.*

Therefore, giving a proposed estimate for joint budget Engineering, Finance and Administration of £734,240.

### **Labour on Cost Account (Post JMC meeting adjustments)**

The Principal Accountant detailed the Labour On Cost account showing a net surplus for 2021/22 of £2,149. She advised the sizable deficit for 2021/22 is due to COVID-19.

### **Maintenance Estimates**

The Principal Accountant presented the revised estimates for 2020/21 of £739,638.

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

The Principal Accountant presented the General Estimates. Members were asked to note that note 8 Environment Agency Precept should read - "Allowance has also been made for a 5% increase for each of the following two years."

The Principal Accountant detailed a revised estimate for the Occupiers Rate Fund Balance of £657,991.

The estimates had been based on a 2% increase in rate and special levy income for 2021/22 and for each of the following two years 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. She advised some Councils would again see an increase in their Special levy due to land in their Districts moving from agricultural to urban/developed.

Members were advised this includes the contribution to the agreed office and depot development, to be split 60/40 between Bedfordshire and River Ivel and Buckingham and River Ouzel.

The Principal Accountant advised the Boards reserves over the next few years are dropping considerably, therefore it is recommended an increase is agreed.

### **Discussion took place-**

### **Labour on Cost Account (Post JMC meeting adjustments)**

A member questioned the significant increase in Vehicle and Mileage allowances and Employers Superannuation. The Principal Accountant advised the estimates for 2021/22 were based on the actual figure from 2019/20 as this is estimated to be a more comparable year; due to the COVID-19 restrictions the figures from 2020/21 were therefore not used. Further details would be provided to the member.

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*Post meeting note (also circulated to the member who raised a query)- The significant uplift on the current year is as a result of a change within the staffing structure to include an additional 3.5 members of staff.*

*The Employers superannuation estimated increase is based on the 3.8% pay increase awarded in 2019/20, the 2.75% increase this year along with the 1%*

*increase in employers pension contributions for the triannual valuation. This estimate also includes the additional members of staff.*

**Kingston Weir and Bridge, Broughton Brook**

It was requested that the ownership of the weir is determined before any capital funds are spent on the project. The Director of Operations advised that the Board had previously sought Counsel opinion on ownership and that this was inconclusive, hence it was not viable to determine ownership. Hence working in partnership with Anglian Water was the most viable option.

**Caldecotte Flood Risk Management Scheme**

Members sought clarification as to progress with funding contributions from partners with outcome measures potentially moving from 2025 to 2027. The Board requested officers continue to seek funding contributions from the EA.

**BA****Byelaws**

Members requested the Chairman to write to Defra to obtain an update.

**PH****Members noted and approved the following estimates:**

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

**11 TO SET THE DRAINAGE RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/2022 AND TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SEAL THE RATE**

Members agreed a 2% increase in rate and special levy income for 2021/22 resulting in the rate of 5.00p in the pound and rate and special levy income of £694,288 and authorised the Chairman to sign and seal the rate subsequent to the meeting.

**PH****12 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 Lloyds;
- 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 £309,352.

**Investment and bank account balances-**

The Principal Accountant advised the Board held balances of £1,867,824 at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

**The Finance Report was approved.**

### 13 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.**

### 14 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.

#### **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.*

#### **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

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.**

## 15 UPDATE ON CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT

The Chairman invited Doug McMurdo, JMC Chairman, to update 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 JMC Chairman advised that as the Buckingham and River Ouzel Board representatives of the Joint management Committee (JMC) whose remit includes staffing and HR matters 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 a few days before the meeting and had agreed proposals to 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.

Members were in full support of the interim arrangements with Water Management Alliance.

**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.**

The Chairman requested members approval for the interim Clerk/CEO be added to the bank accounts signatories once in post.

Members agreed to the interim Clerk/CEO, Mr Phil Camamile, to be added as a signatory to the bank accounts.

Action  
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**16 FUTURE BOARD MEETING DATES**

Date	Day	Time
8 June 2021	Tuesday	2pm
16 November 2021	Tuesday	2pm

**17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – 8 June 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 16:00pm