

UMIDB
UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the BOARD
held at 17 Albion Place Maidstone
on **Tuesday 22 November 2016.**

Members of the Board Present

M Dobson - Chairman

D Aikman
J Cannon
D Cooley
S Highwood
H Rogers
C Stewart
G Swift
R Thomas
C Wheeler

In attendance

M D Watson - Clerk & Engineer
N Gunn - Environment Agency

The Chairman introduced and welcomed R Thomas newly appointed member of Wealden District Council.

The Chairman then introduced and welcomed Neil Gunn from the Environment Agency who was invited to update members on the Medway flood storage project which is still under consideration.

The Chairman explained that Item 15 would be covered first of all so that Neil Gunn didn't have to sit through all of the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from R Lewis, S McLeod, T J Reader, M Round, J Scholey and R Young.

2. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION

None of the members present declared an interest in any of the items to be discussed on the Agenda.

3. PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

Members were reminded that all matters discussed relating to employees of the Board should at all times be treated as confidential. Members were reminded once again that there could be implications for the Board under Data Protection and Employment Law if matters discussed were disclosed to others.

4. MINUTES

RECEIVED a copy of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 19 July 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

AGREED by all Members present that the Minutes are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

5. FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 19 July 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

6. JOINT SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Joint Services Committee Meeting held on 9 September 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

H Rogers commented that there were not many representatives from the Upper Medway IDB. He then asked what had been decided about Members expenses.

The Clerk explained that this was still unresolved and needed more work.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Internal Audit Sub Committee Meeting held on 8 June 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes dated 3 May 2016

Item 13 – Internal Audit – Year Ending March 2016

The Clerk informed members that K Funnell has confirmed his retirement with effect from 30 June 2016 and his last visit is scheduled for 12 May 2016, when the Annual Return will be reviewed and signed off.

Consideration needed to be given with regards to appointing a new Independent Internal Auditor.

REPORTED that J Scholey (Internal Audit Committee Chairman) and the Clerk conducted interviews and have appointed David Griffiths as the new Internal Auditor. The first internal audit with the new auditor took place on 15 November 2016.

9. HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATES

REPORTED that Paul Bush has attended a NEBOSH health and safety training course so that the Board has at least one employee trained to an appropriate standard. Paul will be able to help advise the Board in the future to improve its working practices. I would expect to see a number of items included in this section of the agenda in the future.

The Clerk explained that training is likely to be very important with specific regards to abrasive wheels and angle grinding. Site safety IOSH course for all employees will be beneficial.

Further clarification is needed regarding portals, working under power lines and annual health checks.

REPORTED that Toolbox talks are ongoing.

REPORTED that the first Health & Safety Committee meeting with Officers and representatives from the workforce will take place in December. It is hoped that these quarterly meetings will help bring a smooth transition for any new Health & Safety changes, by involving and consulting with the workforce.

10. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RECEIVED the various planning applications the Board has been invited to comment on since its last meeting.

(As attached to these Minutes)

11. CONSENTS

RECEIVED particulars of applications requiring the written consent of the Board.

- (a) **Location: Crabtree, Jarmons Lane, Collier Street.**
Proposed: Installation of a new water supply across Collier Street Stream (U19).

Ms Maunder, the applicant, is the owner of a property (Crabtree) which borders Collier Street Stream (U19) and is in the process of refurbishing the house. Due to being unaware of the need for the Board's consent for any works affecting this

watercourse, a new water supply pipe has recently been installed within the channel of the watercourse. Unfortunately, this new pipe is likely to collect debris and affect water flows. It will also affect the Board's routine watercourse maintenance (and is likely to be damaged by IDB equipment). Ms Maunder has therefore been requested to remove this pipe and to apply for consent for an alternative arrangement.

It has now been proposed to relocate this water pipe, to fix it to an existing culvert headwall which provides access to the property (approx. NGR 571133,147317). The headwall has the facility to install stop-boards but no boards have been installed for some years and there is no intention to install them in future. The culvert itself has signs of deterioration and will need to be repaired in future, but this is not part of this application. The proposed changes are considered to be an improvement on the existing arrangement.

This application for consent has, in consultation with local Members, now been **approved** with the following specific conditions:

1. The applicant must arrange for an appropriate ecological assessment to be carried out prior to the commencement of works.
2. The Environment Agency's guidance must be followed in respect of pollution prevention and control.
3. The water pipe is to be securely fixed to the headwall and is to be positioned above the soffit (top) of the culvert pipe, to ensure that water flows remain unaffected.
4. No stop-boards are to be installed in this existing headwall without the prior written agreement of the Board.
5. The completed works, along with the existing culvert providing access to Crabtree, must be regularly inspected and maintained by the applicant and successors in title.

**(b) Location: The Orchard, Hampstead Lane, Yalding.
Proposed: Renewal of two culverts in an ordinary watercourse.**

Mr Playfoot, of Wealden Country Landcraft Ltd, has on behalf of the owner of The Orchard, Hampstead Lane, Yalding (Mr Ritchie) applied to replace 2No existing culverts which provide access to the property (approx. NGR 568380,150200. Both culverts have been found to be in a poor condition. The existing upstream culvert is approximately 650mm in diameter but is heavily silted up and its capacity is therefore significantly reduced. The downstream culvert is even more heavily silted up and the existing pipe is not visible. The applicant proposes to replace both culverts using 650mm diameter twin-walled plastic pipes with concrete bag headwalls.

This application for consent has, in consultation with local Members, now been **approved** with the following specific conditions:

1. The applicant must arrange for an appropriate ecological assessment to be carried out prior to the commencement of works.
2. The Environment Agency's guidance must be followed in respect of pollution prevention and control.

3. The channel of the watercourse, including 10m sections immediately upstream and downstream of the proposed culverts and throughout the length of the applicant's land ownership, is to be de-silted by the applicant.
4. The culvert pipes are to be set at the level of the hard bed of the channel (when the channel has been de-silted).
5. The completed works must be regularly inspected and maintained by the property owner and successors in title.

(c) Location: Medway Valley, Nettlestead.

Proposed: Installation of a sewer rising main beneath ordinary watercourses.

MGJV Ltd is planning to undertake a sewage rising main replacement project on behalf of Southern Water, which will involve the laying of approximately 1.8km of 225mm diameter plastic pipework through fields. The works require the crossing of 3 open watercourses (at NGRs: 569116,150692; 568817,150984; 568838,151634) and 1 piped watercourse (at NGR 568823,151831).

The proposed method of construction, in relation to the watercourse crossings, is directional drilling. The potential impacts are therefore minimal.

This application for consent has, in consultation with local Members, now been **approved** with the following specific conditions:

1. An appropriate ecological assessment must be carried out by the applicant prior to the commencement of works.
2. The Environment Agency's guidance must be followed in respect of pollution prevention and control.
3. All works beneath the channels of the watercourses must be at least 1 metre deep (taking any in-channel silt depths into account).
4. The complete works shall be regularly inspected and maintained by the applicant.

(d) Location: Mill Farm, Underlyn Lane, Marden.

Proposed: Creation of a wetland area connected to Marden Beech Stream (U18) and an ordinary watercourse.

The Medway Valley Countryside Partnership has applied to create a wetland area, which will also provide additional local flood storage, by excavation and landscaping a field alongside an ordinary watercourse and Marden Mill Stream (U17). The ordinary watercourse reportedly backs up and regularly floods land and property at Little Pattenden and Great Pattenden on the northern outskirts of Marden.

MVCP and the landowner have therefore proposed to cut an 'inlet' from the ordinary watercourse (set 600mm above the bed level to ensure that normal flows are retained in the watercourse) to allow flood flows to enter the new wetland/storage area, which will measure approximately 350m long, be approximately 65m at its widest and 20m at its narrowest and maximum 2.2m depth at the centre with a gradual sloping edge from 0-2.2m. The maximum capacity of the feature has been calculated to be 15,740m³. There will also be an overflow spillway excavated to allow excess flood waters in an extreme event to return to the Marden Mill Stream (the spillway will be set 1.4m above the inlet weir and at least 1.2m above the bed of the

receiving watercourse). The inlet and overflow weirs are to be lined with coir matting to protect against soil erosion. The applicant has confirmed that an 8m margin will be retained alongside the IDB maintained watercourse for future maintenance.

It is difficult at this stage, with the limited information available, to fully assess the benefit to local flood risk. However, this scheme does provide additional storage capacity in an area with a history of flooding and is considered likely to be of benefit (as well as providing an improved habitat for wildlife).

This application for consent has, in consultation with local Members, now been **approved** with the following specific conditions:

1. An appropriate ecological assessment must be carried out by the applicant prior to the commencement of works.
2. The Environment Agency's guidance must be followed in respect of pollution prevention and control.
3. The inlet and spillway weirs, which are to be covered with coir matting to prevent erosion, must be set back at least 1m from the channel bank-line to ensure that in-channel flows and routine maintenance activities are not affected. The coir matting must be securely fixed in place.
4. The applicant must ensure that all other permissions are established and obtained prior to the commencement of works (such as the need for planning permission).
5. The complete works shall be regularly inspected and maintained by the applicant.
6. As information on local flood risk is limited, the Board reserves the right to request alterations to the works should problems be identified in future.

**(e) Location: Newstead Farm, Couchman Green Lane, Staplehurst.
Proposed: Culverting of a short section of Houndhurst Stream (U16) to connect two existing access culverts.**

Further information has been provided in respect of this previously reported application. The owner of Newstead Farm at Staplehurst, Mr M Greengrow, intends to improve access into the farm from Couchman Green Lane. Currently there is a Y road junction with two 800mm diameter culverts (approx. 5m & 6m in length with a 6m gap between). Mr Greengrow has proposed to lay a flexible pipe inside the existing pipework, through the ditch and to install an access chamber.

Initial thoughts, due to lack of detailed channel flow or flood risk assessment, are to resist reducing the size of the culverts at this location. A site inspection is to be carried out and a report will be produced in due course for local Members to consider.

**(f) Location: Hoathly Farm, Clayhill Road, Lamberhurst.
Proposed: Installation of a new culvert in an ordinary watercourse.**

Discussions have continued with the applicant regarding this previously reported application. Further details are still awaited and a report will be produced in due course for local Members to consider.

P Dowling showed members a plan of the proposal and explained that he hasn't yet responded to the landowner.

12. ENGINEER'S REPORT

RECEIVED the Engineer's Report Number 147.

(As attached to these Minutes)

The Clerk read through the Engineers report.

Members noted the content.

13. ANNUAL RETURN - YEAR ENDING MARCH 2016

RECEIVED a copy of the approved IDB Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

REPORTED that no areas for concern have been raised.

The Clerk informed Members that the approved Annual Return is displayed on the Boards Website.

14. END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS - YEAR ENDING MARCH 2016

RECEIVED a copy of the End of Year Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

REPORTED that this document is produced purely for Board Members information and the asset values reported reflect current book value, not actual purchase price as stated in the annual return.

15. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

Neil Gunn from the Environment Agency provided members with an update on the Medway flood storage project which is still under consideration.

Members were informed that the River Teise and Beult Flood Storage Reservoirs (FSR) will not improve Yalding in any way. They may (possibly) save a handful of properties in Collier Street, but the cost is £7.5m for River Teise and £9.1m for River Beult.

£95m has been estimated for dredging the River Medway. 5-20% in places lost in cross sectional area. The Environment Agency are worried that World War II chemicals might be disturbed.

Members were also informed that Hildenborough would not flood if their FSR is done, as well as the Leigh FSR.

Neil Gunn asked members whether they would consider allowing the Environment Agency to spend some of the IDB Precept money on property protection etc.

The Clerk asked Neil to provide figures of what maintenance costs have taken place before the Board can consider allowing the EA to spend the remainder of the Precept money.

The Chairman thanked Neil for his time.

Neil Gunn left the meeting.

Members were directed to Item 1 on the Agenda.

16. ESTIMATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

RECEIVED the recommendations of the Preliminary Estimates Committee for the Estimates for the year commencing 1 April 2017.

(As attached to these Minutes)

REPORTED that the Environment Agency has confirmed that for the next 12 months the precept payment will remain the same.

REPORTED that the Finance Committee's recommendation is to leave the penny rate at 3.3500 for the next year.

C Stewart asked whether there were any future plans that would affect the Boards bank balances.

The Clerk explained that Item 18 would help explain this, but there wasn't any significant costings expected imminently.

D Aikman commented that he thought the Local Authorities would appreciate a 0% increase.

Members were asked to set the penny rate and the Chairman to sign the drainage rates and special levies certificate.

AGREED to set the penny rate at 3.3500

AGREED on a proposition by D Aikman, seconded by C Stewart that the Chairman signs the Drainage Rates & Special Levies Certificate.

All Members in attendance were in favour.

The Clerk suggested moving to Item 18, before discussing Item 17.

Members were directed to Item 18.

17. APPROVAL OF CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2017

Members considered and approved the calendar of meetings for 2017.

(As attached to these Minutes)

AGREED Dates:

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--------|
| 21 March | Finance Committee | 2.00pm |
| 21 March | Board Meeting | 2.15pm |
| Thursday 25 May | Finance Committee ONLY (To approve the Annual Return) | 2.00pm |
| 18 July | Finance Committee | 2.00pm |
| 18 July | Board Meeting | 2.15pm |
| 21 November | Finance Committee | 2.00pm |
| 21 November | Board Meeting | 2.15pm |

The Estimates Committee Meeting 17 October 2017.

The Joint Services Meeting 8 September 2017.

18. BOARD MODERNISATION PLAN

REPORTED that at the Joint Services Meeting held on 9 September 2016 the Clerk proposed an idea to modernise and streamline the current processes.

These will include:

- Board meeting frequencies and format.
- Purchasing policy.
- Reducing paperwork.
- Using Computer systems to store and circulate data.

The main goal is to improve efficiency within the office, a better use of officer's time and wherever possible reduce the amount of paperwork produced, stored and posted.

It's unlikely Members would be aware of the amount of time and effort it takes to prepare for a Board meeting. It currently takes a whole day to photocopy approximately 1100 pages, two days worth of preparation compiling the Board Agendas and approximately £20 worth of postage. With 10 Board meetings a year (5 per Board) that roughly equates to 11,000 pages, 10 days printing, 20 days worth of officers time compiling reports and information for the agenda and over £200 worth of postage per year.

As a start to these important changes I would like to propose to the Board that the number of Board Meetings be cut from 5 to 3 and are evenly spaced throughout the year. Keeping the Estimates meeting in November, the March Meeting and an inspection Meeting in July.

The Clerk also wanted to propose reducing the amount of information sent to members. The Standing Orders require me to send members an agenda by post 5 days in advance

of the meeting. I would like to send a brief agenda by post but can I ask where possible consideration be given to circulating agenda documents electronically.

The Clerk then proposed that the reduced meetings are more interactive by introducing a large screen in the Board Room. By going through the agenda items in more detail interactively, this should make it more entertaining and easier for Members to understand.

REPORTED that the Joint Services Committee Members were happy to trial the recommendations for a year or two. The proposals were put to the Lower Board at their last meeting and members were happy to trial for 12 months.

R Thomas agreed with the TV idea and said this is what they use at the Council.

H Rogers suggested that the Boards Standing Orders be amended to say that the Board Agendas will be sent out via email rather than post.

H Rogers also thought with reduced meetings the members really need to know what works have been carried out or planned. The Clerk mentioned that the annual maintenance programme will be available and regularly updated.

On a proposition by G Swift, seconded by C Stewart it was **AGREED** that the Board will trial for a period of 12 months a reduced format Agenda which will be emailed to Members in a pdf format where necessary and reduce its meetings from 5 to 3 a year.

Members were directed back to Item 17.

19. ADA CONFERENCE

REPORTED that the Clerk, P Bush and G Fulton (Lower Board Member) attended the Annual ADA Conference held on 17 November 2016 at One Great George Street, Westminster, London.

The Clerk explained that the Conference wasn't great this year. The Minister and EA Chairman didn't connect to the audience.

Demaining and partnership working was the main message, but the Clerk doesn't see it as being a two-way thing.

The Chairman reminded IDBs of the importance of Health & Safety and should be high priority, especially when working this winter. Do our best, but do it safely.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss

21. CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed and thanked the Board for their attendance.