

UMIDB
UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the BOARD
held at 17 Albion Place Maidstone
on **Tuesday 21 March 2017.**

Members of the Board Present

M Dobson - Chairman

J Cannon
S Highwood
T Reader
H Rogers
J Scholey
C Stewart
G Swift
R Thomas
C Wheeler

In attendance

M D Watson - Chief Executive
P Bush - Technical Engineer
L Collins - Office Administrator

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from D Aikman, N Chantler, D Cooley, K Jay, R Lewis, S McLeod and M Round.

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. DECLARATION OF BOARD MEMBERS INTEREST FORM 2017/2018

RECEIVED a copy of the Declaration of Board Members Interests form.

(As attached to these Minutes)

Members were reminded that this form should be completed by ALL Board Members at the start of each financial year and amended as necessary during the year. Any staff member who has a significant interest should also complete a form. Forms should be completed at your earliest convenience and then returned to the office.

Forms were available during the meeting and a number of completed forms were handed to Officers by the end of the meeting.

4. 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.

5. MINUTES

RECEIVED a copy of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 22 November 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.

6. FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 22 November 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

7. INTERNAL AUDIT SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Internal Audit Sub Committee Meeting held on 14 December 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

H Rogers commented that he was pleased to see that computer backups are being done, but wondered whether any attempts to restore from backups had been carried out in order to check the validity of the backup tapes.

The Chief Executive explained that none were carried out on a regular basis, but there had been a situation in the past where there was a need to restore data from a tape. This was successfully carried out.

Members were informed that the server system needs looking at and will possibly move to cloud storage in the future.

Officers were asked to make enquiries as to whether the backup tapes could be checked for validity on an agreed period.

The Chairman thanked H Rogers for his comment.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

9. HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATES

REPORTED that the Technical Engineer completed his NEBOSH health and safety training over three weeks in November 2016.

REPORTED that the Technical Engineer received a distinction in late February 2017 and is now NEBOSH qualified to advise/assist on H&S Policies and Procedures for the Boards.

The Chief Executive and Members congratulated the Technical Engineer on passing this course with distinction.

The Technical Engineer explained that he will start to look at things methodically. **REPORTED** that a review of the Boards current Policies will take place, with a provisional proposal of requirements being prepared and presented to the Joint Services Committee at their meeting on 8 September 2017. Any recommendations will be presented to the Board, along with any costings involved. There will be a need to prioritise.

The Board will need to agree on the timings of priorities at a future meeting.

Activities and changes are starting to take place and updates will be given at Board Meetings.

10. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY PRECEPT 2017-2018

RECEIVED details of the precept for the year ending 31 March 2018 and the Environment Agency's Estimate of Expenditure and Income relating to land drainage.

(As attached to these Minutes)

REPORTED that the Environment Agency Precept Payment 2017 was estimated to be £119,423. The actual was £119,423.

Also **REPORTED** that the actual Environment Agency spending for the next 12 months will not increase.

11. BOARD INSPECTION

Members were asked to give consideration to a Board Inspection this year.

Members discussed and **AGREED** that they felt it would be sensible to hold a joint Inspection with the Lower Medway IDB.

Members also **AGREED** that they would like to visit the Thames Barrier. The Chief Executive was asked to arrange a visit to the Thames Barrier as a joint Inspection with the Lower Medway IDB.

H Rogers explained that it would be of interest to members if the Chief Executive could arrange for someone from the 2100 project to give a presentation on the day explaining how the replacement of the Thames Barrier will affect IDBs.

Date to be arranged and members will be circulated details in due course.

12. SANCTION TO BORROW

The Clerk explained that this is something that the Board does every year, just in case it ever needed to raise emergency funds. It doesn't cost anything to apply for, and involves writing to the EA and DEFRA to request. The Board has never used it, but it is always good to have a backup plan should extra funds be needed.

AGREED on a proposition by J Scholey, seconded by R Thomas that an application be made to DEFRA for permission to raise an overdraft from National Westminster Bank Plc. for a sum not exceeding £100,000.

J Scholey asked the Chief Executive to check whether the Board could actually apply for a larger sum of money.

The Chief Executive explained that this figure is likely to be quoted in the Land Drainage Act 1991, so it would be highly unlikely that IDBs could apply for a larger sum of money.

J Scholey explained that £100,000 in 1991 was a lot of money, but in today's terms is not so.

The Chief Executive will find out and report back at the next meeting.

13. INTERNAL CONTROLS – YEAR ENDING MARCH 2017

RECEIVED a copy of the Statement of Accounting Policies and the Statement of Internal Control for the year ending March 2017.

(As attached to these Minutes)

REPORTED that the Officers had reviewed these documents and other than the change in dates, it was felt that no further amendments were required. Next year will require a few amendments, as the number of Board Meetings has reduced and the Boards External Auditor will change, but for now only date changes are required.

AGREED on a proposition by J Scholey, seconded by S Highwood that the amended Statement of Accounting Policies and the Statement of Internal Control for the year ending March 2017 are approved.

14. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

(As attached to these Minutes)

The Chief Executive read through all the planning applications listed.

Members were informed that any planning applications concerning over 10 units are considered as large developments and are responded to by Kent County Council and the Environment Agency.

C Stewart explained that the Board may wish to keep an eye on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council planning application number 3.

15. CONSENTS

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

The Chief Executive explained that there had been a number of applications received over recent months, which have not been processed due to either waiting for the £50 administration fee, or the applicant had not provided the necessary information required.

- (a) U16 Houndshurst culvert extension update – REFUSED.
REPORTED that this application has been ongoing for months now. Enough is enough, so the application has been refused.
- (b) Proposed bridge over ordinary watercourse, near Lamberhurst update - REFUSED.
REPORTED that the applicant hasn't provided a design on the bridge despite being chased up. Enough is enough, so the application has been refused.
- (c) New rising main, Forest Row – AWAITING FEE.
REPORTED that the fee has now been received and the Chief Executive will be liaising with the relevant Members in due course.
- (d) Clarendon Homes SW outfall into ordinary watercourse, Headcorn – PROJECT ON HOLD.
- (e) Culvert refurbishment, Ashurst – PROJECT ON HOLD.

16. ENGINEER'S REPORT

RECEIVED the Engineer's Report Number 149.

(As attached to these Minutes)

The Clerk read through the Engineers report and a number of photographs showing watercourses before and after maintenance works had been carried out were displayed on the screen for members information and interest.

Members commented that it was good to see photographs of the Boards equipment used to carry out maintenance works and found it easier to then relate to the works being carried out.

H Rogers explained that it would be useful for members if costings of work activity could be reported.

The Technical Engineer explained that the accounts system can produce reports based on area, not watercourse. This information could be produced in a pie chart in future for members.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for a very informative report.

17. WORKS HEALTH & SAFETY GROUP MEETING

RECEIVED a copy of the Works Health & Safety Group Meeting Minutes dated 24 January 2017.

(As attached to these Minutes)

The Technical Engineer explained that by Law there should be Health & Safety meetings held with the workforce.

There have been various ongoing issues which relate to both Health & Safety and work practices.

REPORTED that these meetings are being used to consult with the workforce to bring in the modernisation changes required. There is a representative from each Board, agreed by their work colleagues and all Officers are in attendance of these meetings.

REPORTED that concerns regarding pay and conditions had been raised which needs investigation and will be put to the Joint Services Committee at their meeting on 8 September 2017 and any recommendations will be presented to the Board for consideration.

REPORTED that there are Policies which differ from each Board which need consideration to realign to assist Officers in the management of the day to day business. These issues will be prepared for discussion and put to the Joint Services Committee at their meeting on 8 September 2017 and any recommendations will be presented to the Board for consideration.

Minutes will be reported at each Board Meeting moving forward.

J Cannon left the meeting.

18. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

The Chief Executive explained that no one from the Environment Agency was able to give the Board an update today on their activities over the next 12 months. Lisa Lennox is our new appointed Officer, but was unfortunately unable to make today's meeting.

Members were informed that N Gunn has been removed from his role and moved to a National project.

The Chief Executive then explained that he had received an email late yesterday (5.05pm) providing an update.

The Chairman briefly reviewed the document and felt that the contents were not sufficient for the Boards purposes and felt that given the short amount of time to review it would be unfair to ask members to make a decision.

It was **AGREED** that Members had no option but to submit an appeal against the 2017/18 Precept payment on the basis that the content of the report submitted is insufficient and was not submitted in a timely manner for the Board to consider.

J Scholey left the meeting.

The Chairman requested that the Chief Executive submits a letter on behalf of the Board appealing against payment of the 2017/18 Precept payment until an adequate report has been submitted for the Boards consideration.

19. INTERNAL AUDITORS INTERIM REPORT 2016/17

RECEIVED a copy of the Interim Internal Audit Report for the year ending March 2017 produced by David Griffiths on 15 November 2016.

(As attached to these Minutes)

The Chief Executive informed members that the watercourse annual maintenance programme is now complete and on the Boards website.

Members were also informed that the Internal Auditor will be visiting the depot at his next visit to review its operations.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Medway IDB/River Stour IDB Partnership

REPORTED that the Medway IDB/River Stour IDB Partnership comes to an end on 31 March 2017.

The Works Supervisor becomes full time at the Medway IDBs.

The Chief Executive will deal with all planning and consent applications.

P Dowling will return full time to the River Stour IDB.

REPORTED that a review of staffing resources will take place over the coming months.

(b) ADA Branch Meeting

REPORTED that the next ADA Branch Meeting will take place at the Stockpot, Ashford on 27 April 2017.

The Chief Executive informed members that he'd like to have someone from the UMIDB to be represented at this meeting. Other IDBs are doing so. It is a useful meeting to find out what's happening nationally and what other IDBs in Kent are doing.

M Dobson expressed an interest in attending. All members in attendance were happy for the Chairman to attend and represent the UMIDB.

(c) Feedback on Meeting

Members were asked to provide feedback on the new meeting format and presentation. Officers want the transition from paper format to a more visual format to be suitable to all members, so any feedback that could make the meetings better would be gratefully received.

H Rogers asked whether the Appendix's could be sent as one document rather than individual attachments for ease of viewing on an electronic device during the meeting.

Members were reminded not to be afraid to speak up and contact any of the Officers with comments/suggestions regarding the new format.

21. CLOSURE

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