

UMIDB
UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the **BOARD**
held at **Zoom Conference Call**
on **Tuesday 15 November 2022** at **10am**.

Members of the Board Present

O Baldock
Cllr M Davis
Cllr M Gillman
D Goff
Cllr P Harper
Cllr D King
Cllr S McGregor
Cllr H Rogers
W Thompson
C Wheeler
L Young

In attendance

O Pantrey – Clerk
L Carey – Finance Officer
J Davis – Works Supervisor

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Cllr J Perry, C Hosmer, S Highwood. Cllr Wakeman could not attend due to technical issues.

The Chairman welcomed the members and asked everyone to give a short introduction.

2. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION

The Chairman said that there was an item from the Finance Committee meeting to set an exemption for C Wheeler to have to declare an interest in Bullen Court/Farm unless the item specifically related to the property.

All **AGREED** that C Wheeler should be exempt from making this declaration each time.

3. REGISTER OF MEMBERS INTERESTS 2022/23

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The Chairman reminded the members that it was a legal obligation to ensure declaration of interests were made. He then encouraged those that had not yet filled out the form to do so.

The Clerk said that he would soon be requesting 2023's declaration of interests from members but it would still be a good idea for members to get their 2022 forms back to the office.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman requested any alterations to the minutes of 28 June 2022. He then requested that these were approved as correct.

On proposal from the Chair, it was **AGREED** by all Members present that the minutes of the meetings held on 28 June be approved as a true and accurate account.

5. ACTION LIST AND MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman asked the Clerk if there were any issues arising from the action list.

The Clerk said a few of the actions need further explanation. He said we are still awaiting a request from KCC for funding at Alder Stream, although we will require them to walk us through the work as it occurs.

He informed members that the proposed letter to Tim Reader's wife was not sent as it was deemed a little late. He requested that we mark an official minute to thank him for his work with the Board.

On proposal from the Chair, it was **AGREED** by all members to mark this minute as a thank you to Mr T Reader for his service to the Board.

Finally, Council members were requested to chase up letters sent to the CEO/Finance Directors etc. regarding engagement with the IDB on surface water and PSCA matters. The Clerk said he would expand on this later in the meeting.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman said he had little to report this time around which was actually a bit of a relief considering the dramas of the past years. He informed members that things seemed to be settling down well and that the administration was on a strong trajectory. He said this allowed planning for the future to take centre stage finally and he wished to thank the office staff for steadying the ship. He also thanked the Vice-Chairman for his efforts to support him and the office staff.

He continued by saying he had attended the finance committee meetings and the annual ADA conference. He said the speakers were very well received and the presentation on the history of the special levy was of particular interest.

7. CLERK'S REPORT

Groundwater and Weather

The Clerk explained that since the last meeting the district has been exposed to severe weather events, in some cases for the first time in history in relation to the July 'red warning' put out by the Met office. He said that while the impact of that will be felt across multiple areas of the company as a general overview the impact on water levels has led to extremely low water in the ground, with reservoirs in the district reporting lower than average or very low readings. As a result, he said there has been an abstraction time reduction

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issued by the EA to try and compensate for this which he hoped had not impacted those who need it too severely.

He continued by saying that we were on course for a reasonably uneventful year in terms of severe weather warnings as a collective number, but this has only served to demonstrate that those events we are suffering are increasingly harsh. Along with the wind from earlier in the year, and the heat from the summer, he said we have more recently seen major rainfall in particularly tight bands, due to slow moving lows, which combined with the very dry and parched ground created ideal flash flood conditions as the water did not have chance to soften and then penetrate the soils to any meaningful degree. He explained that with recharge still being very slow, and general groundwater levels remaining low too, the district was still at risk of flash events should this occur again without any persistent, but less heavy rainfall to improve the overall ability of the soil to absorb water and overland flows. He said that as will be discussed later, the Board has been looking to improve its reaction capability through new plant and he thought this was now more justified than ever if we intend on being part of the response to flash events going forward.

Staffing

The Clerk confirmed they have now began training and assessment of the successful applicant to take over from John as the Works Supervisor in 2023, and as part of the recruitment process, we offered a soft-start system that would allow a slower entry and more controlled learning curve to the role that would also allow for reduced financial burden on the Board. He confirmed we are assessing his progress and will update the Board after Christmas.

He did confirm that he would be drawing up job descriptions and adverts for 2 additional ground staff as a minimum in the coming weeks, so the Board was in a position to get its works programme complete and create room to expand into new contracts in the future where available.

Office Admin

The Clerk confirmed that the Board has now been through the major audit period for the year and while the external and internal audits were acceptable, there were some areas of improvement still relating to policy and budgeting to tighten up on.

He gave the response to the comments from the auditor as follows:

The accounting of recharges was mistakenly used as an income in previous years when it should have been offset against the original expense. This led to over inflated income figures which the auditor has marked as being incorrect... because we told them it was incorrect from the start. Whilst this has been removed for this financial year, this is also seen in the IDB1 form, although this will be remedied for next year.

IT and cyber risk assessment and control measures have now been included and approved by the Board.

We offered a reconciliation for the Section 48 (levy income) figures but they didn't use it for some reason. The reason was due to extra funds being brought in through debt control.

He said there seems to have been some confusion over the non-use of petty cash with the internal audit which led to the external auditor saying it was omitted. We will remove petty cash from the balance sheet in the future to resolve this confusion.

He explained that the internal audit highlighted need for further governance and accounting systems, such as a monthly budget report, that has had a positive impact upon the future budgeting forecasts and represents a welcome initiative from the auditor. He confirmed that he has appointed Mid Kent Audit as our internal auditor for 2022/23 and will commence the initial inspection in the coming months.

The Clerk said he has contacted every council within the district in order to discuss surface water drainage and the opportunities possible under PSCA, to which sadly only Mid Sussex and Maidstone councils have responded. He requested that members go back to their respective CEO/Finance Director/Open Spaces Director and encourage them to contact me so we might get further conversations and relationships built.

He concluded by saying that overall, there is still likely to be a workload surplus as we continue to seek contracts with the EA and other local authority partners, and there will be an expectation that the new office staff member fulfils the role John leaves behind, including the management of contractors and new contracts. He said that the Board should be looking to assess office and ground staff levels as a matter of course for the time being until we are in a more settled position in relation to income, public interaction, and works completion.

EA Partnership

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The Clerk said that EA interaction remains slow and recent meetings with the ADA regional group have shown that they are struggling with recruitment in both technical and practical positions. It is unknown whether or not this is having an impact on their maintenance programs and the spending of the precept, but it has had a dramatic effect on the ability of the Board to secure a PSCA agreement. He said he was grateful to David Lowe for his help in trying to get the agreement over the line, but it remains painfully slow.

The Clerk explained that there have been several instances of pollution reports being considered unnecessary to explore and again this is linked to lack of staff at the Agency. There were also reports of sluices on the Teise malfunctioning and then several month lead times for repair of these local vital structures.

He confirmed he would request from the EA a full report in the new year as to what structures they are keeping within the district and those that they are likely to remove from service. This will also hopefully include some sort of longer-term direction from them regarding their expectations on us and their own freshwater services.

Local Issues

The Clerk finished his report by saying there have been isolated pockets of local flooding due to the recent flash events but, overall, the district is as ready for winter as we can make it at this time. He confirmed that the ground team was conducting block checks periodically still to ensure that we are prepared ahead of any upcoming events, but where possible we are continuing to carry out pioneering and desilting works to reduce the chance of debris collecting at bridges when levels inevitably rise.

The Chairman explained that the meeting with Maidstone Borough Council was an excellent opportunity to express the future works plans of the Board and demonstrate the new, responsible attitude regarding finances and long term investment.

The Clerk said that he agreed and that he felt it was extremely positive that they could come out of a meeting like that with a good chance that the Board and the council would be able to work together under PSCA in the coming years.

The Vice-Chairman reiterated the words of the Clerk regarding the EA staffing and works levels. He said there was a reported 20% reduction in staffing for them and this represented a major issue regarding works in the fresh water systems. He said the Clerk was giving us plenty of opportunity to discuss and work with our partners in the EA and it was vital we supported the longer term plans regarding PSCA and COWs.

Cllr Gillman requested the letter was sent to him so he might follow it up with his finance director.

L Young said she was disappointed in the EA and the lack of actions, particularly with regards to woody debris being left in main river such as the Eden.

The Works Supervisor said he agreed with L Young and said it put everyone under pressure when work wasn't completed as we invariably received the complaints in the office.

The Clerk said he agreed that the premise of woody debris was beneficial but really it was unacceptable to not communicate this to land owners without some sort of longer term plan and demonstration of what might happen in terms of localised flooding.

Action: Clerk to send Cllr Gillman the letter sent to the Finance Officer at Tandridge DC.

8. WORKS SUPERVISOR REPORT 164

Cllr Gillman said this was an excellent report and he thanked the Works Supervisor for the depth of information. This was echoed by all members.

The Clerk said that he and the Works Supervisor had done a lot of market testing recently to establish the quality and necessity of multi-use equipment. He said in the past these market reports had not been given

full attention by the Board and that he felt we were doing the right groundwork to establish what was and was not suitable in terms of plant for the Board.

9. FINANCE REPORT

The Chairman said the finance committee minutes were just for information.

The Finance Officer gave a report on the financial position of the Board.

She confirmed that the only outstanding special levy was from Maidstone and Sevenoaks. She also said we were down to £2500 outstanding from agricultural rates.

The Clerk updated members on a couple of errors in the Financial Risk Assessment prior to its approval subject to those changes.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for his efforts to get this document in place and in an appropriate condition.

On proposal from the Chair, and seconded by Cllr Gillman, it was **AGREED** that the Financial Risk Assessment should be approved, subject to the minor errors being changed.

Action: Clerk to make requested changes and update the website with the new Financial Risk Assessment

10. ESTIMATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

The Clerk introduced the subject by saying the estimates are a reflection of the conversation held after the finance committee scrutinised the figures a couple of weeks ago. He explained that they had welcomed Cllr King to that meeting, and said he hoped it offered him greater insight into the way we approach budget discussions.

The Clerk informed members that the key considerations of the new budget should be the increase in insurance provision, the increase in staffing members on the ground to compliment the Board direction in relation to expansion of service, and the reduction of the works budget to reflect the increase in Board HR liability.

He said the recommendation is to adopt the scenario 2 expense forecast and recommend a rate increase of between 2 and 5%. This allows for a draw down on the surplus while also incorporating staff increases, paid for over a gradual period.

The Chairman said that there was a need to make allowances for inflation after it was clear that we were in the midst of a somewhat turbulent economic era. He said it was unclear where inflation and associated costs might go and that we should be looking to secure ourselves financially against this.

He then asked the Vice-Chairman to give his thoughts ahead of the debate.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Clerk and the Finance Officer for providing the estimates in a far clearer fashion than in previous years. He said it was much easier to understand the impact of the decision taken on elements such as reserves and demonstrated a much more controlled version of the budget, without impacting upon longer term aims and objectives.

It was opened up to the members for comment.

There was a question about mobile phone contracts and donations to which the Clerk answered.

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There was a comment regarding the reserves and whether or not we should actually be looking to spend the surplus on projects and not holding down levy increases by drawing on that.

The Clerk said he would be more than happy to spend the surplus on projects but there currently wasn't anything that he could link to the money that hadn't already been suggested. He said the surplus gave us an opportunity to maintain a lower levy increase over 3 or 4 years while still investing in staff.

A comment from the members asked if there was a requirement to set a balanced budget.

The Clerk said it was up to the Board how it set its budget, but he felt that it was responsible to draw down on the surplus in a managed way to create a balanced budget in 3- or 4-years' time after staff investment had been made.

A comment came from the members asking if the staff were subject to the same wage structure as civil servants.

The Clerk said they were not subject to the same restrictions, and he explained the proposed change in wages. He said that by allowing the trucks to be used by the ground team it offered real world saving and improvement without the need for excessive wage increases.

It was asked if this was subject to income tax increases for the staff as the trucks might be a taxable benefit.

The Clerk said he had discussed this with the Finance Officer, and because they were responding to work related incidents, often at short notice, they were considered exempt. He said he would ask the Finance Officer to double check but that they did look into this prior to the guys getting the trucks. He added that while not relevant to tax, the staff were probably doing 2-3 more hours work as a result of having access to the vehicles which was reflected in the increase in productivity this year.

Action: Finance Officer to double check responder exemption from taxable benefit regarding the trucks.

There was a question asking whether or not if there was too low a levy increase this year, we might be running a risk of a large increase in the future.

The Clerk said he felt it would be good to set a strong rate increase between 2-5% because it meant there was a more controlled loss prediction, and it would make years 2-3 less likely to incur large rate increases should we exhaust the surplus.

There was suggestion from members that it was wise to set a strong levy this year and ensure the Board was securing its financial position. Discussions circled around whether 5% was suitable or if it should be more. The general feeling was 5% was responsible in terms of both the Board and the wider economic situation in the country without being excessive.

It was discussed that while the levy setting meeting would be held in January in the future, it was in the interest of everyone to prepare the local authorities for the 5% raise in the levy now and allow them to digest that increase from the Board.

On Proposal from the Chairman, and seconded by the Vice-Chairman, it was unanimously **AGREED** that the penny rate for 2023/24 would be set at **4.1342p in the pound**, and that the Clerk and Chairman should sign the Drainage Rates and Special Levies Certificate.

Action: Clerk and Chairman to sign the drainage rates and special levy certificate

Action: Clerk to put notification on the website of the setting of the drainage rate for 2023/24

Action: Clerk to notify the council partners of the setting of the levy for 2023/24

11. SETTING OF MINIMUM BANK BALANCE POLICY

The Chairman asked members if there was any need to change the minimum bank balance policy this year.

All members **AGREED** that the £350,000 minimum bank balance policy was suitable for 2023/24.

Action: Clerk to update minimum bank balance policy on the website.

12. BIODIVERSITY REPORT

The Clerk presented the biodiversity report in the absence of the Conservation Representative, S Highwood.

He said that Biodiversity and Conservation continue to be leading objectives for the Board and as we head into winter, he was delighted to say Carol has completed the first year of ecology study on four watercourses within the district.

He explained that all four have received desk studies and walkovers from Carol to assess practice and general enhancement opportunities. While Carol will be presenting a full report to the Board early next year, he reported that she was impressed with the standard of maintenance and instead of altering practice she is likely to focus more on enhancements and improvements.

He said he would be holding a meeting with Carol, John, and a member of his team to determine the extent of these enhancements once Carol has returned from leave. He said it is hoped this will form the basis for works between April and July going forward (a time traditionally where work was not arranged due to bird nesting).

He suggested that as a Board we should thank John and his staff for their efforts in bringing our watercourses more in line with expectations of our partners and for continuing to champion conservation within our works. He said it is worth mentioning that Carol did make note of multiple issues of invasive species and these are going to be actioned in the coming months to varying degrees.

The Clerk said this summer recorded the first ever Red Warning by the met office for heat and the prolonged dry period led to issues ranging from widespread fish kills to wildfires in the North of the County. We have seen several instances of fish deaths within the district on the River Teise at Horsmonden, and at Lucks Lane Fishery in Paddock Wood. I expect there were more, but we didn't receive word of these.

He explained that attempts to hold water and provide sanctuary for wildlife has received mixed reviews from our ecology partners who are concerned there is a lack of fish passage available when sluice boards are used and that we are potentially making issues worse across the entire length of our watercourses. While there is a need in some instances to hold and move water, we are likely to need to remove some structures entirely to accommodate these conservational concerns.

He finished by saying that he was pleased to report that we are continuing to upskill staff on conservational matters and, combined with Carol's survey work, this has led to courses being completed relating to both hedge management and laying (both offering nature and flood benefit) with Kent Wildlife. We have also dealt with two instances of invasive species removal, one with Carol and one with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. He said this is a huge step forward for us in relation to education, management of invasive species, and public interaction and I hope to see it continue into the future.

13. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

The health and safety report was given by the Board H+S Representative O Baldock.

O Baldock said that since our last meeting the main maintenance works have been undertaken by the works team and although this presents a more hazardous period for the staff, he was delighted to report that we have had no injuries for the period despite the increased works opportunities due to the dry weather.

He informed members he had participated in the works health and safety meeting in July and October as the Board representative and remains happy that this provides an efficient and open platform to allow communication between the staff and the Board.

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He said he accompanied the Clerk and his NVQ assessor, Louise, on the annual depot inspection and audit at Lees Road. This was a full day assessment of the depot, its documentation, and its safety provisions and failings. I was pleased to see the new tarmac had been installed and has resolved several issues from previous inspections that put the Board at potentially quite high financial risk.

He reported that overall, the standard of the depot is very high in terms of health and safety, although there were several areas that need immediate remedy and will incur a reasonable associated cost. The major points of note were the cracking of the mess room walls and the cleaning of the gutters. While the mess room has been resolved, the cost of the gutter cleaning is causing issues as it seems excessive. He offered that the Clerk would welcome any recommendations for local contractors should members be aware of them.

He wished to thank John and the staff in the ground team for their efforts to maintain a safe, clean, and efficient depot.

He finished by saying one of the main areas of concern revolves around near miss reporting and how it can be improved. As a Board, the earlier we identify and avoid accidents the less likely we are to have to suffer financial ramifications. He requested that while the Clerk and the Works Supervisor continue to request and seek alternative means of improvement for this notoriously difficult area of health and safety, any input from the Board would of course be welcome.

The Works Supervisor thanked O Baldock for his comments and said they would continue to work hard on the standards and near miss initiatives.

14. STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVE

Resilience Fund

The Clerk reported that the resilience fund has now been discussed with Innes and Peter Bateson of the W4th IDB who has advised that as long as governance and transparency is displayed at all times, the Board is within its rights to control how its own money is spent, assuming there is always a link to the Board objectives relating to land drainage and the LDA.

He said that it was suggested that we make it clear that no decision is a precedent of importance and that every decision will be taken on its own merit at all times to avoid the question of 'why is their design ok, but mine is not?'

The Clerk said Mr Bateson did suggest that we approach the EA to get funding for district wide inflow modelling, and that this would then identify the areas most at risk from flood and peak flows, to which we could then justify the NFM designs explicitly against this modelling data. The Clerk advised that in the short term this is unlikely, but similar work has been done by SERT albeit on a more anecdotal basis, that might be useable alongside EA modelling data.

He said that it was probably not time to vote this through and would instead request input and alterations from the members before submitting a final draft for approval in January.

Cllr Gillman asked if there was any priority given to requests that already secured contributions from other parties.

The Clerk said there was not and he would make sure it was included going forward with a rough outline of priority projects and criteria so that members had a framework for decision making and award amounts.

Action: Clerk to set out decision framework including maximum percentage awards for each tier.

Action: Clerk to submit final draft of resilience fund in January 2023.

Plant replacement

The Clerk said that members had now seen the multi-use machinery report, and after the finance committee meeting, we are in a position to purchase the New Holland T4 and attachments, making us far more able to carry out additional works in the district at traditionally quieter times and under PSCA.

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He said that the initial idea was to buy a Multihog but it was too expensive as a test machine. He did say that should they secure PSCA's for more and more roadside work, it was likely the best bit of equipment available and they would look into it again in the future.

He said that by sourcing second hand it saves a lot of money, and also allows us to use plant we are familiar with, hopefully avoiding the Berky situation from 10 years ago.

The Chairman asked if this was a replacement or additional piece of equipment.

The Clerk said it was an additional piece of equipment that was designed to offer relief to the need to pull the larger machines away from work in the outer reaches of the district, offer better multi-use activities, and also to reduce the hazard presented on roadside work by the bigger tractors.

Another question was asked about the gearbox in the T4 machine.

The Clerk said it was a 40kph gearbox and that this was because they didn't anticipate a need for the tractor to travel too far in any one journey.

On proposal from the Chair, it was **AGREED** by all that the Board should purchase the New Holland T4.100 and associated attachments.

The Clerk said there was a part two to this request that involved trading in our existing Valtra tractors and returning to New Holland to keep our plant more local than Charing and New Romney.

There was a comment that for the sake of some minor travelling it might not be worth the effort of going through the switch back at this time.

The Clerk said he agreed and was not particularly fussed whether the Board chose to go back to New Holland or not as Valtra, Crawford's, and Bell Agri had all been exceptional in their service. He said this was purely about being offered a really good trade in price from a local, known, and trusted dealer, and being able to get the tractors all back local in one go while the Board was in favour of progressing the works side of the company.

A further comment from members said that they felt having a more local partner for the major plant offered good opportunity to reduce downtime.

The Chairman asked the Works Supervisor about downtime.

The Works Supervisor said the issue with travelling to Charing and New Romney is that it usually pulled two people away for at least a morning on each trip. He said that while this wasn't a major problem, it did seem unnecessary to drive so far when it could be handled much closer to home where the office staff could even be utilised to collect staff at short notice.

He continued by saying that he and the Clerk had spent a lot of time searching the market to ensure this was a good idea at this time and felt that because we had still had warranty and low depreciation this was as good a time to swap as any.

The Clerk said that whether we upgrade the larger tractors or not, there is no denying it's a good price and gets our kit back into a more geographically friendly area. He added that it was worth saying that the price is only being held on the basis that we buy before Christmas as they want to get these machines off their books to make room for the new models.

On proposal from the Chair, and seconded by L Young, it was **AGREED** by all that the Board should return to using New Holland tractors and make the immediate switch using the quote submitted by Haynes.

UM32B Extension

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The Clerk explained he wanted to request an extension of watercourse UM32B on Pierce Mill Lane, East Peckham to counteract potential for flooding on the road.

He showed members that the extension would be around 100m and take the watercourse to a more natural collection point from a road culvert. He explained that this does take us slightly outside the district but there is nothing to stop us taking this responsibility on, and that we are insured to carry out drainage related activities anywhere so this would be acceptable to NFU too.

On proposal from the Chair, all **AGREED** to extend the watercourse at Pierce Mill Lane as displayed by the Clerk.

At this point several members of the Board had to leave the meeting.

15. GOVERNANCE AND POLICY

The Clerk asked members if they had any further changes to the amended policies which were:

Updated Policy

- Access Request Policy
- Capital Financing and Reserves Policy
- Debt Recovery Policy
- General Privacy Notice
- Members Expenses Policy
- Planning and Byelaw Strategy
- Severe Weather Policy
- Website Privacy Policy

On proposal from the Chairman, it was **AGREED** to approve the policies listed

Action: Clerk to update website with policies

Updated Governance Documentation

- Division of Responsibilities
- Finance Regulations
- Scheme of Delegation

On proposal from the Chair, it was **AGREED** to accept governance documents listed.

Action: Clerk to update website with governance documents

16. PLANNING AND CONSENTS REPORT

The Clerk reported that there has only been one consent request received for a development at Stilebridge, to which we had approved. He mentioned that this was also going through the EA permit system in relation to discharge of treated fowl into a main river.

He informed members that the request from the finance committee meeting to pass further comment on the Brook Farm/Church Lane development was sent to the WLMA as requested.

17. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

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The Chairman told members that with his intention of stepping down from the council in 2023, it may leave the Board without a Chairman halfway through the year. He said that in order to prevent that, and to ensure continuity at the top of the Board he wished to hold an election for a change in Chairman. He suggested to the Board that the current Vice-Chairman might be the best person to take over at this juncture.

The Vice-Chairman said that he would be honoured to take on the role as Chairman should that be the wish of the members.

The Clerk led the voices of gratitude for the effort, commitment, and leadership provided by the outgoing Chairman, saying that he had given us excellent stability and wisdom during a turbulent time for the Board as it separated from the Lower administratively. He said on behalf of himself and his staff he thanked Mr Rogers for everything he had done to which all members present agreed.

The Clerk then suggested that it might in fact be better to swap the roles of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman so that we had continuity of the Chair but also so that Mr Rogers could take up the position of Chairman of Finance until such a time as he felt he may have to step down from the Board.

All members present agreed this seemed to be a good idea and offered neatness to the situation.

On proposal of the outgoing Chairman, it was **AGREED** that Mr David Goff become the Chairman of the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board.

On proposal of the incoming Chairman, it was **AGREED** that Mr Howard Rogers become the Vice-Chairman of the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board.

The Clerk said that as several members had to leave prior to the vote, but noting that we were still quorum, the decision should stand, but that it should be ratified in the January meeting of the Board, to which all members **AGREED**. He then welcomed Mr Goff as the new Chairman.

It was commented by members that there was a vacant landowner position on the Board and perhaps Mr Rogers might become an elected member in the future should he not be co-opted by the council.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Depot Works

The Clerk reported that the work is ongoing to complete the remedial actions from the health and safety inspection.

He said the mess room has now been bonded and cracks repaired. The room was also redecorated at the same time to cover over the repairs made to the walls.

He informed members that the guttering is proving to be an issue as Mr Baldock suggested in his report. We are trying to avoid a £1500 bill but the tree work to the rear of the depot is proving difficult to navigate. We will look into having just the front gutter cleaned.

He finished by saying that the tarmac is completed, but we are now getting prices for line work to finish it off and ensure safe parking and travel is indicated.

There was an offer from a member of a telehandler and a cage in order to clear the gutters.

The Clerk said he would double check if that was legal as he believed that when using lifting equipment, the person being lifted should be in control of the machine at all times.

Action: Clerk to check if a person can be lifted in a cage without having control of the machine itself.

Calendar of Meetings 2023

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The Clerk said that the members had been presented with a calendar of meetings for 2023.

The Chairman asked if there were any comments from members about the proposed dates, to which all were happy at this stage.

19. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

There was a private and confidential conversation relating to a previous employee.

The Clerk and the Finance Officer then left the meeting and members discussed the Clerk's appraisal.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was set as:

Tuesday 24 January	Board Meeting - Virtual 10am
Tuesday 30 May	Finance EOY Committee – In person 10am

21. CLOSE

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked the Clerk and his team for their efforts, and for the content of the meeting. He also wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year before closing the meeting.