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**UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING** of the **BOARD**  
held at Bullen Court Business Centre,  
Bullen Court Farm, Bullen Lane TN12 5LX  
on **Tuesday 12 November 2024** at **10am**.

**Members of the Board Present**

O Baldock  
M Davis  
D Goff (Chairman)  
Cllr King  
H Rogers  
C Wheeler  
Cllr M Crane  
Cllr M Summersgill  
Cllr Patterson  
C Hosmer  
Cllr Harwood  
Cllr Coleman

**In attendance**

O Pantrey – Clerk  
L Carey – Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)  
J Schuiling – Works Manager (WM)  
E Robertson – Sustainable Development Officer (SDO)  
Carol Donaldson – Ecologist  
Sarah Butler – Guest/Member of Public

The Chairman proceeded the meeting by a round table introduction of members and welcomed the new members to the Board.

**1. APOLOGIES**

- Apologies received from Stuart Highwood, William Thompson & Louise Young
- Non-Attendees – Cllr A Baker

The Board welcomed Carol Donaldson & Sarah Butler to the Meeting.

**2. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION**

No pecuniary interests were noted by members for the upcoming meeting.  
Mr Wheeler had previously declared his interest as the owner of the Board's main office.

**3. REGISTER OF MEMBERS INTERESTS 2024/25**

The Clerk will be reissuing the register of members interest for all members to sign in the new year, as this is a legal requirement.  
He suggested that members only fill these out if they are different to last year's submissions.

**4. MINUTES**

The Chairman requested any alterations to the minutes of 18 June 2024. 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 18 June 2024 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 at present there were none but that he wished to resolve one matter arising that he said needed the immediate action of the Board regarding reconstitution.

The Chairman said not at present as we now have new members on Board and to see how the numbers go. **All AGREED.**

No more actions were raised.

**6. ECOLOGY PRESENTATION**

The Chairman informed members that they had been joined by Carol Donaldson, who gave a presentation of the overview of works completed within the ecology study over the past 3 years.

Circulation of the presentation was made available upon request.

The Chairman thanked Ms Donaldson for her presentation and summed it up as a positive attitude that things were improving in our relationships within and around our catchment area and that perhaps staffing levels will have to be reviewed in the future as we take on more ecology works.

**7. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman said that he along with the Clerk and the RFO attended the ADA regional meeting at Ashford and would be in attendance of the main ADA Conference the following day. The meeting reflected on the major issues with capital and maintenance spending as there is much more ground water. The Government are today looking at the flooding issues and perhaps the IDB's will be asked to help more with this in the future.

The ADA Gazette was offered to the members to sign up and receive the magazine quarterly. The Chairman also attended a meeting at Sittingbourne with the farmers and horticultural growers from Spain and how they cope with their drainage.

The Chairman said he had again attended at the Ploughing Match in September which was well received.

**8. MEMBERS ROUND TABLE REPORT**

A question was asked about conservation and ecology and that if this should be another committee and if so, is there any vacancies.

At present Stuart Highwood represents the conservationist for the Board and if more is required it needs to be investigated for the next 5 to 10 years, (sub committee for the work).

The members were told that the existing staff cannot at present take on more workload in this area, but the Clerk and Chairman would take a look at our HR and financial position.

**9. CLERK'S REPORT**

No questions were put to the Clerk; however, the Clerk did offer an educational presentation, via Teams meeting, to those of the Board who do not know what the IDB actual does or wished to know more.

**10. WORKS REPORT**

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The Chairman asked the Works Manager if he had any comments to add regarding his report and if the Board had any questions for the Works Manager – None.

The Works Manager informed the Board that with the bad weather in September, they were now playing catch up and will present the final figures at the January 2025 meeting.

The Clerk informed the new members of the Board that the work of the ground team was shown on the website as a live feed and that at any time the Ratepayers could see what and where we were working on.

The Chairman asked the Works Manager to thank his team for all their hard work this year.

### **11. FINANCE REPORT**

The Chairman ask the RFO if she had anything else to report on with regards to the information already given in her report. The RFO said that there was none at present.

The following requires approval from the Board:

#### **Approval of top sheets reconciliation of period:**

On proposal by Chris Wheeler and Seconded by Colin Hosmer, it was **AGREED** that the reconciliation for the period were correct.

The RFO requested that we send in the Bailiffs to a landowner to obtain the funds owed to the Board via the Drainage Rates. The Board asked how much he owed and if the cost of the Bailiffs would offset against this, as the Board did not want to be out of pocket. If the Bailiff cost were to be far more expensive than what the return could be, perhaps it would be better to leave it as it is for the foreseeable future.

**ACTION** – RFO to find out costs of the Bailiffs.

AGAR and External Auditors report was received in September with no highlighted issues. The Chairman complemented the RFO on her excellent work.

#### **Approval of Financial Risk Assessment:**

Anniversary approval of the Risk Assessment as highlighted in the June minutes.

Proposed by Mark Davis and seconded by Owen Baldock, it was **AGREED** by all to accept the financial risk assessment.

#### **Finance Committee to be reconvened:**

The Clerk informed the members that due to Cllr Harper being removed from the Board by Maidstone Council, the reconstitution of the Finance Committee must be reconsidered. He said that at present there are 4 members from the main Board on the committee. The Chairman offered this out to the Board and explained that it was only mostly an advisory and oversight position as the Finance Committee did not have the powers to make the final decision as it once did. Cllr Summersgill offered to join the Finance Committee.

The Board **AGREED** to reconstitute the Finance Committee every 3 years.

On proposal by Cllr Coleman and seconded by Mr Davis, it was **AGREED** that the finance committee would be made up of The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Mr Highwood, Mr Wheeler, and Cllr Summersgill until November 2027 or sooner as needed.

### **12. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Sustainable Development Officer (SDO) requested that any questions relating to her reports to be asked with her after the meeting. There are at present no sites for the consideration of the Board.

Mr G Wilson's complaint: - E mailed received from a new solicitor today, which yet the Clerk and SDO have not had time to read and respond to, as this needs to be discussed also with KCC. Any action or funds required for this will come from the Byelaw Enforcement Fund. Mr Davis has offered to read the letter from the solicitor.

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Interviews will be taking place in the next couple of weeks for a further team member and The Clerk and SDO will update the Board at the meeting in January of their success.

The SDO requested that when she sends out the application poles that the members answer the pole at the bottom of the sheet and not e mail her their response. Any further information that the Board requires is in the appendix 8.

### **13. BIODIVERSITY REPORT – Mink Eradication**

The Clerk said that work had been done up the country on the Norfolk Broads to eradicate the invasive American Mink, and that Prof Tony Martin has decided to move his team down to the South to start the process there.

The Clerk requested that the Board considers its involvement as a prominent authority and whether the Board would consider financing this at a cost of up to £8,000.

The decision was agreed to be made in the January meeting, once the Clerk has investigated this further.

One of the members stated that they thought this sort of money could be put to better use on an ecologist to look at habitat instead.

It has been requested that the Clerk asks Prof Martin to give a presentation in the January Board meeting.

**ACTION** – Clerk to arrange WRSE presentation for January’s Board meeting.

### **14. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The Chairman asked if there were any questions relating to the H&S report – None.

The Health & Safety representative for the Board visited the Depot and stated that there was a vast improvement and that he was very happy that there were no H&S issues.

He also congratulated the Clerk on achieving his level 6 NVQ in Occupational Health and Safety Management and the Works Manager for passing his NEBOSH General Certificate earlier this month.

The Clerk said that with the Board are now able to take on more invasive species, weed cutting, and PSCA works due to our continually improving H&S standards. He also suggested that a continuing improvement in health and safety management would reduce the risk of fines and financial liabilities on the Board which was well received by the members.

### **15. STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVE**

5 Year plan – For information. The Clerk asked the new members to give appendix 11 a further read and if they had any questions or additions they would like to make, then please to contact him.

Update of Board Achievements – The strategic objectives for the Board were set out over 7 areas, and the Clerk demonstrated what had been done in 2024 to achieve these.

Council newsletter to be approved – The letter is sent to all our partners to let them know what we are doing. He asked if the Board was happy for this to be sent on an annual basis. All in **AGREEMENT**.

**ACTION** – Clerk to send newsletter to partners in the region.

### **16. GOVERNANCE**

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
- CCTV Policy
- Debt Policy
- Debt Recovery Procedure
- General Privacy Notice

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- 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

### Updated Governance Documentation

- Division of Responsibilities
- Scheme of Delegation

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

**ACTION** – Clerk to update website with governance documents

**ACTION** – Clerk to update website with policies

## **17. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

IDB1 Form 2024 to be sent to DEFRA

The Chairman indicated that the Board was a potential cause for concern as our numbers at Board meetings were not as high as would be expected. He said that thankfully we are now back up to a more appropriate number and are not a cause for concern anymore in the eyes of DEFRA.

Members asked who was missing from the Board, to which the Chairman informed them it was 2 elected members short.

Mr Wheeler left the meeting at 12:30pm

## **18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Office/Depot location report – All members have been asked to give the Appendix 14 a further read and to give thoughts at the January meeting.
- Calendar of meetings – All members were happy with the dates for the 2025 meetings.
- DRS Regional Amalgamation – The Clerk gave an update on this and explained that the WMA were offering the new chance to access DRS 365. It has been suggested that for DRS specifically, all the Southeast Boards go into an administrative consortium to lower the costs. This is at present being discussed with Phil Camamile, who has agreed in principle for this to go ahead. It was also noted that lead Board will be appointed to be the licensee and recover costs by invoicing the other Boards.

The Clerk asked the Board if they would be included in the administrative consortium for DRS and would they be happy to be the licensee if necessary.

It was **AGREED** by All to both elements.

## **19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was set as:

Board Meeting – Tuesday 21st January 2025, 10am – Bullen Court

Finance Committee – Tuesday 10th December 2024, 10am – Bullen Court

## **20. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS**

At this time the staff and Clerk were asked to leave the meeting whilst the discussion of the Clerks performance and other staffing issues.

## **21. CLOSE**

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked the Clerk and his team for their efforts and closed the meeting.

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