UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD

Held at **Bullen Court, Bullen Lane, East Peckham, Kent, TN12 5LX**

On **Tuesday 16 June 2026 at 10:00am**

Members of the Board Present

D Goff (Chairman)
H Rogers (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr D King
O Baldock
S McAll
R Lingham
Cllr D Kent
C Wheeler
Cllr T Harwood
Cllr R Rodwell
C Hosmer

In Attendance

O Pantrey – Clerk
L Carey – Finance Officer
J Schuiling – Works Manager
B Thomson – Sustainability Officer

PRESENT

Members and officers present introduced themselves to the Board. New Members Cllr Rachel Rodwell and R Lingham were welcomed to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr M Crane, M Davis, Cllr C Coleman and W Thompson.
It was noted that no response had been received from S Highwood, L Young or Cllr N Williams

2. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION

Members were invited to declare any interests relating to the agenda. It was noted that S Highwood would declare an interest in the Natural Flood Management funding application due to a family connection.

3. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS 2026/27

The Clerk reminded Members of the requirement to complete the Register of Members' Interests and confirmed that assistance would be provided where necessary.

4. MINUTES – MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2026

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on **20 January 2026** were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. ACTION LIST AND MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Clerk advised that the Board action list would be revised to align with the newly established committee structure. Future committee actions would be monitored through the relevant committee reports, with only Board decisions remaining on the central action register.

Members welcomed the revised approach and noted that it should improve monitoring and delivery of actions. No further matters arising were raised.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman updated Members on activities since the previous meeting, including the productive meeting between the Finance Committee and the auditors. This received positive feedback regarding improvements to the Board's governance arrangements and the possibility of reducing audit time in future years. The Chairman advised that guidance had been received regarding governance self-assessment and proposed that a review of Board governance arrangements be undertaken.

The Board received an update on discussions with the Environment Agency, including catchment-based working, organisational change and communication with local communities. Concerns were expressed regarding silo working, river maintenance communication and the absence of post-flood debrief meetings. Members agreed that improved partnership working would benefit all organisations involved in flood risk management.

The Chairman reported on succession planning for the Finance Officer role. Initial discussions had considered future staffing requirements, including outsourcing opportunities and the need for an appropriate handover period before retirement. Members noted that the Ombudsman had declined to investigate a historic complaint due to the elapsed timescale and thanked officers for the considerable work undertaken in responding to the matter.

7. CLERK REPORT

The Clerk updated the Board on the Ombudsman decision and confirmed that no further action would be taken.
The Chairman thanked the office team for the significant amount of work undertaken in responding to the complaint and associated Freedom of Information requests.

Prior to receiving the committee reports, the Board formally ratified the appointments of the committee chairs:
Finance – H Rogers
Works – O Baldock
Sustainability – Cllr Harwood, S McAll (Vice)

On proposal from Cllr Kent, it was **AGREED** that the members would hold those chairs for 3 years.

8. WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT

The Board received the Works Committee report. O Baldock noted that operational activities continued to progress satisfactorily. The postponement of the previous committee meeting was noted, and Members were advised that a further meeting had been arranged.

Members received an update on operational works, including the treatment of giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed across the district. The significant scale of the work undertaken, together with the increasing extent of invasive species across the catchment meant a new approach was required. The Board discussed the development of the Invasive Non-Native Species strategy and the need for closer working with the Sustainability Committee and external partners. Members recognised the benefits of local training initiatives and improved catchment-wide coordination.

An update was provided on the recent investment in the tractor winch, with the significant cost savings already achieved through in-house delivery of work being welcomed.

Finally, the committee chair said that health and safety performance remained positive, with low incident rates reported. Members also discussed the continued use of glyphosate and the monitoring of additional invasive species, including Cherry Laurel on roadsides and Parrot's Feather on the River Sherway.

9. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Board received the Finance Committee report and noted the positive engagement between Members and the Internal Auditors. The Chairman of the Committee commended the Finance Officer for the work undertaken in strengthening the Board's financial governance arrangements.
Members considered the recommendation to maintain the £250,000 fixed-term investment.

On proposal from the Chair, it was **AGREED** That the £250,000 fixed-term deposit be reinvested.
On proposal from H Rogers, it was **AGREED** to approve the Investment Policy.

The Board discussed opportunities to strengthen governance arrangements further through self-assessment and the possible benefits of professional body membership.

On proposal from H Rogers, it was **AGREED** that both the Top Sheets reconciliation and the amended Financial Risk Assessment were unanimously approved.

The Board recorded its appreciation for the contribution made by Cllr Summersgill to the Finance Committee and the Board.

10. SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE REPORT
The Chairman of the Sustainability Committee thanked officers and Members for their work in establishing the new committee structure and acknowledged the support of the Vice-Chair, S McAll in the early success.

The Board considered the planning and consent applications presented and resolved as follows:

- **24_338_C - Jubilee Sports Ground, Headcorn Road, Staplehurst (3G Artificial Grass Pitch)** – Approved.
- **25_790_C - Lingfield House, East Grinstead Road, Lingfield** – Approved.
- **26_877_C - Eastbourne Road Development** – Approved.
- **26_878_C - Lenham Road, Headcorn Development** – Approved.
- **26_894_C - Mote Road Development** – Approved.

Members discussed the increasing use of sustainable drainage features, including swales and attenuation systems, and the associated challenges for long-term water management and maintenance. Concerns were expressed regarding treated effluent discharges and the cumulative impact of development across the catchment.

The Board considered the Natural Flood Management funding application for works at Yalding from J Highwood involving restoration of a paleochannel and associated habitat creation. It was discussed that this required an agreement to be created for clarity and consistency.

The Chair requested that S McAll and M Davis work with the Sustainability Officer to produce the document.

It was **AGREED** that this should then be sent to the Sustainability Committee for approval ahead of confirmation being sent to the applicant.

On proposal by Cllr Harwood, and seconded by S McAll, it was **AGREED t**hat funding of £14,000 be approved, subject to the completion of an appropriate agreement and suitable monitoring arrangements.

Members discussed wider strategic issues relating to planning, water resources and the Board's role as a non-statutory consultee. They also considered the increased use of Grampian conditions, infrastructure pressures within the frame of adequacy of existing drainage systems.

The Board recognised that there was a growing need for strategic involvement in water management issues but also acknowledged the significant resource implications for the organisation. It was agreed that future resource requirements and opportunities for wider engagement should be considered further, either by variable incomes or raising of the levy.

11. STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVE PLANNING/ACTIONS
The Board received the Plant Replacement Report and discussed how it provided a long-term overview of anticipated capital expenditure and asset replacement.

Members discussed the rationale for maintaining appropriate reserves to support future investment and noted the expected replacement programmes for vehicles, plant and equipment. Consideration was also given to future developments in vehicle technology, including electric and hybrid options.

12. INTERNAL AUDIT END OF YEAR REPORT

The Board received the Internal Audit report and noted the positive outcome of the audit process.

Members noted that the recommendations related primarily to governance and administrative improvements and that actions arising had either been completed or were underway. Updates to website compliance, data protection arrangements and contractual matters were noted.

13. END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS – YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026

The Board considered the End of Year Accounts for the financial year ending March 2026.

On proposal from the Chairman, it was **AGREED** by all to approve the end of year accounts and for the Chairman to sign the Annual Governance Statement.

14. ANNUAL RETURN (AGAR) – YEAR ENDING MARCH 2026

The Board considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

On proposal from the Chairman, it was **AGREED** that the AGAR be approved and signed by the Chairman, Clerk, and Finance Officer for submission to the external auditor.

It was also stated that the Clerk should post the unaudited accounts on the website.

15. GOVERNANCE

The Board considered the governance documents circulated in advance of the meeting. Members noted that the new Invasive Species Management Policy represented an important addition to the Board's governance framework.

On proposal from the Chair, it was **AGREED** to approve the following policies:

New Policy

- Sustainability – Invasive Species Management Policy.

Updated Policies

- Board – Business Continuity Policy.
- Board – Complaints and Feedback Policy.
- Board – Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Board – Cybersecurity and Acceptable Use Policy.
- Board – Data Protection Compliance Statement.
- Board – Website Privacy Policy.
- Finance – Investment Policy (Within item 9)
- Finance – Members' Expenses Policy.
- Works – Training and Development Policy.

Updated Governance Documentation

- Board – Annual Governance Statement.
- Board – Finance Regulations.
- Board – Policy Statement.
- Board – Scheme of Delegation.
- Board – Statement of Accounting Policy.
- Finance – Financial Risk Assessment (Within item 9).

Updated / Other

- Board – Business Continuity / Emergency Plan.
- Board – Scheme of Publication.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Lees Road Development

The Board received an update regarding the proposed storage building at Lees Road.

Members considered the quotations received and discussed specification requirements, including foundations and future operational needs. It was agreed that further quotations and refinements should be obtained before a final decision was made.

Environment Agency Precept Report
The Board received the Environment Agency Precept Report for 2025/26. which demonstrated the ongoing partnership working with the local asset team via the precept. Members received an update on the extension of Public Sector Cooperation Agreement work and Phase 2 of the Pen Stream project, including weir removal and habitat improvements.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
The Board approved the following meeting dates:

- Board Meeting – Tuesday 10 November 2026.
- Finance Committee – Tuesday 13 October 2026.
- Works Committee – Tuesday 20 October 2026.
- Sustainability Committee – Tuesday 27 October 2026.

18. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS
The Board received a confidential update regarding the conclusion of a staff grievance process.

Members noted that aspects of the grievance had been partially upheld and that management actions and additional training had been implemented. No significant disciplinary action was considered necessary.

19. CLOSE
There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members and officers for their attendance and closed the meeting a **12:00pm**.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Clerk and Chair to assess a governance review of the Board's effectiveness following auditor feedback.
- Clerk to obtain and present outsourcing options and costings for future Finance Officer provision.
- H Rogers and Cllr King to investigate governance self-assessment opportunities, including potential CIPFA membership or alignment, and report back to the Board.
- Sustainability and Works Committees to develop the Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) delivery strategy jointly between the Works and Sustainability Committees, including training and performance measures where appropriate.
- S McAll and SO to prepare and complete a formal agreement for the Natural Flood Management funding project and establish appropriate monitoring arrangements and send to committee members for approval.
- Clerk and Chair to assess Board’s long-term involvement in wider water resource and catchment management
- Chair to sign the Annual Governance Statement
- FO to Complete the statutory AGAR submission process and publish the required notices.
- Clerk to place the unaudited accounts on the Board website
- Clerk to obtain a third quotation for the Lees Road storage building, refine the specification as necessary, and report back to the November Board meeting.