

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 2.00pm on Thursday 3 November 2016
In the Board Room at the Canterbury City Council Offices, Military Road, Canterbury, CT1 9SN

PRESENT

Mr M J G Tapp (Chairman), Mr A D Linfoot OBE (Vice Chairman), Councillor M J Burgess, Councillor M Conolly, Mr P S Dunn, Councillor A K Hicks, Mr P Howard, Councillor M Martin, Councillor M Ovenden, Councillor P J F Sims, Councillor D O Smith, Mr G R Steed, Mr M P Wilkinson, Mr P Williams and Mrs G Wyant.

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Ms D McNamara (Incident Response Team Leader – Upper & Lower Stour Area, Environment Agency), Mr I Nunn (FCRM Operations Manager for KSL, Environment Agency), Mr D Godden (IDB Contracts Manager, Rhino Plant Hire). The Chairman also welcomed Ms C Donaldson (Carol Donaldson Associates).

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance were Mr J E Dilnot (Engineering Assistant), Mr P N Dowling (Clerk & Engineer to the Board) and Ms A Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Walker, Mr P E Dyas and Mr J F E Smith.

ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2017

In accordance with the Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Board's Rules and Standing Orders there is a requirement for the Board to elect a Chairman for the ensuing year. Mr A D Linfoot proposed that Mr M J G Tapp be re-elected to the post of Chairman, this proposal was seconded by Councillor M Martin. There being no other nominations, it was resolved that Mr M J G Tapp be elected to the post of Chairman for the period ending November 2017.

ELECTION OF A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2017

The Chairman stated that in accordance with the Board's Rules and Standing Orders, there is a requirement for the Board to elect a Vice Chairman for the ensuing year. The Chairman proposed Mr A D Linfoot for the post of Vice Chairman, this proposal was seconded by Mr P S Dunn. There being no other nominations, it was resolved that Mr A D Linfoot be elected to the post of Vice Chairman for the period ending November 2017.

ELECTION OF A FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2017

The Chairman stated that the Board's Rules and Standing Orders also require the Board to elect a Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee for the ensuing year. The Chairman stated that last year's committee consisted of himself, the Vice Chairman, Mr P S Dunn, Mr P E Dyas, Councillor A Hicks, Councillor M Martin, Councillor M Ovenden, Councillor H Stummer-Schmertzing and Mr M P Wilkinson. The Chairman stated that Councillor M Martin wished to withdraw from the F & GP Committee and proposed Councillor D O Smith as her replacement. Therefore, with there being no other nominations, the Chairman proposed that the Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee for the year ending November 2017 should consist of the following: The Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Mr P S Dunn, Mr P E Dyas, Councillor A Hicks (Ashford Borough Council), Councillor M Ovenden (Dover District Council), Councillor D O Smith (Ashford Borough Council), Councillor H Stummer-Schmertzing (Thanet District Council) and Mr M P Wilkinson.

The proposal was seconded by the Vice Chairman and it was resolved that the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Mr P S Dunn, Mr P E Dyas, Councillor A Hicks (Ashford Borough Council), Councillor M Ovenden (Dover District Council), Councillor D O Smith (Ashford Borough Council), Councillor H Stummer-Schmertzing (Thanet District Council) and Mr M P Wilkinson be elected to form the Board's Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee for the period ending November 2017.

APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2017

The Chairman stated that the Accounts and Audit Regulations require the Board to appoint/re-appoint an Internal Auditor for the ensuing year. The Chairman stated that the internal audit function is currently carried out by Mr David Griffiths of D G Consultancy Ltd and that he was happy to propose that Mr David Griffiths be re-appointed for a further year. The Chairman's proposal was seconded by Councillor Hicks and it was resolved that Mr David Griffiths be re-appointed as the Board's Internal Auditor for the period ending November 2017.

ELECTION OF AN INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW TEAM FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2017

The Chairman stated that the Accounts and Audit Regulations require the Board to review its Internal Audit arrangements annually. This review is carried out by the Board's Internal Audit Review Team which consists of 3 Board Members. The current Internal Audit Review Team consists of Mr P S Dunn, Councillor A Hicks and Mr M P Wilkinson. As Mr Wilkinson has been on the Internal Audit Review Team the longest it was proposed to replace him. The Chairman thanked Mr Wilkinson for all his work and time on the Internal Audit Review Team and asked for another volunteer to join the Internal Audit Review Team. Mr G R Steed volunteered to join the Internal Audit Review Team as the third member of the team. It was therefore proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Burgess and resolved that Mr P S Dunn, Councillor A Hicks and Mr G Steed be elected as the Board's Internal Audit Review Team for 2016-2017.

SHORT PRESENTATION BY MISS CAROL DONALDSON (CAROL DONALDSON ASSOCIATES)
ON THE BOARD'S BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME PROGRESS (BAP)

Ms Donaldson started her presentation by thanking the Board for their continued commitment to improving the biodiversity within the drainage district and for supporting her plan for future work – this programme followed on from the 6 years of surveys highlighting what to focus on and what work would be beneficial for the future. Over the last 12 months Carol has focussed on:

- Resurveying some channels and reviewing maintenance recommendations – resurveyed 13 watercourses and assessed another 4 for possible enhancements, she focused on the channels first surveyed in 2010 as these have had six years under changed management and effects can be seen and reviewed if necessary. Interesting to see that often there has been a change in land use from grazing marsh to arable or fallow which is not necessarily helpful for wildlife often meaning further management is needed. The resurveys also highlighted pollution incidents, the need for tree management and some examples of poor land management, which all occur on Bockhanger Dyke (IDB19).
- Suggesting a programme of enhancements for a selection of channels – enhancements have taken place on South Poulders Dyke (IDB170) and this project may be used as a template for further improvements to channels around Sandwich. Proposed enhancement projects include Sturry Road Dyke (IDB34), Shalmsford Street Dyke (IDB31), Ash Level Feed Dyke (IDB207), West Monkton Valley Stream (IDB51) and Sarre Penn (Main River).
- Looking at Biosecurity and responding to threats within the district – it was identified that the non-native invasive plant Parrot's Feather has become a problem in several channels on Chislet Marshes. Rhino Plant Hire were asked to do a severe cut of the affected areas on Wademarsh Stream (IDB114) to remove as much of the plant as possible and this will be followed up with spot checks in the spring and possibly further cutting and spraying if necessary.

Ms Donaldson highlighted the vital importance of information, awareness and the practice of good biosecurity. Rhino Pant Hire operators are issued with identification sheets for non-native plants associated with watercourses and they are aware of the importance of checking, cleaning and drying all equipment when working in watercourses known to have invasive species.

- Overseeing maintenance and improvements on some of the Main River Channels – Ms Donaldson and the Board's Engineering Assistant have observed some of the manual and mechanical weed cutting and have discussed with the contractors: biosecurity, the management of the margins and how to work with the channel to create meanders – this has proved to be very useful and has been beneficial for both parties.
- Looking at a project for the Sarre Penn which has had flooding problems in the past – regular flooding problems occur here and it has been identified that a two-stage channel would stop silt from settling whilst increasing the conveyance capacity for higher flows.
- Planning a programme of meetings with landowners to discuss possible improvements in the coming months

The Chairman asked when there is a problem with an invasive weed do the normal restrictions to working still apply. Ms Donaldson stated that more severe measures are sometimes required when trying to eradicate invasive plants though a balance still needs to be found.

The Chairman asked if a regular check is kept on the nitrate levels of the Stour because most of the Board's dykes are fed from the Stour. Ms Donaldson stated that she looks at the watercourses in isolation and she is not aware of what is happening upstream or downstream of them. The Chairman stated that it may be worth measuring the nitrate levels where the feeds come in to get an idea of what is occurring in the Stour.

The Chairman asked Ms Donaldson if she knew what is happening about the sharp increase in the mink population. Ms Donaldson said that she is aware that the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) has been placing mink rafts out to assess numbers and presumably they will follow that up with some sort of control measures. Ms Donaldson further stated that she has not found as much evidence of water voles as she expected and that this is possibly due to increased numbers of mink. The Clerk & Engineer reported that he has been speaking with Jon Shelton of the KSCP who have placed a dozen rafts across the Lower Stour Marshes area and have the materials to install more but need volunteers to monitor them. The Clerk & Engineer stated that if anyone is willing to have these on their land and monitor them they should contact him. The Clerk & Engineer did mention the workshop to Mr Shelton that had originally been suggested and he said he will consider it but KSCP resources are currently stretched.

Mr P Howard asked Ms Donaldson if when inspecting the dykes, she makes direct recommendations to the workforce. Ms Donaldson stated that she assesses the watercourses from a biodiversity point of view and she puts her findings/recommendations to the Clerk & Engineer of the Board who then takes other factors into consideration, such as issues around flooding, before finalising the programme. Ms Donaldson explained that she may suggest that somewhere has a reduced weed cut (50%) but if it is an area that is known to flood weed cutting will usually continue to be 80%. Mr Howard asked if there was a standard weed cut that operators use if no other recommendations are in place. Ms Donaldson stated that she has now surveyed all the channels so there are specific recommendations to each IDB channel but prior to that all the channels would have had 80% weed cut (marginal fringes retained). The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board has previously adopted standard specifications which have been developed and agreed with the Association of Drainage Authorities, the Environment Agency and other Flood Risk Management Authorities. The Clerk & Engineer further stated that Ms Donaldson has not just been looking at the width of cut, she has been identifying where there are problems or enhancement opportunities or rare species and trying to tailor the Board's maintenance around that to maximise benefits whilst still maintaining conveyance capacities.

Mr Dunn stated that in certain areas on the Ash Level and Richborough Stream in particular, where the land is used for grazing and an 80% cut has been carried out, wide margins are left and when during the Summer the weed grows, often livestock end up stuck in the watercourse. Mr Dunn asked if, where there are sheep, the margins could be cut down. Mr Nunn stated both the Environment Agency and the IDB are using similar specifications but where specific requirements are sought, the landowner needs to speak to the relevant organisation who will then assess if those specific requirements can be achieved.

The Chairman thanked Ms Donaldson for her presentation.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 4 AUGUST 2016

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on Thursday 4 August 2016 were received. It was proposed by Councillor Hicks, seconded by Mr Dunn and resolved that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings at that meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Environment Agency Works

Councillor Smith asked if the results from the survey on the Aylesford Stream to test the phosphate levels had been received. Ms McNamara reported that there is still no new information on this but she will continue to chase for this information.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee held on Monday 17 October 2016 were received. It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by Councillor Hicks and resolved that the minutes be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

JOINT REPORT OF THE CLERK & ENGINEER AND FINANCE & RATING OFFICER FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman ran through the report (this report is fully integrated in the F&GP meeting minutes of 17 October 2016).

Ref: A6-1 Environment Agency Appointments

It was reported that the Environment Agency's Area Manager, Mr Andrew Pearce, has now been appointed Deputy Director for Asset Management and Ms Julie Foley has been appointed Area Manager for Kent, South London & East Sussex. Prior to this appointment, she was Area Manager for the Environment Agency's Cambridgeshire & Bedfordshire Area and was previously Deputy Director for Sustainable Places with national oversight for the Environment Agency's work on spatial planning and sustainable development. Her background prior to that was in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) where she was an environmental advisor to the Defra Ministerial team on climate change, flooding and water management issues.

Ref: W1-39 Main River Rationalisation Project

It was reported that a meeting took place with local EA officers to discuss this project, for which the Stour catchment is a frontrunner (pilot). Although further details are yet to be confirmed, several 'low category' rivers were identified, which the EA finds difficulty obtaining funding for maintenance and which might be better managed by the IDB (or others).

It was further reported that Ms Alice Pinfold has been appointed by the EA to manage this project so it is hoped that progress will be achieved over the coming weeks and months. The EA's new area manager, Ms Julie Foley, has been involved in this project nationally from the outset and has indicated that she intends to retain a direct involvement in the Stour frontrunner. A meeting has been booked for 15 November 2016 with Ms Foley, Ms Pinfold, the Clerk & Engineer, the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. The Chairman reiterated that future funding is a fundamental issue of this project. Councillor Martin asked when will the Board have more information on the funding. Mr Nunn stated that Defra's previous Minister decided that the burden of 'low risk' Main River should be removed from the EA and although steps are being taken with a view to develop this project, Defra's guidance on asset transfers is still awaited and funding provision is on the agenda but no commitments have been made. Mr Nunn stated that it is important that the Clerk & Engineer and Ms Pinfold agree what lengths of watercourse are appropriate for transfer, and associated assets, so that existing costs can be more clearly identified. This will be useful when discussing future funding. Mr Nunn further stated that it is key to remember that this is a pilot scheme where ideas are developing. We are considering what works best for everyone and it is to be based on agreement between all parties.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board is looking at the possible transfer in principle as it accepts that the EA's priorities are being pushed by government towards higher risk systems, strategic planning and incident management. Initial discussions have identified where the EA is going to struggle to fund and maintain some low risk systems. Approx. 67 km of watercourses have been identified which will be subject to finance discussions/arrangements. Ms Pinfold is going to map all of these watercourses and will provide more information on the associated assets and also provide records and costs of previous maintenance.

The Chairman stated that another issue that needs emphasising is that some of the Main Rivers run outside the IDB district, meaning that to adopt these the Board would have to extend its district. An alternative option could possibly be for them to be de-mained but identified by a Local Authority or KCC as important channels needing continued maintenance. The Board would then be able to carry out maintenance on these under a PSCA. The Clerk & Engineer reported that he has approached this subject with Mr M Tant (Flood Risk Manager, KCC) and he said that KCC do not have powers to carry out works in a watercourse so he would expect this to go to the District Councils which do have that power. Therefore, for the top section of the Sarre Penn it would be Canterbury City Council and the uppermost reach of the Great Stour end it would be Ashford Borough Council.

The Chairman proposed that a Sub Committee be formed to work through this project and report back to the F&GP Committee and the Board. The Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Martin, Councillor Sims and Mr G Steed volunteered to form part of the Sub Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Conolly and resolved that the Sub Committee to discuss the Main Rationalisation Project be formed by the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Martin, Councillor Sims and Mr G Steed.

Ref: W4/WSR Rainfall & River Flow Data

The Clerk & Engineer ran through the latest rainfall and river flow data as previously reported in the F&GP meeting minutes.

Ref: W7 IDB Programme of Works (Including works carried out under PSCA)

Weed Cutting

The Clerk & Engineer summarised this year's weed cutting programme, as reported in the F&GP meeting minutes (approx. 130km of IDB watercourses, and approx. 45km of Main Rivers, leaving approx. 55km remaining).

The Clerk & Engineer reported that again Rhino Plant staff have done extremely well in delivering this extended programme and that the Board's appreciation has been passed on to Rhino staff as previously requested.

De-silting

The Clerk & Engineer reported that this year's de-silting programme has been reviewed from 13,732metres estimated to cost £24,410 to a total of 12,629metres estimated to cost £24,094.07. The de-silting programme is scheduled to commence in November.

The Engineering Assistant confirmed that he is still discussing details with the EA regarding around 10km of desilting on Main Rivers under the PSCA (North Stream, Chislet Pump Channel, Delf, North Poulders Stream, North & South Stream (Hacklinge) and a section of the Wantsum).

Spoil Spreading

The Clerk & Engineer reported that most spoil from the 2015-2016 de-silting programme has been spread, as reported in the F&GP meeting minutes.

Tree & Shrub Maintenance

The Board's Engineering Assistant is still working through this programme.

Structures Maintenance

The Board's Engineering Assistant is still working on the installation of water level gauge-boards on IDB and Main River watercourses. A list of minor works on various IDB structures is also still being produced.

Obstruction Clearance

The routine inspection of watercourses continues to be carried out and obstructions cleared as necessary, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

Water Level Control

The Clerk & Engineer reported that water levels continue to be managed in consultation with the Environment Agency in order to balance different requirements. Due to the prolonged period of dry and warm weather, water levels are still generally higher than normal winter levels. Eel protection measures are continuing at Minster Pumping Station (from 1 September until 30 November, not 31 October as previously reported).

Contract Expenditure

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the overall expenditure for water level control and maintenance activities up until 30 September was £115,998 against a forecast of £135,083 (£19,085 below forecast). He further explained that this underspend was mainly related to weed cutting (partly due to some re-scheduling to accommodate Main River), spoil spreading (which was delayed and a substantial amount being completed by landowners) and the structures costs being lower than expected but are expected to level out by the end of the year.

Ref: A4-3 Biodiversity

The Clerk & Engineer reported that Carol Donaldson Associates (CDA) has continued to monitor a selection of IDB watercourses in line with the Board's recently revised BAP and is now focussed on further enhancement works for discussion with landowners in due course.

The channel enhancement proposal for the Sarre Penn at Nethergong Bridge is still to be developed in consultation with the Environment Agency and the landowner.

A plan of action is to be developed in relation to the serious outbreak of Parrot's Feather on Wademarsh Stream (IDB114).

Ref: W7G Environment Agency Works

The Clerk & Engineer reported that Main River weed cutting programme is reported to be progressing well. This year's de-silting programme is still to be finalised. Last year's dredged sections of the Great Stour at Grove Ferry and Fordwich have been re-surveyed and it has been found the Grove Ferry section has already filled back in. Further surveys will continue to help understand silt movements. Although there are currently no plans to carry out any dredging with the boat and barge this winter, investigations are being made into the possibility of some hydro dynamic dredging in the lower reaches towards Sandwich. Mr Nunn stated that it would have most probably have re-silted from the downstream side because the silt in the Stour is marine based but he is not convinced that it is back to the level it was before. The Clerk & Engineer stated that it would be useful to see the survey results to be able to make a comparison. Mr Nunn said that he will look into this and provide the Board with an update of the survey results and plan for the future at a future meeting.

Ms Debbie McNamara reported the following EA activities:

- A boat survey is to be carried out next week at Stonar Cut to identify tree works needed so that the new flag is visible
- Gauge-board installation programme is about to start
- Monkton Engine piling has started, due to be finished soon
- Some work has been done in Finglesham – covered up over 100m in black polythene in between North Stream and South Stream to stop the crassula encroaching on either stream
- Bank repair carried out on the North Stream at Hackling
- Desilting of Broad Dyke to start next week followed on by the North Stream at Marshside – this desilting is to be done in small sections to protect habitat

- Pioneering to start soon
- Pioneering on the Little Stour near Stourmouth as a hole has appeared
- Northern Sea Wall outfall is constantly visited. The EA is in the process of training up 2 drivers to operate dozers to start moving more shingle on the outfall only
- At least a dozen tyres have been removed from the Sarre Penn
- Couldharbour steps and Brooksend steps are been repaired
- Security gates are being put up at Hacklinge access and Minster – combi lock details are available
- New pedestrian access gates are being placed at Worth and Hacklinge (by the Coach & Horses)
- Stop-board replacement programme underway
- The maintenance programme is nearly completed
- Stourmouth Pumping Station access track has been levelled but some pioneering is still to be done once agreed with the landowner.

Ref: A7-1.1 Shared Engineering Resources Agreement

The Clerk & Engineer reported that at a meeting with Medway IDB it was agreed that the current arrangement should be phased-out. The increasing pressures on time for the Clerk & Engineer and for Mr Davis (Works Supervisor, Medway IDBs), working across both areas, and the recent appointment of a Technical Engineer in Medway have contributed to this decision. Medway intends to employ a Planning and Consenting Officer over the coming months. It was therefore agreed that the present arrangements (2 days/week cross-over) will continue until 31 December. If Medway is unable to recruit by 1 January, it was agreed that we will continue to work 1 day/week cross-over until 31 March.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that this arrangement has been in place for nearly 3 years and has benefitted all three Boards. However, with the increasing pressures on the Stour IDB from PSCA working, and possible MR transfers, it is felt that more time needs to be dedicated to the Stour Catchment. The Board will of course continue to liaise with Medway and Romney IDBs on a general day-to-day basis. Members agreed that this is probably the best course of action under the present circumstances.

Ref: W7-7 Public Sector Cooperation Agreements

The Clerk & Engineer reported that a PSCA is now in place with Dover District Council and the Board has now maintained Mathew's Close Dyke (next to Albert Road). He further stated that local residents need to be kept informed of the additional efforts being made to minimise local flood risk – something which is best coordinated by KCC.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that another meeting has taken place with Ashford Borough Council's Cultural Projects Manager to establish whether a PSCA might be of use. ABC's legal team is still to respond. A PSCA with Canterbury City Council will be explored further when ABC's situation has been finalised.

Ref: W5 Planning Applications

The Chairman ran through the planning applications of interest to the Board as reported in the F&GP meeting Minutes.

Ashford Borough Council

The Clerk & Engineer stated that Ashford Borough Council is doing brilliantly within their planning department, planning conditions are becoming extremely detailed and include the design and ongoing maintenance of SuDs.

Ref: W5/NATGRID Richborough Connection Project

The Clerk & Engineer updated Members on the discussions with National Grid regarding a Statement of Common Ground (details reported in the F&GP meeting minutes).

The Clerk & Engineer reported that he had received an email from National Grid saying that the Planning Inspectorate has asked if there is a possibility that we could come to agreement even if this included a partial disapplication of the Board's Byelaws. It does appear that the Planning Inspectorate is placing National Grid under pressure to get this matter resolved. In our latest response, it was re-stated that the Board does not feel that disapplication is necessary.

Ref: W15 Applications for Consent16-ST-02 Alterations to an existing culvert in South Poulders Main Stream (IDB170), at Sandwich (Retrospective).

The Clerk & Engineer updated Members regarding this ongoing issue and reported that at the F&GP meeting it was proposed that an enforcement notice (to remove the structure and recharge costs to Mr Smith) should be issued to Mr Smith.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that after the F&GP meeting, with the Chairman's agreement, he contacted Mr Smith to inform him of the proposed course of action and Mr Smith agreed to meet on site in a final effort to resolve this matter without the need for formal enforcement action. A meeting date of 15 November was agreed.

The Vice Chairman reiterated the fact that if the Clerk & Engineer, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, decides that he needs to go ahead with the enforcement, he will have the Board's authority to do so. All present agreed.

Ref: A3-3 IDB Byelaws

The Chairman reported a problem identified with the Board's byelaws (as detailed in the F&GP meeting minutes).

The Clerk & Engineer reported that since the F&GP Meeting, the ADA had provided an amended version of the Byelaws dated October 2012. This model set of Byelaws was issued to the Members and it was recommended to the Board for consideration /approval. Following discussion about the new model set of Byelaws it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Sims and resolved that these Land

Drainage Byelaws (Amended October 2012) issued by the ADA be adopted by the Board without alteration and the necessary steps should be taken to obtain Ministerial approval.

Ref: F10 Finance/Accounts

Drainage Rate Income - Update

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that the amount of drainage rates now outstanding had been reduced to £519.64.

SPECIAL LEVIES INCOME

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that the second instalments of the Special Levies have now all been received.

FINANCE

Ref: F.1-2 Interim Audit of Accounts for year ending 31 March 2016

The Chairman reported that the Internal Auditor, Mr David Griffiths, conducted his Interim Audit of the Board's accounts and accounting documentation for the year ending 31 March 2017 on Tuesday 25 October 2016. A copy of the report follows:

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2016-2017**

I am pleased to report to Members of the Board that I have completed my interim internal audit of the Board's records for 2016-2017.

My work is primarily an independent check on the financial systems and internal controls that are in place. Members should be aware that my work cannot be relied on to identify the occasional omission or insignificant error, nor to disclose breaches of trust or statute, neglect or fraud which may have taken place, for which it is the responsibility of Members of the Board to protect against.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank your Clerk and Engineer to the Board and also the Finance and Rating Officer for the assistance provided to me in order to conduct the audit which took place on 25th October 2016.

Members will be pleased to note that I have not found anything of major concern while undertaking the interim audit. During the course of the visit, financial records relating to the months of April, June and September were reviewed. All of the records I inspected were found to again be of a very good standard.

FINDINGS THIS VISIT**ACCOUNTING RECORDS**

During this interim audit visit I inspected the cashbook, bank reconciliations, payroll, petty cash records, debtors, creditors and contract payments. My findings are listed below:

Cashbook

The cashbook was found to be accurate and balanced on a monthly basis with all amounts being recorded correctly. From the sample of payments tested, all were found to have been suitably authorised in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

Bank Reconciliations

Monthly bank reconciliations continue to be undertaken with no unexplained entries being identified in the sample of bank statements and reconciliations tested.

Payroll

The Payroll was found to be accurate. I sought to confirm that the correct amounts have been paid to employees. All of the payments reviewed were found to have been made in accordance with the amounts approved by the Board. I am also able to confirm that from the sample tested, the correct payments have been made to HMRC in respect of PAYE, and Kent County Council in respect of pension contributions.

Petty Cash

Accurate records have been kept to support all petty cash payments made. Records of all petty cash related expenditure are accurate and cash is being stored securely. All petty cash claims inspected were found to be correctly authorised.

Debtors

The amount of drainage rate arrears for the current year stood at £519.64 at the time of the audit and while they were found to be slightly higher than last year (£465.39 at last years interim audit), this figure is still considered to be extremely low in general. I can confirm to the Board that suitable measures are being taken by officers to manage arrears on an ongoing basis.

Investments

Suitable action is being taken by the Board to ensure that deposits are invested with suitable financial institutions.

Contract Payments

I inspected a sample of payments made to the contractor. All payments tested were found to have been correctly authorised by the Clerk and Engineer to the Board.

Mileage Claims

Suitable information is being provided by officers when submitting claims for mileage to support the expenditure incurred during the course of their duties. All mileage claims were found to be suitably approved.

RISK MANAGEMENT:**Annual Billing**

I note that the Board will be raising its own bills for 2017-18 rather than making use of a service provided by an external organisation. Through discussions with the Finance and Rating Officer, it appears that the correct steps are being taken to ensure a smooth transition to the internal raising of annual bills.

Member Attendance at Meetings

My inspection of Minutes to recent Board Meetings identified that attendance is relatively low and could be improved. I therefore recommend that a review of Board Member attendance at Meetings is undertaken to ensure that attendance at Board Meetings is as high as practical for every Board meeting.

David Griffiths



Independent Internal Auditor

31st October 2016

The Chairman stated that Mr Griffiths' report only raises one issue which is about the Members' attendance at meetings which could be improved. The Vice Chairman noted that Members were very well represented at this meeting but sometimes attendance is low, especially at F&GP Meetings. The Clerk & Engineer stated that if Members felt that moving the meetings dates and times would improve attendance, this could be considered. Councillor Conolly stated that the difficulty in parking at the Board's offices may have been a deterrent for Members in the past but the current arrangement of having the Board meetings at different Council offices and village halls should have resolved this problem.

The Chairman considered Mr Griffiths' report to be very good and he thanked the staff for the work done. It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Martin and resolved that the Interim Internal Audit Report of the 2016/2017 Accounts and Accounting Records be received and approved.

Ref: F.1-5 Conclusion of the Audit – Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2016

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that the Board's external auditors (PKF Littlejohn LLP) have now completed their review of the Board's Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2016. The external auditor's certificate and report is given at Section 3 on page 4 of the Annual Return which details any matters arising from the review. The external auditors have approved the Annual Return with no recommendations or actions required. The completed Annual Return has been published on the Board's website and on the Board's Notice Board outside its office. A copy of the approved Annual Return is attached to this report.

Ref: F.2 IDB Annual Reports to Defra

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that in accordance with paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2016 was completed and returned to Defra on 15 August 2016. A copy was also emailed to all Chief Executives of the Councils within the Board's District. A copy of this report was made available at the meeting and shall remain available for inspection on request.

Ref: F.15 Insurance – Professional Negligence/Indemnity Cover

It was noted that Professional Indemnity Insurance has been added to the Board's policy and that the Board's insurance requirements will be reviewed prior to the expiration of its existing policy on 24 January 2017.

Ref: R1 DRS - Rating Programme

The Chairman reported that Phil Camamile, Chief Executive, Water Management Alliance has started work on the Board's DRS system and although a few issues have been encountered mainly to do with missing information in a digital form, it is progressing well and should be remotely installed during November. Due to the missing information, we will not be able to use the system to its full potential to start with but we are informed that these issues will not prevent rate demands from being raised.

Ref: R1 Scanning of Maps

The Finance & Rating Officer reported that the paper maps of the Board's District have now been scanned and that other records will be considered in order to capture the information before further deterioration occurs.

ADMINISTRATIONRef: A.1-1 Proposed Dates for the 2017 Meetings

The following meeting dates for the 2017 meetings were agreed:

<u>Finance Meetings</u>	<u>Board Meetings</u>
Monday 16 January 2017	Thursday 2 February 2017
Monday 8 May 2017	Thursday 25 May 2017
Monday 17 July 2017	Thursday 3 August 2017
Monday 16 October 2017	Thursday 2 November 2017

The Chairman asked the Members to comment on their preference for the venues of next year's Board Meetings. Ms D McNamara stated that the EA would welcome the Members at their Plucks Gutter depot as an option. The Chairman thanked Ms McNamara and all agreed that Board meetings should continue to be held at different venues rather than the Board's office.

Ref: A. 2-3 Annual Inspection 2016 – Thursday 20 October 2016

The Chairman stated that the 2016 Annual Inspection which took place on Thursday 20 October 2016 was very interesting, well organised and attended. This year we visited several sites in and around the Chartham to Canterbury area. Councillor Hicks stated that she thoroughly enjoyed the day she particularly found the Environment Agency's demonstration of the Temporary Flood Defences very impressive and a very valuable asset. All Members agreed with this and the Chairman conveyed his thanks to the staff for organising the visits.

Ref: A.8-1 Association of Drainage Authorities
– Annual Conference & Luncheon – Thursday 17 November 2016

The Chairman reminded Members that the Association of Drainage Authorities' Annual Conference and Luncheon will take place on Thursday 17 November 2016 at One Great George Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3AA and that he, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Hicks, Councillor Smith, the Clerk & Engineer and the Finance & Rating Officer will be representing the Board.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ref: 8-1 Association of Drainage Authorities – Address to the Undersecretary of State for the Environment & Rural Life Opportunities re: Special Levy Payments to IDBs

The Chairman highlighted the previously reported ADA's response to the Undersecretary of State for Defra (in the F&GP meeting minutes).

The Vice Chairman reported that the 5 Local Authorities are still in talks about a possible merger and stated that if the merger were to occur the Board's Membership would be affected, and presumably there would be a reduced number of councillors available to choose from. However, on a more positive note, if all the Board's Special Levy were to come from one single authority it would reduce some of the problems associated with the 2% cap.

Councillor Conolly stated that the Consultants employed by the 5 Authorities will be reporting back to Leaders and Chief Executives before Christmas on an initial draft of the viability study. What is still unclear is whether we are looking at a straight forward merger or there is anything beyond that. Councillor Conolly stated that the Leaders and Chief Executives had a meeting with the Kent MPs who urged them to be more aggressive even considering a Unitary Authority which would most likely not be agreeable to KCC.

The Vice Chairman stated that if decisions were to go for Unitary Authority there would be a need to divide up other services such as Social Care Funding which would be a shame because it works well countywide. The Chairman stated that from the Board's point of view there would be a loss of local knowledge from the Council Members and the Elected Members. Councillor Martin stated that history has shown us that the larger the entity the less influence is held by locals and less work is carried out at local level.

East Kent Environment Challenge
– Sandwich, Ash, Woodnesborough and Worth Environment Study (SAWWES)

The Chairman reported that the Board has been approached by Mr Stephen Fuller in relation to an Environment Study he is conducting. The Environment Study Group is asking for sponsorship from the Board (£500). Mr P Dunn declared an interest in this item as he is a member of this Group.

The Chairman reported that after some general discussion at the F&GP meeting it was decided that the Board should not make a monetary contribution but should offer as much assistance as possible, in terms of cooperation and officer time. All Board Members present supported this decision.

Brexit Effects on Legislation

The Chairman highlighted this matter (reported in the F&GP meeting minutes) and thanked Councillor Hicks for keeping the Board informed.

MEETING CLOSED

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