

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board
held at 14.00 hours on Thursday 4 February 2016
in the Ashford Borough Council Offices, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, TN23 1PL
(Committee Room 2)

PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Debbie McNamara (Incident Response Team Leader – Upper & Lower Stour Area, Environment Agency), Mr Darren Godden (IDB Contracts Manager, Rhino Plant Hire), Mr John Davis (Works & Contracts Supervisor, Stour & Medway IDBs), Ms Ana Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer), Mr Peter Dowling (Clerk & Engineer to the Board).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P E Dyas, Councillor P J F Sims, Councillor H Stummer-Schmertzing and Councillor S Walker. An apology was also received from Mr Derek Lewis (Outgoing Clerk of the Board).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 5 November 2015 were received. It was proposed by Councillor Mrs M Martin, seconded by Councillor M D Conolly 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 MINUTES

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 18 JANUARY 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee held on Monday 18 January 2016 were received. It was proposed by Councillor Mrs A Hicks, seconded by Mr A D Linfoot and resolved that the minutes be received.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Main River Desilting

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the silt in the Minster and Richborough Streams has been tested and confirmed to be acceptable for disposal to land. The Chairman asked the Clerk & Engineer to advise Mr Dyas of these results.

Biodiversity

The Biodiversity Sub-Committee comprising of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Mr P E Dyas, Councillor P J F Sims, Mr G R Steed, Mr M P Wilkinson and Mr P Williams will be meeting on 29 February 2016 at 10am in the Board's Offices to discuss the Board's future BAP actions with the Board's Clerk & Engineer.

Stonar Cut

The Clerk & Engineer confirmed that he had passed on the Board's request for further information to be provided prior to the next meeting of interested parties.

STATEMENT ON RESERVES

The Chairman stated that the Board has been concerned for some time that the Board's Reserves are not sufficient to withstand unscheduled or emergency expenditure or drastic changes to estimated income. The Chairman further stated that it has been ascertained from various sources that a sensible reserves figure is between 50% and 100% of the Board's net yearly expenditure. Currently the reserves are around 20% of the net yearly expenditure and this is no longer adequate in view of the Board's increased turnover and all other risks involved.

The Chairman reported that the estimated balance as at 31 March 2016 is £134,000 and as a first step the aim, as recommended by the Committee, should be to increase this amount to around £180,000 by the end of 2016/2017. The ultimate aim is to increase the Board's Reserves to £250,000 and if current experience with PSCA agreements continues (which is by no means certain), there would be a prospect of reaching £250,000 in another two years without an undue increase to rates and levies.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Mr G R Steed and resolved that the Board's Reserves be increased accordingly.

COMBINED FINANCE ESTIMATES FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2017

The Chairman reported that the Combined Finance Estimates for the year ending 31 March 2017 include the Engineer's Maintenance Works Estimates. The Chairman further reported that the 2015/2016 financial year end totals are expected to be £517,005 (£25,932 less than the original estimate) and that the balance held in reserve was estimated to be approximately £134,079.

The Chairman commented on the Maintenance Works Expenditure, reporting that the estimates for the ensuing years are very much in line with the current expenditure with a sharper increase for the year ending 31 March 2020 reflecting the renewal of contracts when a 5% estimated increase has been

applied. The Chairman reported that in the Maintenance Works Expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2017 a higher amount has been estimated for Tree & Shrub Maintenance (£10,000) because it is apparent that more regular work needs to be done to enable access for routine maintenance works; the Structure Maintenance expenditure has also been increased (by £5,000 to £20,000) as for the past few years work has concentrated on Health and Safety improvements and general maintenance, but a lot of the structures are showing their age and a detailed repair/renewal programme is to be developed; a lower amount has been estimated to be spent on Biodiversity for the ensuing years (£8,000) but this is subject to the BAP Sub-committee meeting where a plan of future activities will be considered.

The Chairman summarised that the estimated total income for the year ending 31 March 2017 is £178,555. The Chairman further summarised that the total estimated expenditure for the same period is £729,570 which includes an estimated expenditure of £253,832 for the Watercourse Maintenance and Water Level Control & Emergency Response, £129,047 for the Environment Agency Precept and a Contingency Fund of £35,000 for the Old Thrustbore (an IDB asset situated beneath the Sandwich to Deal railway line).

The Chairman stated that, of the options presented, the Finance, General Purposes and Works Committee have recommended Option 2 to the Board, raising the Rates and Levies by an average of 1.5%. Following a period of discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs M Martin and resolved that:

- a) A total sum of £554,126 be raised.
- b) A rate of 12.386p in the pound be made for the year ending 31st March 2017 raising £57,407 from Drainage Ratepayers.
- c) Special Levies be made on Local Billing Authorities for the year ending 31st March 2017 as follows:

Ashford Borough Council	£233,458
Canterbury City Council	113,500
Dover District Council	68,100
Shepway District Council	497
Thanet District Council	<u>81,164</u>
Total Special Levy Income	<u>£496,719</u>

- d) The Chairman and the Clerk & Engineer be authorised to sign and seal the Rates and Special Levies on behalf of the Board.
- e) The Clerk & Engineer be instructed to advertise the Rates and Special Levies in the Board's Website and Notice Board.

ENGINEER'S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2015 TO 31 DECEMBER 2015

Rainfall & River Flow Data

The Clerk & Engineer summarised the rainfall data as previously recorded in the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting: October - an average of 57.1mm (74% of the LTA of 77.3mm); November - a

max. of 75.5mm at Ashford, with an average of 55.9mm (66% of the LTA of 85.1mm); December – approx. 50mm from data available against an LTA of 69.0mm.

Soil moisture deficits are at zero in most areas, monthly mean river flows **normal**. Groundwater levels maintained an east-west split, being below normal in the west and above normal in the east.

Water levels in reservoirs in the southeast remain around the LTA. Bewl reservoir was recorded to be at 68% on 31 December.

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

Weed Cutting

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the weed cutting programme, which totalled 178km of watercourses including second cuts, was completed in early November.

Site specific maintenance standards, in accordance with the Board's BAP, have continued to be introduced with Rhino Plant staff continuing to deliver a very high standard of work.

Weed cutting on Main Rivers, under the PSCA with the Environment Agency, totalled 63km (31km of mechanical cutting delivered by Rhino Plant and 32km of manual cutting delivered by Oxney Land Services). As well as improving efficiency of working, the cost savings have increased the overall amount of work carried out on the Main River system.

De-silting

The Clerk & Engineer reported that this year's de-silting programme had been altered slightly due to silt levels in Aldington Dyke (IDB14) being found to be much lower than originally thought. This watercourse was therefore removed from the programme. Mr Godden reported that this work has now been fully completed.

An additional 1km length of the Sarre Penn has been added to the previously reported list of Main Rivers to be de-silted under the PSCA, bringing the total length to 8,510m. Mr Godden reported that the de-silting through the PSCA agreement is well underway.

A small drainage grip, measuring approx. 1km in length, has been excavated alongside the Sarre Penn at Chislet, on instruction from the Environment Agency under the PSCA, in order to address a local drainage issue.

Spoil Spreading

The Clerk & Engineer reported that spoil spreading of material from the 2014-2015 Main River de-silting programme, under the PSCA, has been carried out alongside South Stream and Richborough Stream.

Tree & Shrub Maintenance

The Clerk & Engineer reported that tree and shrub maintenance works have been completed as recorded in the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting.

A substantial amount of tree maintenance work has been agreed to be delivered under the PSCA and the additional works at Hothfield Flood Storage Reservoir have been instructed (Oxney Land Services).

Structures Maintenance

The Clerk & Engineer confirmed that repairs have been carried out to Stevens Stop on Worth Minnis Sewer (IDB270) and the three footbridges across the Chislet Pump Channel have been installed and have very much improved access to IDB water level control structures.

The refurbishment of penstocks on the Minster-Monkton Marshes and the installation of gauge boards has been delayed but this work should start in the coming weeks. The Clerk & Engineer stated that a longer term plan is to be produced for structures maintenance/renewal.

Obstruction Clearance

The Clerk & Engineer reported that routine inspections of watercourses continue to be carried out and obstructions cleared as necessary, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

Water Level Control

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the Board's Water Level Controller, with cover provided by the Medway IDB Works Supervisor (under the Stour-Medway agreement) and assistance provided by the Board's Engineering Assistant, has continued to manage water levels throughout the district extremely well, on both IDB watercourses and Main Rivers (under the PSCA). Although the Medway IDB Works Supervisor will remain available to assist water level control activities during times of extreme weather, routine cover and assistance will gradually transfer to the Board's Engineering Assistant. The EA's Operations Team Leader, Ms Debbie McNamara, has continued to be very supportive.

Biodiversity

Details of suggested BAP actions are still being developed and the Board's Biodiversity Sub-Committee are to reconvene on 29 February in order to review options and agree future actions.

Contract Expenditure

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the overall expenditure for water level control and maintenance activities up until 31 December was £185,311 against a forecast of £198,093 (£12,782 below forecast). The main reason for the shortfall is due to works being underway but not completed/invoiced, although final expenditure is likely to be less than the original forecast.

Shared Engineering Resources Agreement

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the cooperation arrangement with the Upper & Lower Medway IDBs has continued, with benefits achieved as previously reported. However due to the increased responsibilities resulting from Mr D Lewis' retirement the time allocation has been reduced to 40% for both (Mr Dowling providing 40% of his time to the Medway Boards and Mr Davis providing 40% of his time to the Stour IDB).

Environment Agency Works

Ms McNamara reported the following update on Environment Agency activities:

- EA Operations Teams are progressing with delivery of the extensive pioneering programme, with a view to taking up to three months to complete, starting on the River Dour in Dover.
- General incident response, weedcreens and flood runs, have become more prominent and ongoing as we enter the wetter season.
- Blockage removal and emergency tree works are more frequent at this time.
- The Stour de-silting programme is ongoing, having been successful in getting the new dredger under the bridge at Grove Ferry. Results of ongoing silt will be analysed to assess the changes.
- North Poulders pumping station has been repaired and is up and running.
- Minster and Sarre pumping stations Eel contingency plans have now been stood down due to the end of the migration period.
- Shingle recycling on the Northern Sea Wall has been completed.
- Lower Penfield Stop repair has been submitted for a funding request.
- The Northern Seawall cycle route has received new wider accessible gates, courtesy of the local Council, with the EA providing a complex locking system.
- This year's Main River de-silting programme is still under development.
- EA staff are working hard to deliver new IT systems, including CAMC (a refined budget application and management package). Further details will be reported in due course, this is being rolled out in January 2016.
- The field team felt under considerable pressure to deliver this year's maintenance programme due to low staff numbers (5 people less). The team now welcomes 3 new team members (Steve, Pete and Tom) with a further 2 due to start in January. We look forward to working with these very enthusiastic staff. This is not an increase in team numbers simply replacing staff who have left or joined the IDB and retired this year.

Councillor D O Smith stated that on the Members' site visits in November 2015, the Environment Agency Officers mentioned that they were using sensors to try and ascertain the source of the high phosphate levels on the Aylesford Stream which is causing additional growth leading to increased risk of flooding. Councillor Smith enquired if there was any progress on this. Ms McNamara said that she is was not aware of it but she will contact the Environment Agency's Environmental Team to enquire and report back to the Clerk & Engineer. Councillor Smith thinks that the source may be somewhere in Willesborough, South Willesborough or Newtown. The Chairman asked if there are any official Southern Water sewerage outlets in that area. Councillor Smith stated that he is not aware of any, the only thoughts are that when the new estate on the north side of the railway line was built some discharge may have been plugged into the Aylesford Stream in error. Councillor Smith stated that the

inflows into Willesborough have been tested and there is no excess, the problem is between Willesborough and the River Stour. Councillor Smith stated that the same situation is observed in the Newtown works where development has just started but a proper water control system is in place cleaning the discharge for any excess of unwanted substances. Councillor Smith reported that he liaises with the environmental group to try and clean the stream of shopping trolleys which are always in abundance but the excess vegetation is also causing blockages.

Flooding Issue – Albert Road, Deal

The Clerk & Engineer reported that although Southern Water have acknowledged that this ongoing problem stems from an ongoing issue at one of their pumping stations, it does obviously draw in other organisations such as the IDB, Dover District Council, the Environment Agency and Kent County Council. The Clerk & Engineer stated that on 25 January 2016 himself and representatives from the Environment Agency, Kent County Council and Southern Water attended a meeting at Westminster arranged by Charlie Elphicke MP. The Clerk & Engineer reported that Mr Elphicke had mainly directed the questions to Southern Water officers and they had provided assurances that improvements to the pumping station are underway and that they are liaising with the affected residents directly. The Clerk & Engineer stated that it would be useful to have a commitment in writing from Southern Water which they could be held to in the future.

The Clerk & Engineer further reported that there was a subsequent meeting with the residents on 28 January 2016 but Southern Water did not attend which caused unrest as most of the residents' questions could not be answered. The Clerk & Engineer stated that the Board's role will be to assist DDC and KCC to improve the condition and function of a small watercourse on Dover District Council's owned land which drains the Albert Road area. Councillor Mrs Ovenden stated that Southern Water need to be pressured into getting their pumping station in as good a condition as they can and they need to have a sensible back up plan for when things go wrong.

Councillor Conolly stated that there is a new development proposal in that area and enquired if they are linked. The Clerk & Engineer stated that there is a proposal directly alongside and the residents are concerned about it in light of the existing problem and reasonably assuming that this development would exacerbate the problem. The Clerk & Engineer stated that the EA, KCC and IDB can only comment on the drainage proposals and these are adequate as they plan to implement a standard SUDs scheme which will restrict run-off to that of the greenfield site. Under normal conditions the foul discharge would not be an issue but when there is a flood event problems arise and during high rainfall the foul sewer is overwhelmed by surface water. The Clerk & Engineer stated that Southern Water need to increase their pumping station reliability and ensure that any connections where the surface water sewer can discharge into the foul sewer are identified and addressed. The Clerk & Engineer stated that he has submitted comments to DDC in respect of this planning application but he could not reasonably object the development itself. Currently the developer is offering to help address the existing flooding problem but there is concern that this cooperation will not be enforceable if/when planning permission is granted, hence the residents are pushing for any offers of assistance or improvement to be supported by planning conditions.

Councillor Conolly asked the Clerk & Engineer if in his view there was a satisfactory commitment from Southern Water to deal with the problem. The Clerk & Engineer stated that all the right assurances are being given but Southern Water have been asked to make a detailed commitment in writing, as to date these assurances have only been verbal. If there is a recurrence and sewage is discharged or pumped into the watercourse it will remain Southern Water's responsibility to clean it up. However, as much as possible needs to be done to prevent it from happening again.

The Chairman stated that the main concern is that although Southern Water have said what they will do, they have not officially committed to anything in writing. Southern Water's pumping station clearly needs to be improved/ upgraded and its plans need to be checked or overseen to ensure their adequacy.

Mr Williams stated that there are several sewerage problems around the County involving Southern Water. Councillor Conolly stated that the Nailbourne is causing problems at present and Southern Water have never been able to solve the problems there. The Clerk & Engineer stated that this is a more difficult problem involving groundwater intrusion but due to local media and political pressure Southern Water has put a considerable amount of work in to solving it.

Mr Williams stated that there seemed to be a general problem with the capacity of Southern Water's assets as he has had reports about manhole covers lifting and sewage water pouring out. Councillor Conolly stated that a similar situation occurred at Preston and Councillor Mrs Ovenden stated that there are problems at Whitfield and Shepherdswell.

The Chairman stated these are the reasons why any planning permission should be conditioned that Southern Water has to provide facts and figures with pumping capacity information ensuring that it accommodates further development. The Clerk & Engineer stated that the residents have a fairly forceful group together and hopefully with the involvement of the Local MP more will be achieved.

APPLICATIONS FOR CONSENT

The Chairman read through the list of consent applications as reported at the F&GP meeting:

- 15-ST-02** Installation of a surface water outfall into an ordinary watercourse at Sellindge.
- 15-ST-06** Installation of a culvert in Westmarsh Drove Lead Dyke (IDB202).
- 15-ST-09** Two open-channel connections into an ordinary watercourse at Cheeseman's Green, Ashford.
- 15-ST-10** Installation of electrical cable beneath an ordinary watercourse at Wickhambreaux.

Enforcement – South Poulders Stream (IDB170)

The Chairman summarised the situation, as recorded in the F&GP meeting, and after some general discussion it was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by Mr P E Dyas and resolved that Mr Smith be issued with a formal notice requesting the immediate removal of all unconsented works. Mr Smith should further be notified that if he fails to address the issue, the Board will arrange for removal of the unconsented works and will seek to recover from him the costs of doing so.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that a notice to take action was issued to the landowner as previously instructed by the Board and the landowner has since been in contact. Mr Smith apologised and thought that this had been dealt by an employee who no longer works for him. Mr Smith stated that he will apply for consent and provide more information. Mr Smith was advised that the Board will still consider issuing consent retrospectively if the details are correct. Mr Smith was further advised that

if this is not received by 28th February 2016 then the Board may go in and remove the unconsented works and recharge him.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Clerk & Engineer ran through the planning applications of interest to the Board as reported in the F&GP meeting minutes:

Ashford Borough Council

- 15/00610 Hall Avenue, Orbital Park, Sevington.
Extension of hotel and amendments to carpark.
- 15/01282 Land at Elwick Place, Ashford.
Outline application for up to 200 residential units.
- 15/01435 Land at Finberry Village, Mersham.
Approval of reserved matters in relation to 11/00473.

Councillor Burgess pointed out that this is an area where flooding is a natural event and the condition is to **not increase** the flood risk and not to eradicate it. The Chairman stated that a real worry is that the recent floods in the north shows that the Environment Agency flood levels are not long lasting and can be overtopped quite substantially.

- 15/01550 Land at Highmead House, Hythe Road, Willesborough.
Construction of 28 residential units.
- 15/01586 Land at Finberry Village, Mersham.
Approval of reserved matters in relation to 11/00473.
- KCC/AS/0121/2015 Land at Finberry Village, Mersham.
Creation of primary school with associated development.

Mr Botting stated that all upstream development impacts on the Lower Stour and asked if this river was going to be cleaned all the way down to allow for the extra water. The Clerk & Engineer stated that if upstream development is allowed to discharge at a higher rate it will increase downstream flood risk but all of the new developments need to comply with Ashford Borough Council's SuDS policy which reduces the run-off rates quite substantially when compared to the greenfield sites so it should reduce the immediate downstream flood risk. The loss of peak flows is however still an issue which must be considered.

Canterbury City Council

- 15/01966 Land at Reculver Country Park, Reculver Lane, Reculver.
New carpark and a campsite for tents and touring caravans.

Dover District Council

14/00240&241 Eastry Hospital, Mill Lane, Eastry.
Redevelopment of site to provide 77 new dwellings with parking and public open space.

14/00842 Land at Salvatori Site, Grove Road, Preston.
Discharge of conditions in relation to outline application for the erection of 73 residential dwellings, parking, access and infrastructure and creation of meadow.

This previously reported application, which relates to two parcels of land connected by a very narrow strip of land (totalling 9.3 hectares), was approved with a condition requiring separate LPA approval of drainage details in consultation with the Board. Due to a number of concerns related to proposed drainage, it was previously requested that the drainage condition not be discharged and further clarification requested from the applicant. Further details have been provided but unfortunately the specific concerns raised have not been addressed (confirmation of outflow restriction; 600mm pipe into a 225mm pipe; and SuDS details to be agreed with KCC's drainage and flood risk team). It has therefore been requested that this condition is **not discharged** until these three main issues have been clarified.

Councillor Conolly stated that the building has started yet the conditions have not been met. Councillor Conolly considered that it is very difficult when a planning committee is told that arrangements are in place to meet the conditions set but no physical confirmation is sought or provided. Councillor Mrs Ovenden stated that the enforcement officers are not stringent enough and compliance should be provided in writing rather than as a gentlemen's agreement which sometimes appeared to be the case. The Chairman stated that it is down to the Local Planning Authorities to be stricter with their officers. Councillor Mrs Ovenden agreed and feels that the enforcement department would benefit from being stricter and from having a policy where conditions are signed off in writing. Councillor Mrs Hicks reported that Ashford Borough Council has recently met with Southern Water and South East Water and some difficult questions were asked and a reply is awaited. Councillor Mrs Ovenden noted this and stated that she will ensure that Dover District Council also arranges a meeting with Southern Water and South East Water.

The Clerk & Engineer stated that although Southern Water can place requirements on a developer they have a duty to accommodate discharges from new development and are not in a position to outright refuse, this leads to them accepting some of these proposals more easily which then places the Local Authorities in a difficult position. Councillor Hicks stated that Southern Water can impose conditions and request funding from the developers to ensure these are met.

Mr Botting stated that there is muddy water running off the building site going into the Preston & Deerson Stream. The Clerk & Engineer stated that Board will have to work with the Environment Agency to ensure that the developer takes adequate measures. Ms McNamara stated that she will investigate.

- 15/00702 Grove Road, Preston.
Erection of 3 dwellings and related infrastructure with the creation of meadow land.
- 15/00829 Land at South Court Garage, Great Mongham.
Erection of 14 houses.
- 14/00929 The Old Colliery, Staple Road, Wingham.
Redevelopment of site.
- 14/01100 Land at Wingham Court, Hawarden Place, Canterbury Road, Wingham.
Erection of 15 care units.

Thanet District Council

- 15/0770 Land to the rear of Manor Hall, Manor Road, St Nicholas at Wade.
Erection of 17 dwellings.

REPORT OF CLERK FOR THE PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2015 TO 31 DECEMBER 2015

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Ref: W1-1 Winter 2015/2016 Flooding – ADA Press Statement

The Chairman read through the press statement as recorded in the minutes of the FGP meeting, which was supported by all present.

Ref: W1-4 Government Spending Review 2015

The Chairman ran through the review paper, as recorded in the minutes of the F&GP meeting.

Ref: W1-38 Future of Water Level & Flood Risk Management (ADA Discussion Paper)

The Chairman ran through the Discussion Paper, as reported in the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting. The six recommendations to better manage water levels are as follows:

- 1. Water levels and flood risk should be managed on a whole life approach.**
- 2. Investment for maintenance should be increased and determined on a multiyear basis.**
- 3. The Government's six-year capital investment programme should remain in place and be balanced against increased maintenance spending.**
- 4. Where Government withdraws from work because it is not cost effective under their funding formula, they should 'invest to save' so that local communities can take greater ownership of water level management assets and operations, through devolved accountability and decision making.**

- 5. Encourage land managers to contribute toward, and play a part in, flood risk management delivery.**
- 6. Support investment in water level and flood risk management innovation to enable new techniques to develop that allow us to adapt to our changing climate.**

Summary of actions recommended;

- 1. Empower local decision makers to decide on their investment priorities for both capital schemes and operational maintenance for water level management, and ensure all partners have a say.**
- 2. Streamline regulation and reduce the burden on land owners who want to undertake maintenance work on main rivers and ordinary watercourses. Further incentivisation will also unlock natural flood risk management schemes.**
- 3. Consider broader use of Public Sector Cooperation Agreements as an interim or permanent solution for local delivery of projects and maintenance, and make and make any necessary legislative changes to allow the creation of new or extended IDBs.**
- 4. Consider short-term increased investment to allow ‘good condition’ transfer of assets from Environment Agency to other delivery partners.**
- 5. Carry out a focussed study to establish possible options for updating land valuations and ratings across the country.**
- 6. Consider a programme of investment in telemetry to manage water levels on a catchment basis.**

Mr Dyas suggested that the Board may wish to write to ADA strongly endorsing the discussion paper and its recommended actions. The Committee considered this discussion paper to be extremely good, highlighting various important issues. It was agreed that the Board should write to ADA to highlight the Board’s support of its proactive approach.

Councillor Conolly asked if it has been suggested anywhere that the 1 in 100year flood event basis be reviewed. The Chairman stated that he thinks that it may be happening in the north of the country. Ms McNamara stated that she is not aware, but Mr A Pearce (Environment Agency Area Manager – Kent & East Sussex Area) has been in the north of the country to review the flooding and that may be one of the items being discussed.

Mr Dunn stated that if the rivers were dredged 100% rather than 50% there would be more scope for flood waters. The Chairman agreed but there is a need to comply with Legislation and Regulations which safeguard the environment. Mr Dunn asked who sets these guidelines and what information are they based on. Ms McNamara stated that most of the Directives are set by the EU and there are always ongoing studies. The Environment Agency, being a government agency has to ensure it abides by the rules set.

Mr Dunn stated that a very good job has been done on the Richborough Stream by the Board’s contractors Rhino Plant Hire and he considers that the water levels have not been so stable for 10 years. Mr Botting reported that whilst he is pleased that de-silting is being carried out on the Lower Stour, some of the spoil put on the river bank is sliding back into the river Stour. Ms McNamara stated that this wasn’t the case as far as she is aware but would investigate.

Ms McNamara reported that the Environment Agency are surveying more areas to be desilted. The Clerk & Engineer stated that he takes on board the comments about the limitations but more channels

are being maintained, and to a good standard, so that they can convey water which enables us to manage water levels in a more efficient and stable manner.

The Vice Chairman stated that in the immediate fallout after the flooding in the north was a lot of talk about reviewing the whole system again, and the relative functions and responsibilities of the various bodies involved in flood protection.

The Chairman stated that he does not agree with leaving the rivers to 're-naturalise' because in dry periods they silt up and in wet periods they overflow, both impacting on biodiversity as well as land and property.

Ref: W1-38 "Time to adopt a catchment approach to Water Level Management"

The Chairman reported that ADA has also issued a general commentary article in support of its Press Statement and Discussion Paper. Members considered this additional information to be very useful and reiterated its support of ADA's approach.

Ref: W4/SW-WRMP Southern Water Update on works in the Newnham Valley

It was reported that Southern Water Services has provided a written update in respect of their works in the Newnham Valley, as recorded in the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

Ref: A7-1 Staff Salary Increases

It was reported that as a result of a change to the management structure due to the retirement of the Clerk of the Board and in recognition of the additional duties and responsibilities taken by Mr Dowling and Mrs Eastwood, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman have approved the following increases in staff salaries with effect from 1 January 2016:

Mr P N Dowling (Clerk and Engineer) – From Spine Point 41 to Spine Point 43
Mrs A I Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer) – From Spine Point 24 to Spine Point 27

Furthermore, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman have also approved a salary increase for Mr Revell in recognition of the extra duties he has taken on under the PSCA and his general commitment to the role.

Mr S F Revell (Water Level Controller) – Spine Point 22 to Spine 23

FINANCE

Ref: F1-2 Interim Internal Audit Report for 2015/2016

It was reported that the Board's Internal Auditor (Mr David Griffiths) carried out his Interim Internal Audit Inspection of the Board's Accounts and Accounting Documents for 2015/2016 on 30 November 2015. A copy of the Interim Internal Audit Report for 2015/2016 is detailed below:

THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2015-2016

I am pleased to report to Members of the Board that I have completed my interim internal audit of the Board's records for 2015-2016.

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, Engineer and the Administrative staff for the assistance provided to me in order to conduct the audit, which took place on 30th November 2015.

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 October were reviewed. All of the records I inspected were again found to be of a very good standard.

FINDINGS THIS VISIT

ACCOUNTING RECORDS

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

Cashbook

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

Bank Reconciliations

Monthly bank reconciliations are carried out, no unexplained entries were identified in the sample of bank reconciliations tested. Similarly, no unexplained entries were identified on the bank statements inspected. All transactions between the bank accounts were correctly recorded and reported.

VAT Returns

All VAT returns tested were found to be accurate, and completed and submitted on time to HMRC.

Payroll

The Payroll was found to be accurate, correct payments have been made to HMRC in respect of PAYE and to Kent County Council in respect of pension contributions.

Mileage claims

The recent employment of a Water Level Controller has resulted in additional mileage claims being processed, all claims reviewed were found to be accurate and appropriately approved.

Income generated from external sources

The Board is currently receiving additional income, suitable controls were found to be in place for the recording and monitoring of the income being received. The Board should however continue to remain mindful that the income may reduce at some point in the future, and therefore should ensure that it does not become overly reliant on this income. The Board could give consideration to using some or all of the additional income to increase reserves to protect itself against unforeseen maintenance liabilities.

Petty Cash

Accurate records are being kept to support all petty cash payments made. Postage records are accurate and stamps are being stored securely.

Debtors

The amount of drainage rate arrears was found to be lower than previous years and stood at £245.69 at the time of the visit. Arrears were £2,300 as at the 2014/15 interim audit.

Investments

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

Loans

The correct payments are being made in respect of loans on time, and being correctly recorded in the cashbook.

Contract Payments I inspected a sample of payments made to the contractor. All payments tested were found to have been correctly authorised by the Board's Engineer.

RISK MANAGEMENT:

Insurance

Suitable insurance cover was found to be in place for Fidelity Guarantee, Public Liability and Employers' Liability insurance. It was noted during the visit that there is a potential insurance claim being made against the organisation. However, the Board has suitable insurance arrangements in place in the event of the claim being successful.

Contract Re-Tender Programme

The newly re-tendered contract came into force at the start of the current year. Through discussion with the Boards Engineer and Clerk, it was established that the slightly revised contract arrangements are working well. It is further understood that the actual costs for the employment of a Water Level Controller are in line with original budget estimates and continue to remain under review by the Clerk and Engineer.

Declarations of Interest

Review of the Register of Declarations of Interest identified that one declaration form remains outstanding, despite reminders from the Clerk to the member concerned. The member should be reminded of the requirement to complete and submit a Declaration of Interest Form to the Clerk of the Board.

Succession Planning Arrangements

It is pleasing to note that suitable plans have been put in place to ensure that a smooth handover takes place in the period prior to the retirement of the Clerk to the Board.

This has been my last interim audit under the current Clerk to the Board, and I would like to take this opportunity to wish Derek a very long, happy and healthy retirement.

David Griffiths



Independent Internal Auditor

7th December 2015

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Mrs Martin and resolved that the Internal Auditor's Interim Internal Audit Report for 2015/2016 be received and approved.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ref: A8-1

Association of Drainage Authorities
IDB Membership Subscription for 2016

It was reported that the ADA's IDB Annual Membership Subscription invoice for 2016 has now been received. The membership subscription has been increased by £107 (5%) from £2,130 to £2,237. The increase in the subscription rate was approved by ADA's Board in October 2015.

Ref: A9-1.F

Flat 34A Gordon Road – Rent Increase

It was reported that Miss C Creaser – the Board's Tenant – has been advised of a rent increase from £700 to £725 per month. This increase will take effect from 1 April 2016.

Ref: F2

Audit of Accounts and IDB Annual Returns

It was reported that when the previous government abolished the Audit Commission, ADA alongside the National Association of Local Councils and the Society for Local Council Clerks successfully lobbied the government to establish a Sector Led Body to procure authority audit services, simplifying arrangements and saving IDBs and other authorities from incurring the expense of procuring their own audit firm. The Board has therefore been formally invited to become an opted-in authority to this scheme. The proposed new external audit arrangements come into effect from 1 April 2017 and the

Board will automatically be included in the new arrangements. However, for opting-out of this arrangement the deadline is 31 January 2016.

It was further reported that any authority choosing to opt-in will have to remain in the Sector Led Authority Body for 5 years, until 2022. The Sector Led Authority Body will monitor the authorities that wish to opt-out to ensure that they comply with all the legal requirements and regulations and a small fee will be charged for this service.

It is reported that due to the deadline restrictions the Finance and General Purposes & Works Committee had to make a decision on this matter and considered that opting-in to the new external audit arrangements to be the best option to suit the Board's requirements. The situation can then be reviewed prior to the end of the 5-year period.

It was proposed by the Vice Chairman, seconded by the Chairman and resolved that the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee's decision to opt-in to the new external audit arrangements be approved.

Ref: F9 & F14-3 National Westminster Bank and Nationwide Building Society

It was reported that with the impending retirement of the Clerk of the Board, Mr D Lewis, it is necessary to remove Mr Lewis from the authorised signatories to the Board's Bank Accounts – namely National Westminster Bank and the Nationwide Building Society – and to add Mr P Dowling, the new Clerk and Engineer to the Board to the authorised signatories of the same accounts.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs A Hicks, seconded by Mr M P Wilkinson and resolved that Mr D Lewis be removed from the authorised signatories to the Board's Bank Accounts and Mr P Dowling be added to the authorised signatories of the same accounts.

Ref: A7-1 Vote of Thanks & Happy Retirement Wishes to Mr D Lewis
– Retiring Clerk to the Board

On the motion of the Vice Chairman, seconded by the Chairman, the Board resolved that its thanks and best wishes to Mr Derek Lewis, the retiring Clerk of the Board, be recorded in the minutes and conveyed to him. It was recalled that Mr Lewis has given exemplary service to the Board for 24 years, and has also played a valued part in the work of the South-East Branch of ADA; his wide knowledge of the Drainage District, his understanding of the legal and financial background, his sympathy with the aims of the Board, and his untiring activity on its behalf, all contributed to his devoted and invaluable service, for which the Board formally records its gratitude in the warmest terms.

Subsequently to the Board meeting, the Chairman on behalf of the Board presented Mr Lewis with a Pastel Painting of the Marsh Gate at Preston by John Hughes as a token of the Board's deep appreciation.

Ref: W7-G Stour Surveys

Ms McNamara reported that the Environment Agency has scheduled another silt survey of the Lower Stour. These are planned to take place twice a year, once in November and then hopefully in February

(still to be confirmed) to ascertain the changes through the seasons. The Chairman stated that it will be interesting to see the findings and conclusions.

Ref: A10-3

KSCP

The Clerk & Engineer reported that KSCP is planning some mink surveys on the Stour marshes again and would welcome any feedback on sightings or any problems. Ms McNamara reported that there have been sightings at Sarre Penn and at Ash Level Pumping Stations and she believes there was a nest at Sarre Penn Pumping Station. Mr Wilkinson enquired if people are allowed to dispose of the mink. The Chairman replied that he believes so. Mr Wilkinson enquired if they can do the same with beavers, not that he recommended such action. Ms McNamara stated that beavers are not a protected species. Mr Steed believes that there may be some European Legislation in the near future which may provide beavers with some protection, he further emphasised how much damage beavers do cause in the areas where they are present and the risk they present to watercourses. Mr Williams stated that it is very difficult to control beavers because they are only active at night. Mr Williams further reported that Natural England has requested that the beavers in the Hacklinge be DNA tested by the Kent Wildlife Trust so that their origin can be traced.

MEETING CLOSED

There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed and thanked the Members for their attendance. The Chairman extended his thanks to Ashford Borough Council for authorising the Board meeting to take place at their offices and he also thanked Councillor Mrs Hicks for organising this.