

## THE RIVER STOUR (KENT) INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held at 14:00 on Thursday 10 February 2022  
at Chartham Village Hall, Station Road, Chartham, CT4 7JA and via Zoom

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### PRESENT

Mr G R Steed (Chairman), Cllr M J Burgess (Vice Chairman), Mr D M Botting, Cllr A Buchanan (via Zoom), Cllr M D Conolly, Mr P S Dunn, Ms N H Dyas, Mr P N Howard, Cllr P D Jull, Ms A G Lynch, Cllr G B Sparks, Cllr D O Smith and Mr M P Wilkinson.

### IN ATTENDANCE

Mr P Dowling (Clerk & Engineer) and Ms A Eastwood (Finance & Rating Officer).

### WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Mr Rob Butson (Misconnection Team Manager, Southern Water) and he also welcomed Mr D Price (Technical Advisor, Environment Agency) and Mr R Tournay (Asset Performance Team Leader, Environment Agency).

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D Crow-Brown, Mr D J Fuller, Cllr N Ovenden, Cllr M Sole, Mr P Williams, Mr L Woollorton, Mrs G Wyant, Mr J Dilnot (Engineering Assistant) and Mr J Williamson (Technical Assistant). Further apologies were received from Mr I Nunn (FCRM Operations Manager, EA), Ms D Thompson (Incident Response Team Leader, EA) and Mr D Godden (Rhino Plant).

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

### PRESENTATION BY SOUTHERN WATER ON ITS POLLUTION REDUCTION PLAN

#### **PIRP/ Environment + Plans & Investment**

Southern Water's equity investment for 2021 was an additional £1bn and the overall investment for 2020-25 will be around £3.8bn. There has been an accelerated benefit investment into this year to overhaul the business in some key areas: Network Digitisation, Control Centre and Operational Response Improvements.

These key elements will help SW to drive better performance and provide a better quality of service as the new investment will contribute towards Key Targets:

- By 2025 – Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) technology will be installed in 100% of sites providing greater transparency – sewer sensors and monitors will show when there have been spills or when there is a situation arising that needs attention
- By 2030 – aim to reduce the use of storm overflows by 80%

- By 2040 – aim for zero pollution incidents; Target 100 is a commitment to customers that each household only uses 100 litters per person per day; and the operation of a fully integrated water environment working sinuously with all water users (customers) and stakeholders

The key initiatives that will receive the investment required to deliver a reduction in pollutions are:

- Waste Treatment Works – 20% of pollutions result from WTWs
- Wastewater Pumping Stations – 49% of pollutions result from smaller WPSs
- Sewer Network – 30% of pollutions are from the SN which conveys flows to pumping stations

Network digitalisation will enable a proactive approach towards all pollution sources and issues because problems will be addressed before they escalate. SW has nearly all overflows monitored, and their relative performance is one of the best in the industry.

SW is: working with the Environment Agency (EA) producing robust action plans to reduce pollution incidents; increasing pumping station assets availability; upgrading the top 250 worse performing pumping stations; increasing pumping stations cleaning programme by 55%; installing 20,000 network sensors in high risk areas which will alert for build ups in the network.

SW has approximately 1,000 outfalls from Storm Overflows which activated 20,000 times in 2020 and 22% of these SOs were responsible for 50% of the events. SW has 381 Wastewater Systems (catchments) and the top 10 account for 35% of events during 2020.

The build-up in urbanised areas is still high, and SW is committed to reducing pollution to zero by 2040 and reduce SO releases by 80%.

### **Storm Overflow Task Force**

The Storm Overflow Task Force has been set up internally and it aims to reduce the use of storm overflows by 80% by 2030 across the region. It will view the water system holistically and aim to establish strong partnership approaches to deliver interventions. It prioritises sustainable catchment and nature-based solutions and will, over the next two years, demonstrate the principles in five pathfinder catchments. It will build a regional plan for implementation between now and 2030, maintaining high standards of transparency whilst improving the accuracy of the Beachbuoy service (interactive online map that provides near real-time information about releases of stormwater or wastewater) and user experience.

### **Bathing Water Update**

SW's performance continues to improve through close collaboration with Environment Agency and Local Authorities and there have been year-on-year improvements across the southeast since 2012. No coastal bathing waters have been classified as poor by the EA since 2017.0

The Clerk & Engineer asked if there is a plan for Beachbuoy to be extended into river systems. Mr Butson replied that there is a lot of focus on river water quality with scope for more to be done and an ongoing review is underway, but it will take some time for this to be active.

Ms Dyas stated that there were extreme problems along the south coast at Thanet just last year with the quality of the bathing water. Mr Butson replied that SW needs to ensure that its monitoring and responses are up to the job to stop sewage discharges into coastal waters. Ms Dyas further stated

that whilst it is fantastic that all this money is being spent on staff, digital upgrades and monitoring, more money needs to be spent on infrastructure that can cope with the demands placed on it. She gave the example of Thanet where vast amounts of surface water mixes with effluent and the pumping station cannot cope with the extra volumes and then it is pumped out to the sea. She also mentioned the inadequacy of the main pipe which goes from Weatherlees to North Foreland which is in poor condition. Mr Butson agreed that surface water must be kept separate from effluent as much as possible and there is a need to work with Local Authorities to identify and implement appropriate SuDS. On the issue of the pipework, he stated that every pipeline is prone to failure so there is a constant programme for surveys and improvements.

Cllr Jull asked how SW can rectify the ongoing problem of wastewater and surface water runoff mixing and overwhelming the sewer network. Mr Butson replied that SW is focussing efforts on the areas of highest known risk to find solutions. Cllr Jull asked if there are any plans to ensure this separation through proper upgrading of the pipe network. Mr Butson replied that this is part of the project in Deal, to understand the problems at source before placing more assets on the ground, but this is unlikely to be on a widescale basis.

The Clerk & Engineer referred to the particular problem at Albert Road, Deal and asked if SW, as part of its improvement plans, would consider upgrading the surface water network from the highway. Mr Butson replied that SW will need to work closely with Highways and Local Authorities to improve the situation. It is job of the Task Force to identify the factors which are contributing to the overwhelming of the system in the first instance.

Cllr Conolly stated that there is a perception that when LPAs consult SW about development proposals, SW tends to over-estimate the capacities of its existing network, and this has created more problems. He questioned whether SW is properly assessing the impacts of new developments and their effects on existing sewer systems. Mr Butson replied that SW takes the increased demands seriously and takes steps to ensure that infrastructure is ready prior to occupation. Cllr Conolly expressed concern that this does not seem to be the case.

Cllr Burgess stated that there is obviously a need to assess aged pipe networks to maximise separation and asked if there is someone on the SW's team checking the districts' local plans, so that renewals and improvements are implemented efficiently. Mr Butson replied that this is a substantial part of SW's development team's role.

Mr Dunn stated that in the rural community, farmers are being asked to renew old systems within the next few years, but new developments appear to be able to connect to old systems. He asked why SW doesn't ensure that the foul and clean water are drained separately in all cases. Mr Butson replied that if there is a surface water system nearby it must give the developer the opportunity to connect to it, but surface water cannot be discharged into the foul-water system.

The Chairman thanked Mr Butson for his presentation and his time, and suggested that an update on SW's progress would be appreciated next year if possible. Mr Butson agreed that this could be arranged. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to arrange an update to take place in February 2023.**

### HEALTH & SAFETY

The Clerk & Engineer stated that other than the recent outbreak of avian influenza increasing across the UK, which increases the need to follow biosecurity procedures and to report any sightings of sick birds to Defra, there are no new issues to report.

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2021

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Thursday 4 November 2021 were received. It was proposed by Cllr Sparks, seconded by Cllr Jull 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

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

#### Azolla Project – Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP)

The Chairman asked if there was an update on this project? The Clerk & Engineer reported that KSCP is on the list for the weevils order, which are in high demand, and they have identified a few areas where Azolla is present. This includes Hacklinge, Ash Levels and Gosshall Marshes. They also plan to survey the Sarre Penn and Chislet Marshes. The Chairman stated that it would be interesting to know how KSCP will assess where best to release the weevils once they know how many they have been allocated. The Clerk & Engineer agreed and believed a more detailed plan should be developed by April and hopefully this will focus on the Hackling area. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to request an update from KSCP for the next meeting.**

### PLANNING APPLICATIONS

#### Dover District Council

**20/01447** – Land at North Poulders, Ash Road, Sandwich, Kent – Development of aqua park.

The Clerk & Engineer reported that planning permission has been granted and works have progressed here but nothing that requires consent has been built yet. He reported that the Technical Assistant has met with the developer and their consultants and reminded them of the need for consenting prior to the commencement of any works affecting any watercourse. **Action: Technical Assistant to pursue and update.**

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 24 JANUARY 2022

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee held on Monday 24 January 2022 were received. It was proposed by Cllr Burgess, seconded by Mr Wilkinson and resolved that these minutes be received.

### MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Ref: W5 – Planning Applications

#### Dover District Council

Planning application 19/01178 – Construction of access road and two dyke crossings on land south of Ash Road, Sandwich (part retrospective).

The Clerk & Engineer reported that no consent application has yet been received. A culvert has been installed as part of this planning application, to which the Board objected. It should be noted

that the applicant's consultant acknowledged that the proposal has the potential to increase local flood risk. However, despite this the Council has approved the application. The Board will need to ensure that the landowner applies for consent and make it clear, if consent is granted, that the landowner will remain responsible any exacerbation of local flood risk.

The Chairman stated that it appears that there is a disconnect between what the Board requires and what the Council is happy to approve and asked if this is something we could try and improve. The Clerk & Engineer replied that we are trying to improve our links with Councils and stress the importance of being consulted earlier on in the process. At the very least, if Councils intend to issue planning permission it would be helpful if the need for IDB Consent is highlighted by condition or note. **Action: Technical Assistant to pursue this consent application and liaise with Councils to highlight IDB requirements in general.**

Cllr Jull referred to the RSPB's development at Willow Farm, between Sandwich and Deal, which appear to have changed, with planning applications having been submitted for works such as fences, culverts, wind turbines and solar panels. The Clerk & Engineer replied that their aim is still to create a wetland site and this now includes solar/wind powered pumps for wetting up the site. The fencing, although somewhat unsightly and undesirable, is intended to keep predators out of the reserve to help protect rare species of birds.

Ref: W1-8 – Flooding in Deal

Mr Botting asked what is causing this ongoing flooding problem. Cllr Jull stated that surface water runoff from the road is getting into the foul sewer which then overflows and floods Albert Road and some residential properties before discharging into Mathew's Close dyke. The system is fitted with sensors, but the deployment of the emergency pump by Southern Water appears to be rather hit and miss. Mr Butson confirmed that Southern Water is in contact with Albert Road residents and is working to find a solution to the problem. The Clerk & Engineer added that he had been contacted by Southern Water's consultants and had agreed to assist wherever possible. **Action: Clerk & Engineer to maintain involvement and provide update.**

Ref: F14 – Banking Arrangements

The Finance & Rating Officer reported the information gathered regarding the two new banking institutions which were suggested at the last meeting:

- **CAF Bank Limited** is a subsidiary of Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) and it invests through third parties such as Shawbrook Bank (0.7%), TSB (0.15) – both 1 year investments – and Scottish Widows (0.05%) – which is a 90 days investment and investments are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

CAF's investment accounts are for Charities and it was advised that **we may** qualify as a not for profit organisation but there was uncertainty as to the Board's status. The highest interest is with Shawbrook Bank and the Board did not qualify to open a bank account directly with them due to not having documents filed with Companies House. Although there is a link on Shawbrook Bank to go through cafonline for investments for charities, Shawbrook Bank were also non-committal about the Board's eligibility through CAF.

- **Churches Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA)** manage investment funds and investments are not covered by the FSCS.

Of the various funds provided, the Public Sector Fund would be the most suitable and this is a cash fund dealing in the short-term money market with funds instantly accessible with no penalties. There is a management fee currently of 0.06% – to increase to 0.08% in April – charged against the interest and currently the net interest is 0.327%. Interest rates are paid at base rate and have always been above market rate and the fund has a AAA credit rating which is the highest possible rating and is managed on a conservative basis with investments placed across 32 to 50 institutions so there is no exposure to the stock market.

Cllr Jull stated that the CCLA has its drawbacks and he opined that no action is preferred to investing with CCLA. The Chairman stated that the rationale for looking at further accounts was to spread the risk and if funds are not covered by the FSCS it negates the whole point. The Chairman stated that the Board needs to decide whether to continue trying to source another investment account to spread the Board's funds further or to accept the level of risk that exists with the current spread of funds, recognising that funds in each banking institution are only covered up to £85,000 by the FSCS. It should also be noted that the internal auditor considered the current situation adequate. It was proposed by Cllr Jull, seconded by Mr Botting and decided that the Board takes no further action.

### ADMINISTRATION

#### Ref: A8-1.1 – ADA South East Branch

The Clerk & Engineer stated that he will email all Members with regards to the vacancies on the ADA SE Branch i.e. Chairman and Vice Chairman to gauge interest. **Action: Clerk & Engineer.**

### ELECTION OF A FINANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES AND WORKS COMMITTEE FOR THE PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 2022

The Chairman reported that the FGP&Works Committee had proposed that Mr D J Fuller fill the vacancy on the Committee. With there being no other nominations it was proposed by Cllr Jull, seconded by Mr Wilkinson and resolved that the Finance, General Purposes & Works Committee for the year ending November 2022 be composed of the Chairman (Mr G R Steed), the Vice Chairman (Cllr M J Burgess – ABC), the Deputy Vice Chairman (Cllr D Crow-Brown – TDC), Mr P S Dunn (Ash Level), Mr D J Fuller (Wye), Cllr P D Jull (DDC), Cllr D O Smith (ABC), Cllr M Sole (CCC) and Mr M P Wilkinson (Chislet).

#### Ref: W2-1 – WATERCOURSE MAINTENANCE ESTIMATES (2022-23)

The Chairman ran through the Watercourse Maintenance Works Estimates as detailed in the F&GP minutes and summarised that the total cost estimated for planned maintenance works for the year ending 31 March 2022 totals £338,500 (£4,500 under the revised budget) – this includes the total cost of carrying out Water Level Control & Emergency Response for the IDB and the EA for which the EA contributes under the PSCA.

The Chairman reported that the estimate for the forthcoming year is £369,500, which denotes a considerable increase on the previous year which is predominantly due to the planned tax changes around the use of diesel. He further highlighted the fact that the new retendered Watercourse Maintenance Contract's rates take effect from 1 April 2022.

The Chairman drew the Members' attention to the Structures budget of £30,000 and explained that this will not be sufficient to fund a structure replacement this year, which has been the case over

recent years. The Clerk & Engineer reported that costs are rapidly rising, and the ongoing structures reserve has been depleted. The Chairman stated that due to the already great strain on the 2022-2023 budget, the Board needs to decide on whether to leave this budget as it is or to allocate an additional £10,000 from the General Reserve so that the planned programme can continue.

Ms Dyas stated that costs are forever increasing, and it would be sensible to continue with the programme as planned. Mr Botting asked if it would be possible to add this extra to the overall estimates. The Clerk & Engineer replied that this is an option but other increases within this budget have already had a significant effect on the overall increase to the rates and levies. Following general discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Burgess, and resolved that the structures budget be increased by £10,000 from the General Reserve so that another one of the Board's structures be renewed during the 2022-23 financial year. All present agreed.

The Chairman reminded the Board that in recent years, generally it has tried to limit annual increases to 2%, but we must be mindful that inflation is currently higher and in forthcoming years this is likely to be insufficient to cover costs.

#### W2-1 – COMBINED FINANCE ESTIMATES (2022-2023)

The Chairman ran through the Combined Finance Estimates for the 2022-23 financial year:

- Income estimated at £182,100
- EA Precept £95,836
- Maintenance Works Expenditure £369,500 – does not include £10,000 added to Structures
- Administration and Engineering Expenditure estimates total £324,700 for the current year and £321,700 for the 2022-23 financial year. He particularly noted the fact that the Building Maintenance budget was increased by £10,000 for the current financial year to bring some work forward (with any overspend to be carried over).
- Rechargeable Works £57,800
- Old Thrustbore Reserve £10,000
- The Chairman reported that to limit overall costs there has been no increase to the Demaining Reserve in the 2022-23 estimates but reminded the Board that it had previously decided to increase this reserve annually by 5% to keep pace with inflation. The Chairman asked if the Board, under these circumstances, wishes to apply any increase for the forthcoming year. Following general discussion, it was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Sparks, and resolved that the Demaining Reserve be increased by 5% during the 2022-23 financial year – but due to the already steep increases this will be funded from the General Reserve.

The Chairman summarised that the net estimated sum needed to be raised from rates and levies (without including the £10,000 increase to the Structures Reserve and the 5% increase to the Demaining Reserve) to carry out the Board's activities for the year ending 31 March 2023 is £672,736 which is an increase of 8.21% on last year's total raised amount and the effect of this is shown on Option 7 in page 8 of the estimates. Several other options ranging from an annual increase of 1.99% to the mentioned 8.21% were presented to the Board. The Chairman reported that following a lengthy discussion, the FGP&Works Committee recommended Option 7 to the Board; this will raise the exact amount needed of £672,736. The Board discussed the various options, and it was proposed by Cllr Sparks, seconded by Cllr Burgess, and resolved that the Board will adopt Option 7 for the financial year ending 31 March 2023 and:

- a) A total sum of £672,736 be raised.

- b) A rate of 14.9759p in the pound be made for the year ending 31 March 2023, raising £68,350 from Drainage Ratepayers.
- c) Special Levies be made on Local Billing Authorities for the year ending 31 March 2023 as follows:

Ashford Borough Council	£284,908
Canterbury City Council	£137,438
Dover District Council	£ 83,284
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	£ 604
Thanet District Council	£ <u>98,152</u>
	<u>£604,386</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 on the Board's website and noticeboard.

All Members present voted in favour.

### **Joint Report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2021**

#### Ref: A10-21 – Beavers

The Clerk & Engineer reported that the previously postponed talk by the Kent Wildlife Trust will now take place on 16 March.

Cllr Conolly asked if Defra is still not compensating landowners for damages caused by beavers. The Chairman replied that unfortunately appears to be the case but there may be some limited funding from other sources. Defra's final report is however still awaited. The Clerk & Engineer stated that it is hoped that there will be some funding for Risk Management Authorities such as the EA, IDB and Councils to maintain their systems which should in turn benefit affected landowners.

#### Ref: W7G – Environment Agency Works – Update

- The options for the work on the Mile Penstock are still being evaluated.
- The 2021-22 EA's weedcutting programme has been completed
- The long-term desilting plan is still being developed using data gathered during recent desilts.
- Cooper Street Pumping Station works were completed but the problem with the anchor bolts should be sorted by the end of March.
- There is a meeting planned to discuss the options for funding the repairs to the Boiling Spot Stop.
- Desilting of the South Stream alongside the Pinnock Wall at Hacklinge – decision not made yet but it is looking like it will not be done this year
- Lower Stour bathymetry survey results are still not available. Dr Pryce reported that they have applied for funding so that this survey is done annually for around 5 years so that results can be compared, and a conclusion drawn.



- Brewery Sluice – new trash screen is still delayed due to new guidance so likely to be pushed back till Autumn 2022.
- Brewery Sluice – new outfall flap design was submitted, now waiting for funding to be approved but still on track to be installed Summer 2022.
- Stonar Cut – penstock seal is leaking, and investigations have revealed that the seal is designed to seal against the tide so the tide can't go upstream but likely to leak on the other side as it is difficult to achieve a seal on both sides. There is a suggestion that the penstock has warped so this is being investigated.
- Sarre PS – replacement discharge flap is likely to be installed in the Summer 2022.

#### Ref: W5 – Planning Applications

The Chairman ran through the Planning Applications as listed on the F&GP Committee meeting minutes. There were no additional comments.

#### Ref: W15 – Applications for Consent

The Chairman reported the Applications for Consent as listed on the F&GP Committee meeting minutes. There were no further queries or comments

#### Ref: W15 – Enforcement issues

#### **IDB218 Minster Station Lead Dyke**

The Clerk & Engineer reported that this is where there is a culvert which is restricting flows and increasing upstream flood risk to the south-eastern areas of Minster village. An outline summary will be issued to the Chairmen, local Members and Mr Williams (Natural England).

#### **IDB 309 Shelvingford Stream**

The Clerk & Engineer stated that conversations are ongoing between the Technical Assistant and the landowner to try and resolve the issues so that access is restored for maintenance.

#### **Ordinary Watercourse feeding into IDB 116 Walmers Hill Stream**

This has been a long-standing problem, where the site has been built up with no planning permissions or consents. The Technical Assistant arranged a joint visit with the EA and CCC and the landowner has agreed to clear the blocked watercourse, but this still needs to be checked.

#### **Ordinary Watercourse at Chitty Lane, Chislet.**

Application still not received.

**Action: Technical Assistant to pursue and update all of the above.**

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr Botting asked if any future structure renewals are being protected against beaver damage. The Clerk & Engineer confirmed that new stopboards will include a metal cover.
- Cllr Sparks referred to a possible new development in Lenham for a high number of houses, and he asked if the Board is assessing the potential impact that this will have on the neighbouring watercourses. The Clerk & Engineer replied that this major site is outside of the Board's district, but it does drain to it. The Technical Assistant has been in contact with

Maidstone Borough Council to highlight the Board's interest and to request it be consulted as details become available.

### Future Meeting Format

The Chairman stated that he considers there to be too much repetition of matters at meetings. He suggested that the FGP&Works Committee should consider mainly financial and policy related matters and avoid going through the Board minutes which are the full Board's responsibility to consider and approve. He continued to propose that in future the FGP&Works Committee should focus on finance and any other policy related/high-level matters which it can then report to the full Board.

Cllr Sparks agreed that too much time is spent going through previous meeting minutes and this causes duplication. Members should read minutes before each meeting, and they should therefore be taken as read, with only items that need clarification or update raised.

Cllr Burgess stated that it would also be helpful to have recommendations and actions in bold.

The Chairman proposed that this is tried at the next round of meetings, but we could change or revert back if not helpful. All present agreed. **Action: Clerk & Engineer and Finance & Rating Officer.**

### MEETING CLOSED

There being no other business the Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.