

MINUTES of Meeting held on Monday 4th September 2023 at the Strensall and Towthorpe Village Hall, Northfields, Strensall, York

PRESENT

Mr J P Coverdale (In the Chair)
Mr S Stark
Mr D R Brotherton
Mr J Sowray
Mr D J E Sherry
Mr M Cockerill
Mr I Ridsdale
Cllr M Warters
Mr D M Crossley
Mr C Chambers
Cllr T Fisher
Mrs S Wiseman
Mr M Lumley-Holmes
Mr S Wragg
Cllr D Needham

The Clerk – Mr W Symons

Engineering Assistant – Mr N Culpan

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P E Clark, Mr M Kemp, Mr R J Burnett and Cllr E Pearson.

NEW MEMBERS

The Chairman welcomed the two new Council Nominated Members to the Board. These included Mr M Lumley-Holmes nominated by the City of York Council and Cllr D Needham (Pocklington Provincial Ward) nominated by East Riding of Yorkshire Council, both of whom introduced themselves.

The Clerk confirming that the Council Nominated Members from the new North Yorkshire, York and East Riding Councils had now been confirmed by the Councils and verified.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr T Fisher informed he was a Member of City of York Council and on the Council Planning Committee. He noted two planning applications which he was unable to comment on, 7072 and 7428, which the City Council was the applicant.

There were no further declarations of interest related to the items listed on the Agenda.

The Clerk informed Members that the Register of Members Interests was available for inspection and update as required.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2023, a copy of which had been sent to all Members, be taken as read and approved and that they are forthwith signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk reported that no matters were arising from the Minutes of the last meeting which were not covered on the Agenda.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Clerk advised that there have been no reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive (RIDDOR) since the date of the last meeting.

He noted the Board had been progressing the rollout of the Health and Safety Policy with its workforce.

RATES

The Clerk reported that the total rates collected up to the 4th September 2023 are as follows:

(a) Special Levy -	£176,443.42	(50%)
(b) Direct Levy -	<u>£ 51,951.01</u>	(94%)
	<u>£228,394.43</u>	

The Clerk having a list of accounts with sums outstanding at the meeting which he shared with the Chairman.

The Clerk confirmed that any outstanding rates will be pursued for payment and any remaining sums or credits at year-end will be included in next year's rate demands.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

The Engineering Assistant had circulated a report to Members with the Agenda. This report contained a web link to electronic maps identifying the maintenance work carried out by the Board. He offered to give demonstrations on using and gaining access to the Scribble Maps software system to individuals if required.

Bone Dyke

Cllr T Fisher informed he was concerned that Bone Dyke when flowing has a presence of several small fish. The dyke has a habit of drying up, leaving little or no water for these fish. He asked about the possibility if he could help by creating deeper spots for water to be retained to help these fish.

The Engineering Assistant informed that this should not be a problem if it is parish council land however if it was not then and owner agreement is likely to be required. He further asked if Cllr T Fisher could keep him informed of what he proposes.

Osbalwick Beck

Cllr M Warters informed about the excellent work carried out on Osbalwick Beck. This including manual work removing weed and rubbish.

The Engineering Assistant informing that the Board's workforce had been assisted by some of the workforce from adjacent Boards also administered by the York Consortium of Drainage Boards.

Biodiversity Trial Review

The Engineering Assistant's report had highlighted the trial linked to delivering more sensitive flailing works being applied in two locations which he explained at the meeting. He informed that a review of the potential success of this new approach with the Board's partners will be carried out which will be documented.

Mr M Lumley-Holmes noted how important that the review is concluded and used to consider the Boards approach in following years.

Mr S Wragg asked about how the balance and success with the revised maintenance approach is valued. He informed that clearly a view will be given from St Nicks and others but recognised how these views and input are meshed together is a challenge.

The Engineering Assistant was in agreement.

Cllr T Fisher noted how hard it was to address Himalayan Balsam in that it was very hard to deal with. If cut or pulled pre seed pod maturing then spreading can be contained as the seeds do not spread. This however can be a problem with later cuts. The plant prior is a good source of pollen earlier. He further noted that two sightings of mink have been reported in the last week. The presence of which clearly has an impact on water voles and other small mammals.

Pick-up Truck Replacement

The Engineering Assistant had circulated a report at the meeting regarding a vehicle replacement. He apologised that he had not been able to circulate the report prior because the costs had not been available when the agenda was sent. This being slightly early due to the bank holiday. The report considering the costs of several equivalent vehicles of similar specifications. The favoured option being an Isuzu D-Max Double Cab 4x4 Pickup as described in the report which will be available within October 2023. The truck and accessories costing £32,744 with an anticipated part exchange of £8,000 all sums exclusive of VAT and road tax.

Mr I Ridsdale noted the lack of extras costs on the alternative vehicles.

The Engineering Assistant informed it was very hard to obtain quotes from a number of suppliers fully scoped to the Boards requirements as clearly the Board will only be purchasing one vehicle.

Mr S Stark noted the reliability of the Isuzu vehicle running several in his own fleet.

Mr M Lumley-Holmes proposed the Board purchases the Isuzu D-Max Double Cab 4x4 Pick up on the basis of the report, part exchanging the damaged Toyota Hilux.

Mr S Stark seconding the proposal of Mr M Lumley-Holmes which was UNANIMOUSLY AGREED by the Board.

Dipper Extension for 8 Tonne Tracked Excavator

The Engineering Assistant explained the situation with the potential purchase of the arm as covered in his report.

Mr C Chambers proposed the Board purchases the dipper arm extension on the basis of the single quotation. He recognised the difficulty of obtaining alternative quotations. The purchase being in the sum of £6,845 exclusive of VAT.

Mr S Stark seconding the proposal of Mr C Chambers which was UNANIMOUSLY AGREED by the Board.

(SEE APPENDIX TO MINUTES)

HIGHLAND WATER CONTRIBUTION

The Clerk advised that claims had been made to the Environment Agency for the 2022/23 Upland Water ditch maintenance works. This was made based on the sum of £238,302.33 of total works of which £115,691.60 is eligible to claim. The July meeting of the Regional Flood Defence Committee has agreed to pay 62.7% of this claim relating to the budget made available. This results in the payment of £42,583.23 to the Board. The Environment Agency may be able to pay a larger sum if efficiencies and savings made are achieved/identified in the revenue programme later in the year. This however did not occur last year so is potentially unlikely to occur.

The Clerk further informing that this returning of maintenance funds a year later is an important return income to the Board. The level of percentage paid in recent years has been high. It however, gives no certainty that the percentages will remain and last years percentage paid was much lower. However, the Board supports and appreciates the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) at keeping the percentage contribution as high as possible.

AUDIT

External Audit Return

The Clerk referred to a copy of the External Auditors Certificate and Opinion for the accounts for financial year 2022/23. A copy of the External Auditors Certificate and Opinion had been circulated (Section 3 and 4) to Members prior to the meeting with the Agenda.

The Clerk informed Members that the return from the External Auditor does not raise any matters under Section 3 External Auditor Certificate and Opinion 2022/23.

Completion of the Audit

The Completion of the Audit has been advertised, as required. The Board acknowledged this outcome.

Appointment of Internal Auditors

The Clerk advised the Board that the audit of the Board's accounts is reasonably complex. In view of this any new auditor would require some time to understand the working arrangements currently in place.

The current Internal Auditors, Brodericks (Doncaster), who have carried out audits for a number of other Boards, are familiar with the Consortium arrangements along with the Audit of small body public accounts and the requirements of the external audit.

In view of this the Clerk asked if the existing Auditor is retained for the 2023/24 financial year audit because of the familiarity of our current systems. The cost of last year's audit, support and production of the required reports for the Board was £1,350 plus VAT. However, the cost could increase depending on the requirements of the audit.

The Clerk noted that the external audit will continue to be under the local framework contract with PK Littlejohn. In this sustaining continuity of the internal audit is likely to help if any problems arise with these arrangements.

Members UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the Board re-appoint the Internal Auditors, Brodericks (Doncaster) for the 2023/24 financial year.

Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control

The Clerk referenced the historical concerns of the External Auditor regarding the review of the effectiveness of internal control.

The Clerk asked if the Board would wish to continue to review its effectiveness of internal control in financial year 2023/24 with the report being prepared by the internal auditor. This is because the Internal Auditor is believed to be impartial to the interests of Members and the Board's Consortium staff. This therefore avoids any potential conflict of interest. However, the Board's Clerk should review the documentation and scope of this report to ensure that the audit compliance requirements are fully covered.

The Board Members UNANIMOUSLY AGREED for the Board's Internal Auditors work to additionally include the review of the effectiveness of internal control as carried out in the previous financial year 2022/23.

BUSINESS RISK ASSESSMENT

The Clerk informed Members that the Association of Drainage Authorities have issued a model policy document for the Board's Risk Assessment. This has been in place several years. The format is in the form of a 3 x 3 matrix which evaluates the likelihood of an event happening against the consequence if it occurred. A draft updated Risk Assessment for the Board on this basis has been prepared which Members considered at the meeting. The text with changes being highlighted and underlined.

The draft also has been considered and updated with the comments following the report of the Boards Internal Auditors' letter along with the Report on the Effectiveness of Internal Control.

The Clerk ran through the items on the assessment with a score which had been identified as 4 or higher.

Members reviewed this document and considered the higher risk matters.

Brexit, Materials, Energy Supply and Climate Change

The Clerk highlighted how the risk of Brexit with markets and supply appears to have settled down. This along with COVID pandemic and restrictions diminishing. In the time following the pandemic shortages of raw material such as steel, cement and wood were not as prevalent as initially predicted. Costs however have increased and timber used in watercourse bank works at a reasonable cost being in short supply. The energy crisis influenced by the Russian Ukraine conflict continues but it appears electricity prices are falling.

Members considering these risks not only from the perspective of drainage board maintenance operations but also from the ability of our ratepayers and councils paying special levies to fund our activities. Councils have seen large payments due to recent events and financial funding restrictions. This along with landowners/occupiers potentially experiencing unfavourable market conditions for agricultural products or excessive overheads and could influence their ability to pay drainage rates.

It was noted that the Risk Assessment can be updated as new risks are established and mitigated.

The Clerk informed the Board that the Board's Audit required the Board to formally consider and approve its Risk Assessment for 2023/24.

Members **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** the Board adopts and approves this policy approach to risk assessment and the evaluation carried out in the document for financial year 2023/24.

ADA NATIONAL

ADA Virtual Annual General Meeting

The Clerk informed that ADA National are organising a virtual AGM on 27th September 2023. Joining details for Members wishing to attend will be made available if required closer to the time.

ADA Conference 2023

The Clerk informed that ADA National are organising a Conference on 21st November 2023 at the Institute of Civil Engineers at 10 Great George Street, London, SW1. The Board approving the payment of Members attendance at the meeting and appropriate travel costs. The Clerk has been making arrangements to pre book rail tickets for Members who wished to attend.

ADA NORTHERN BRANCH

ADA Northern Branch AGM

The Clerk informed this is likely to be on 24th November 2023 at Yorkshire and Humber IDB offices.

WATER MANAGEMENT 2023

The Clerk informed that he had attended the ADA National Land Drainage Machinery and Equipment Demonstration. This was held on 5th and 6th July 2023 at Dyson Farms in Carrington near Boston in Lincolnshire. This was an interesting event organised by ADA and was a good opportunity for meeting Members and officers from other IDBs nationally.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk reported there was no correspondence of significance received since the date of the last meeting.

PLANS

The Clerk referred to the list of planning applications commented upon since the last meeting of the Board, which had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

The Clerk reporting that all this information was now digitised and a copy can be provided at the meeting on a laptop computer instead of the paper records.

Yorkshire Green – Planning Inspectorate – Large Project Application

The Clerk informed that the Board were dealing with the response which is a significant infrastructure project being considered by the Planning Inspectorate. The scheme impacting on Foss (2008) IDB, Ainsty (2008) IDB and Kyle and Upper Ouse IDB. The work consisting of upgrading of electricity transformers and distribution equipment. This including a transformer unit with access etc. being in the Board's district (near Hull Road). The Board is seeking National Grid (the applicant) to provide suitable high voltage cable clearance for the Board's excavators to safely operate under. The Planning Inspectorate in the overall project will be considering this matter and the outcome will be published in the near future.

Battery Storage Facilities

Cllr M Warters explained he was concerned about potential fires at these power battery storage facilities. This, if it occurs, could require chemical methods to extinguish along with release of toxic materials into the ground and land drainage systems.

(SEE APPENDIX TO MINUTES)

CONSENTS

The Clerk referred to the list of consents granted since the last meeting of the Board, which had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

The Clerk reporting that all this information was now digitised and a copy can be provided at the meeting on a laptop computer instead of the paper records.

Mrs S Wiseman asked about the Board's Consent 966 for abstracting water to use in a private garden.

Members discussed the Board's position on the consent.

The Clerk informed that the consent related to equipment/structures which could hinder the Board's maintenance works or potentially damage the bank. The Board making it clear in its consent that any other required consents would have to be obtained from the respective authorities.

(SEE APPENDIX TO MINUTES)

BANK STATEMENTS

The Clerk produced the Bank Statements for the Board's Current Account with a credit balance of £397,320.81 with Barclays Bank as at the 18th August 2023.

The Virgin Bank account has an additional credit balance of £207,105.59. The Board placing funds into a twelve-month deposit account which is achieving 4.3% gross per annum.

The Nationwide Building Society account has an additional credit balance of £65,293.55. The Board placing funds in a 95 day business saver account which is achieving 2.80% gross per annum.

The total balance of the Board's funds held in these accounts is £669,719.95.

The Clerk confirmed that Barclays Bank continue charging for its banking services.

ACCOUNTS FOR CONFIRMATION

The Clerk referred to the list of accounts paid since the date of the last Meeting, which had been circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

Mr M Lumley-Holmes noted the variation in National Insurance payments between April and May's payments.

The Clerk investigated this further following the meeting and the payment in April is larger in respect to the first half payment of an unconsolidated sum in April which was part of the Board's employees pay agreement.

Members RESOLVED that payment of these accounts be confirmed.

(SEE APPENDIX TO MINUTES)

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was directed that the next Meeting of the Board is due to be held at the Strensall and Towthorpe Village Hall, Northfields, Strensall York on **Monday 6th November 2023** commencing at **1.30pm**.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday 8th January 2024 (AGM)
Monday 4th March 2024
Monday 3rd June 2024
Monday 9th September 2024
Monday 4th November 2024

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman closed the meeting at 2.55pm as there was no other business.

(APPENDICES TO FOLLOW)