

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Board** at a Meeting held at the Board's Offices, 47 Norfolk Street, Boston on **Thursday, 15th June 2017**

Present: - J.E. Grant (Chairman)

Messrs: P. Bedford R. Hall-Jones
B. Bowles C. Hardy
C. Brotherton A. Harrison
M. Cooper R.F. Leggott
C. Crunkhorn P. Richardson (Vice-Chairman)
H.C. Drake A. Saul

1 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1.1 **Reglone Application**

The Chairman advised that a letter had been received on 28th April 2017 confirming our application to use Reglone had been refused for the first time. There is no right of review and the Committee's decision is final. However, a letter has been sent to the Minister confirming that we were not given the opportunity to discuss the importance of this issue and he is hoping for an opportunity to meet with Professor Cushley, the Chairman of the Environment Committee for Pesticides (ECP), sometime in July.

1.2 **Review of the Lincolnshire FRM Partnership**

An event has been organised by the Strategy Group at Petwood Hall Hotel in Woodhall for 10.00am on 23rd June 2017. The event is an opportunity to review the existing partnership and to seek to develop newer aspects of the partnership, such as the LEP. The Chief Executive will be attending and any Board Members interested in attending the event should contact him.

1.3 **Welcome to Ed Johnson**

The Chairman was pleased to announce the appointment of Ed Johnson as the Assistant Engineer. Ed joined the Board on Monday 12th June from North Level IDB where he was Operations Manager. The Chairman confirmed that Ed was the strongest candidate that had applied for the position and will be more than capable of succeeding the current Engineering Manager when he retires.

1.4 **George Firth (Juddy)**

The Chairman was sad to announce that George Firth had passed away on 20th April 2017. He was an ex-employee who had initially joined on a temporary six month contract but stayed with the Board for 44 years as a tractor and flail operative. His funeral had taken place on 8th May 2017 and the Engineering Manager and Roger Hooton had attended to represent the Board.

1.5 **Roger Hooton**

The Chairman confirmed that on Monday, 12th June Roger Hooton had completed 45 years' service with the Board having joined in 1972. The Chairman asked the Board to join him in congratulating Roger for his achievement and to recognize the outstanding service that he has given to the Board.

1.6 **Changes to BBC Elected Members**

Michael Brookes has been replaced by Paul Skinner. The Chairman had been hoping to welcome Paul to the Board but he was not able to attend the meeting. The Chairman also congratulated Michael Cooper on his appointment as Leader of Boston Borough Council.

1.7 **Visit to Lade Bank Pumping Station by University of Third Age**

The Board recently hosted a tour of the pumping station to members of the University of the Third Age (U3A), which was a group set up to keep people active as they grow older.

2 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from:-

Messrs: T. Ashton
R. Austin
M. Dennis
N. Jones
C. Rylott
P. Skinner
J. Ward
R. Williams
J. Woods

The Chairman was very disappointed that no ELDC appointed Board Members were in attendance.

Also in attendance was Mr D Gowing (Internal Auditor) who would be delivering the findings of the recent internal Audit.

3 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST ON ANY GENERAL ITEM**

Declared an interest in discussions about Triton Knoll – J. Grant, P. Richardson
Declared an interest in discussions about Sea Banks and Bridges – A. Saul, C. Hardy, B. Bowles and H. Drake.

The Chief Executive Officer urge those members who had still not completed their Declaration of Interests Form to do so as this was an important part of the Board's governance.

4 **MINUTES**

4.1 **Board Meeting – Wednesday 9th February 2017**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 9 February 2017 were submitted and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising:

4.1.1 **Nord Holland Study Tour – Amsterdam 31 October – 2 November 2017 – Page 49**

The Chief Executive confirmed that Welland and Deeping and 2 other boards had expressed an interest in this trip. The idea would be to leave early on Tuesday 31st October and spend the whole day at the Flood-Ex exhibition followed by a tour of North Holland on the Wednesday and a formal dinner on Wednesday evening to thank the hosts, with flights home on Thursday morning. If any Board member would like to reserve a place on the trip then a £100 deposit would secure the booking and should be sent to the Chief Executive. The Board would pick up basic costs and each individual would be responsible for any additional items. Approximately 15 places are available and interest needs to be expressed by end of June. The Chief Executive would send details by e-mail to all members.

5. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

5.1 **Internal Audit Report -David Gowing's Report**

The Internal Auditor introduced himself and confirmed that this would be his last Board meeting with Witham Fourth as he has decided to retire. He confirmed that the good news was that there was adequate assurance in place and that the Board had good accounts and record-keeping. Progress was continuing with regard to debt recovery, the records had been

updated and this was all very positive. There were still one or two little “issues” that he had raised: - i.e. cheques were still being used to pay suppliers rather than BACS payments although this was being considered. More importantly he urged all members to ensure that the Register of Interests had been completed. This was a governance issue and must be complied with.

David Gowing also confirmed that members’ travel expenses are paid into the “Chairman’s Account” but Council appointed members do not see them or sign for them and they need to be certain that the expense claims are not duplicated. The Internal Auditor believed that the discretionary 0.4% payment award breached the Public Sector pay gap but the Chairman confirmed that this was discretionary and he felt that this was the right thing to do to attract the right calibre of employee.

David Gowing confirmed that there were two main points which needed to be addressed and these were shown on pages 7-8 of his report. An anti-bribery policy needs to be put in place and ADA has produced a guideline for a standard policy and secondly was the issue of the Register of Members’ Interests which he had mentioned earlier. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that the new policy would be delivered at the Governance and Risk Committee meeting in November 2017.

The Chairman thanked David Gowing for his efforts over the past seven years and wished him a long and happy retirement.

5.2 **Meetings with Outside Organisations**

The Chief Executive ran through the Outside Meetings Report and confirmed that Black Sluice members would be aware that 5 EA de-maining pilot sites had now been signed off including the South Forty Foot which was very positive news. The Chief Executive also confirmed that the next ADA branch meeting was due to be held at South Forty Foot on 13th July 2017 between 2pm and 4pm if any Board Member wished to attend. There would be a demonstration of the Dutch de-silting operation on the day.

C. Crunkhorn - asked if details of the ADA Branch meeting could also be emailed to members.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he would add the details to the bottom of his e-mail regarding the Nord Holland Study Tour.

6. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT**

6.1 The Chief Executive went through his report and highlighted the recent expenditure figures contained in item 3:- £42,000 telemetry was covered by Grant in Aid, £32,000 in respect of new gears was an initial payment and £58,000 in respect of Hobhole electricity would be discussed in detail later in the report.

With regard to other expenditure, the Chief Executive is currently reviewing three quotes in respect of the insurance renewal which equates to roughly £40,000. These need to be reviewed and put in place before the deadline of 1st July.

6.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that although there was a detailed list of rate arrears in the report, the numbers were small. There was an outstanding balance of £46,000 at the year end, of which £38,000 relates to one ratepayer who appealed his Assessment value and this has subsequently been resolved. This means that the actual arrears at the year-end were in fact approximately £8,500 which is the lowest that they have been in recent years. Rate Demands for the current year have now been sent out and payments are being received. The Chairman thanked the Ratings Officer for her efforts.

6.3 The Chief Executive confirmed that adequate assurance had been given by the Internal Auditor.

6.4 The Chief Executive then went through the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2017. Page 1 of his report was a financial commentary on the year compared to the original estimate. The pumping station resilience costs of £27,000 came out of the pumping

stations Reserve and therefore had no effect on the rates. The Board had incurred expense for the gearbox and have spent money on the properties which had now been updated with new kitchens/bathrooms and septic tanks.

With regard to the electricity charges, since 2012, 5 of our 7 pumping stations sites had been receiving estimated invoices rather than actual invoices. An estimate had been included in the accounts of £20,000 but we have now received a stack of credit notes and invoices covering the period to date and having reviewed them they total £80,000. Considering that the Board has changed electricity providers twice within that time this is hard to understand but to avoid a re-occurrence of this, we have now set up a system where we are reading the meters monthly and submitting the details direct. The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman have confirmed that this expense should be included in the accounts and the Board agreed.

The net effect of this payment is that the General Reserve, which were £584,000 have been reduced to £524,000 but this still exceeds the Board's policy to have at least 20% of the annual expenditure in the General Reserve. The Chief Executive then went through the rest of his report in detail.

A. Saul - asked where details of the Chairman's fund was shown

The Chief Executive confirmed it was included within the "Debtors". The fund relates to monies we spend on events such as the Inspection and it does not actually go to the Chairman.

6.5 **Management Accounts and Annual Return – Year ending 31st March 2017**

(i) The Chief Executive explained that the Annual Return reflects the financial statements as at the year end.

(ii) The Chairman asked for the approval of the Board to sign the Annual Governance Statement.

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31 March 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

(iii) The Chief Executive would arrange to send the approved Annual Return, to the External Auditors (Grant Thornton). Their Audit Report together with the signed External Audit Opinion would be discussed at the September Board Meeting.

RESOLVED that the Financial Statement in the Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman and the Chief Executive, and forwarded to the External Auditors.

(iv) **External Audit**

The Chief Executive confirmed notice would be placed on the website and also on the office Reception window offering ratepayers the opportunity to inspect the records.

6.6 With regard to Contribution from Developers, confirmation had been requested from WMA as to the current value per impermeable square metre. (£7.55 per square metre)

6.7 The main points to report with regard to FDGiA applications was that the money had now been received for the sewer lining project and the Wrangle Sea Bank project was a £1m 2 year project . The Chief Executive confirmed that the Legal Agreement with LCC needed to be sealed and he asked the Board's permission to sign the Agreement.

RESOLVED to sign and seal the Agreement with Lincolnshire County Council in respect of the underwriting of the Wrangle Sea Banks Project.

6.8 **Employees Pay Award**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the 2017-2018 pay award had been set at 1% with the additional discretionary 0.4% payment. The Chief Executive had taken advice from the

Treasury they had confirmed that, contrary to the Internal Auditor's understanding, it only applied to government employees.

7. **ENGINEERING MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 1/17**

The Engineering Manager first welcomed Ed Johnson to the Board and said that he had known Ed for many years. Ed was very capable and had a good, sound knowledge and he was pleased to be working with him. The Engineering Manager drew the Members' attention to the improvement works which had taken place here at the rear of the car park. The area had been allowed to become so overgrown that we had recently discovered somebody had been sleeping rough under the bushes!

The Engineering Manager then went through his report, highlighting those areas of importance for Board Members

7.1 **Maintenance Works**

7.1.1 **Flailing**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that some progress had been made in critical areas, but due to the current staff shortage we were not as advanced as hoped. Although dealt with later in his report, he advised that at the start of the year the Board had 2 vacancies one of which was subsequently filled. One employee has since been dismissed for gross misconduct and another has resigned. On top of this, the Engineering Manager had been absent for a period of weeks following an accident when he broke his leg.

7.1.2 **Mudding**

The Engineering Manager confirmed 23km of the 29km outstanding had been completed.

7.1.3 **Fodderdyke East Drain**

The Engineering Manager asked the Board to approve the estimate of £110,000. The Chairman added he believed that our own workmen had better knowledge of the work required as they are familiar with the area.

RESOLVED to approve the Board's estimate of £110,000.

B. Bowles - Asked if the lack of 3 men had a detrimental effect on maintenance?

The Engineering Manager confirmed it did, but the recruitment process was his main priority. The Environmental Manager had also left which made it difficult to stay on top of all the issues. Bushing was a bit behind and recently 3 machines had been stood idle in the yard which is an extremely rare occurrence.

P. Richardson - Added the shortfall of labour had saved wages and in turn had had a positive effect on the balance sheet

B. Bowles - Asked if we were managing with two men less?

The Engineering Manager confirmed that we were not and were simply managing the best we could.

7.2 **Rainfall**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that he had included figures for the last 5 months rather than the usual 3 and this had shown the rainfall was only slightly above average.

7.3 **Gear Box**

The Engineering Manager confirmed the August deadline still applied and that David Brown had now confirmed that the Board's operation temperature for the oil was sufficient.

7.4 **Pump No 1**

The Engineering Manager confirmed removal had been a complicated scenario, which was still continuing. The pump was now with Sulzer and they confirmed that the threaded lifting points on the pump were no longer adequate and Sulzer have commissioned bespoke lifting tackle at a cost of almost £5000, which they have offered to let us purchase at a cost of £5,000 once the work has been completed. The Engineering Manager asked the Board if they would be happy to approve this purchase.

R. Leggott - Asked if we could rent the hoist out?

The Engineering Manager confirmed not as it was unique to our pump.

RESOLVED to approve the purchase of the lifting equipment.

7.5 Electric Pump Repairs

The Engineering Manager advised that we had instructed a firm called Perry's Pumps based in Lincoln to carry out the repairs and he was very pleased with the quality of their work so far.

7.6 Pump Discharge Corrosion

A fist sized hole had been discovered in the cast iron discharge pipes which we have been unable to fix at the present time. The pipes have been in place since 1986 and have rotted. The hole has been covered for the time being until a permanent repair can be organised.

7.7 Second Hand Engine Offer

The Engineering Manager asked the Board for their views on the purchase of the second hand engines. The Engineering Manager confirmed that this was a one on a lifetime opportunity to purchase the engines for scrap value. He suggested that we purchase two of the engines and keep one whole and use one for spares. There were three engines available in total.

R. Leggott - felt we should purchase all three engines.

C. Brotherton - wondered if storage might be an issue but agreed that we should potentially look at purchasing the three engines.

R. Hall-Jones - Also raised the issue of storage.

The Engineering Manager confirmed that if we purchased the three engines we could always lay a concrete base and build a shed around the engines but they were an opportunity not to be missed.

M. Cooper - Added we only needed one major breakdown and the spares would have more than paid for themselves.

B. Bowles - Said we should also consider purchasing the generator.

The Chairman agreed that this should be looked at when we view the engines and it was agreed that the three engines should be purchased.

7.8 Plant Replacement

The Engineering Manager confirmed that 2 no 5m weed baskets had been purchased from two different manufacturers, as a trial to see which is most suitable for the Board's operations.

A. Harrison - Asked if we had managed to sort the transport issue?

The Engineering Manager confirmed that they had been put on the low-loader.

7.9 Carriage of Dangerous Goods (ADR)

The Engineering Manager was pleased to confirm that a good report had been received in relation to this.

7.10 LCC Enforcement Issue

There was a possibility that this issue may cause concern moving forward so the Engineering Manager just wanted to bring it to the Board's attention.

7.11 2017 Sewer Cleansing Programme

The Engineering Manager apologised for the typo error and confirmed that this should read 2018.

7.12 Sewer Adoption Request

A. Saul - Declared an interest as he owns the next field.

R. Leggott - Asked if there had been any previous issues?

The Engineering Manager confirmed there had been no previous issues.

C. Brotherton - Asked if the dyke was lost would this increase the risk of flooding?

The Engineering Manager confirmed the risk would increase because of surface water.

R. Hall Jones proposed the sewer be adopted and there was overall approval from the Board.

7.13 **Triton Knoll**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that the Contractor should be appointed by September 2017.

With regard to the Viking Link construction was due to commence in 2019.

8. **ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that an otter with two young pups had been spotted in the Hobhole Drain.

M. Cooper - Asked if there was any updated regarding the depth of the Viking pipeline?

The Engineering Manager confirmed they were trying to keep it as shallow as possible. The Chairman added that this had not yet been finalised and urged Board Members to share any information that they may obtain regarding this.

B. Bowles - Asked if any meetings were planned?

The Engineering Manager confirmed there was one on 16th June at Stickney.

P. Richardson - Confirmed he had attended a recent Triton Knoll meeting and there was discussion that affected areas would be compensated to the tune of £500 million. He urged those affected to bear this in mind.

9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A.Harrison - Confirmed that an aquatic plant survey was being undertaken in Wildmore Fen.

The Chairman asked that if he saw anybody carrying out the survey to ask what plants had been found as this could support the use of aquatic Reglone.

There was No Other business and the meeting concluded at 3.45pm

Chairman