

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Works Committee** at a Meeting held by Zoom on Wednesday
18 November 2020

Present: P. Richardson (Chairman)

Messrs:	P. Bedford	A. Hall
	C. Crunkhorn	R. Hall-Jones
	(Vice-Chairman)	A. Harrison
	J.E. Grant	R. Leggott (telephone)
	C. Hardy	A. Saul
		J. Woods

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: M. Cooper

2. CHIEF ENGINEER'S ESTIMATES 2021/2022

2.1 Weed Control Estimates

The Chief Engineer presented his estimates to the Committee: -

Item	Weed Control	Movement	2021/22	2020/21
1	W. Con – Works Supervision	£101,571.30	£138,656.00	£37,084.70
2	W. Con - Spraying	- £11,899.60	£10,000.00	£21,899.60
3	W. Con – Flailing Drains	£4,450.00	£48,450.00	£44,000.00
4	W. Con – Flailing Sewers	- £18,207.00	£187,779.00	£205,986.00
5	W. Con – W/basket Sewer	- £530.14	£353,292.00	£353,822.14
6	W. Con – W/basket Drains	£8,347.50	£100,347.50	£92,000.00
7	W. Con – H/Roding Sewers	£350.35	£6,600.00	£6,249.65
8	W. Con - General	£3,925.68	£5,000.00	£1,074.32
9	W. Con – Weed Boats	- £18,407.50	£10,000.00	£28,407.50
10	W. Con – Transport Plant	- £12,807.50	£15,600.00	£28,407.50
	Total	£56,793.09	£875,724.50	£818,931.41

Item	Cleansing	Movement	2021/22	2020/21
1	C. Works Supervision	£4,364.66	£59,423.56	£55,058.90
2	C- Sewer/Imp/Cleansing	- £32,118.00	£67,050.00	£99,168.00
3	C- Drains/Imp/Cleansing	-£7,063.20	£45,000.00	£52,063.20
4	C. Revetements	-£9,451.95	-	£9,451.95
5	C. Vermin Control	-£1,033.00	-	£1,033.00
6	C. Cowbridge Lock/sludge	£57.67	£4,200.00	£4,142.33
7	C. Slip Repairs	£28,853.60	£74,408.90	£45,555.30
8	C. Surveys	£1,481.67	£2,525.00	£1,043.33
9	C. Bushing	£770.40	£33,000.00	£32,229.60
10	C. Faggott making	-£602.60	£12,000.00	£12,602.60
11	C. Drain Access Works	-£8902.48	£17,000.00	£25,902.48
12	C. Transport Plant	-£2,954.10	£5,000.00	£7,954.10
	Total	-£26,597.33	£319,607.46	£346,204.79

The Chief Engineer read through the estimates for 2021-22. The Chief Engineer said that he would take the report as read and would just go through a couple of points and then take any questions that members may have. The estimates had been presented in a slightly different way this year. The Chief Engineer had been in post for 2 years and was now in a position to look at the estimates in more detail and focus on what was needed for each workstream on an annual basis and this was reflected in his estimates. The estimates show what was approved last year, this year's estimates and in red the movement between them.

Starting with the weed control estimate there is significant movement between the two however the Chief Engineer has reviewed each operation thoroughly and specifically the hours required for each workstream and is confident that the estimates are now more realistic and will ensure that when the Board come to complete each task that the funds will be in place to allow the work to be done. The Chief Engineer feels more confident and the Operations Manager is now in place and he is recording information which has formed, in part, the basis of the estimates.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the most significant movement was under Supervision. In previous years, supervision has been just apportioned on an ad-hoc basis. This year, the Chief Engineer has tried to apportion it correctly and so it is in line with the total spend shown at the bottom of the estimate. Weed control is the major element of the spend and so demands the most supervision. Although we now have an Operations Manager within the budget, this is not a new cost – Andy Clark, Les Robinson and Jon Banham have always been included within the estimates but are now highlighted under one heading which makes it appear more significant. There is a significant liability for slip repairs this year. Members will be aware there is almost £250k work to do following damage caused by the bad winter last year. Trying to work the repairs into a 3-year programme within our own financial limits. The movement in the estimates have meant that we can fund the slip repair works this year without having to draw on any other balances. The Chief Engineer believes that this is more prudent. There are pluses and minuses on many sections. There is an increase in weed control of £56,793 and this has been allowed from a movement in cleansing and within the estimates itself.

With regard to cleansing, there is a significant change under sewer improvement and cleansing – which is the mudding works we do annually. It has not been necessary to carry out pipeline cleansing work this year which means employing a contractor so that has helped with the budget. The Chief Engineer assured members that we were not skimping on any work that needs doing and was confident that standards were being maintained. Less drain improvement and cleansing works were required next year which has allowed a further £7,000 payment towards the slip repairs. Revetments is the same as slip repairs. Vermin control in the district was minimal so this has been moved in with slip repairs. The Chief Engineer asked if there were any questions.

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| <i>J. Grant</i> | <i>- expressed nervousness at the level of costs of supervision and said the figures did not make sense when we should be keeping costs down.</i> The Chief Engineer understood the concerns but said that when he prepared the estimate, he was aware it was a large figure for supervision sat at the top. However, he wanted to be completely transparent with the figures and where we are at this time and perhaps historically supervision had not been reported quite as accurately. Included in the current supervision is Jon Banham's wages which had previously been included in other sections rather than just one item under supervision. Sewer improvements show a £32k swing but previously we had not spent £99k on cleansing. The Chief Engineer was trying to be totally transparent as to where money was being spent. It was important to be able to budget and know that the funds were there for say slip repairs which could be carried out in the summer when they should be done and not trying to find money at the end of the year. |
| <i>A. Saul</i> | <i>- confirmed it was a 2.5% increase on last year which he did not feel was too horrendous.</i> |

J. Grant - does appreciate what the Chief Engineer is trying to do and was aware that Jon Banham would have been included in another department and there was now 3 staff supervising instead of 2 and he was worried whether the Board was being frugal enough for the Councils and for the ratepayers. The Chairman confirmed he had looked at the figures in the estimates and as a result of the transparency people could see where the movements were. The budgets are always the same as what they have always been – fully spent. The 3rd man in the district is paid by monies received from the EA and as has already been stated an increase of 2.5% is not an unreasonable increase. The Chief Executive added that there is an increase in income from the EA works and that some of that will not be invoiced until the end of the year.

The Chief Engineer added that the total of the EA work this year would be roughly £750k and with the best will in the world he would not have been able to oversee that and keep on top of our own work and the Operations Manager's assistance had been paramount in enabling us to deal with this. Hopefully, this will continue, and the EA are intimating this level of work next year and the Chief Engineer is sure that members will see the benefit of having this level of supervision on the ground level. The Chairman added that there were some historical accounting issues which have now been rectified and we did not want a windfall at the end of the year but rather constant throughout the year.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that at the end of the day he still had discretion to move funds if necessary and nothing was set in stone. There will also be some monies due from Triton Knoll/Viking Link and these funds could possibly be used towards slip repairs.

- A. Harrison - asked if another operative had been taken on to replace Jon Banham? The Chief Engineer confirmed that a younger person had been taken on in the summer to do EA work and his salary has been covered by Public Sector works but he has been retained because Jon Banham is due to be retiring next year.
- R. Leggott - shared Mr Grant's concerns and surveying the situation in 2 years' time – he believed that it was not about the money but whether our infrastructure would still be considered fit for purpose

A discussion followed regarding slip repairs, the budgets for the repairs and the timescale for that work.

3. Asset Improvement Programme

The following section details the estimate for asset improvements for 2021/22:

	Assets	2021/22	2020/21
1	Watercourse Assets/Urban	£31,070.00	£31,067.48
2	Watercourse Assets/Ordinary	£20,709.13	£20,711.65
3	Bridge Repairs	£15000.00	£15,000.00
		£66,779.13	£66,779.13

- J. Grant - asked what the urban pipeline conditions were like? The Chief Engineer confirmed the high-risk ones through the town were in good condition. At present the Board are carrying out £40k of sewer lining improvements where they can from Grant in Aid. With regard to the more rural ones the Technical Engineer is currently out doing asset management which should hopefully be concluded in the Spring. The Chief Engineer confirmed the main liability is old structural pipes falling in.

The Chairman asked if there were any other questions. There was a show of hands and it was recommended that the estimates be approved.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the 2021/22 Weed Control, Cleansing and Asset Improvement Programme be approved by the Board.

J. Grant

- *added to ensure that all the changes were explained fully to the Board.* The Chairman confirmed that it would be made clear to all Board members.

4.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY/ CO-OPERATION WORKS

Project	Main River Maintenance System 041	Main River Maintenance System 042	Main River Critical Ordinary Watercourses	West Fen Catchwater Drain Bushing,& Badger Mitigation	East Fen Catchwater Drain Bushing,& Badger Mitigation	
	8015120	8015110	8015130	8015140	8015150	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	
Total project estimate	123,974.34	45,961.00	10,059.50	297,614.40	246,388.72	723,99.96
W4IDB Plant & Direct Labour Costs P W Wright Contractor Costs	105,063.00	38,950.00	8,525.00			152,538.00
				253,070.00	208,804.00	461,874.00
Supervision & Engineering Support @18%	18,911.34	7011.00	1,534.50	44,544.40	37,584.72	109,585.96
W4IDB Costs to date	55,425.09	38,377.49	4,122.54			97,885.12

The Chief Engineer confirmed the table details the current position £777k. £140k is Main River maintenance and the rest is recovery work and bushing, and clearance works on the East and West Fen Catchwater Drains. The majority of this work has been carried out by a contractor and supervised by the Operations Manager, the highlighted figure is money due to come back to the Board in respect of supervision.

The Chief Engineer believes that the operational team has capacity for this work and would simply ask for the Board's approval to continue.

J. Grant

- *asked if the Contractor's costs for next year were known?* The Chief Engineer confirmed that any work we can do we are happy that we can absorb that workload. Anything over and above that we give to a Contractor, but we supervise it.

The Chief Engineer said that to close off the question on future works we are carrying out some survey work on the East and West Fen Catchwater Drains with a view to pushing through some cleansing works which we will manage.

A. Harrison - asked if the Board are benefitting from doing this work pound for pound? The Chief Engineer confirmed that financially it was not for profit but there was an 18% return on all work for supervision and engineering support, . Also there is a small element of profit on the plant hourly rate,

The Chairman added that during last winter's wet weather there were a number of risks in the district between the EA and the Board . More control for the Board must be better. Looking at the cost of machinery it is a benefit to have a few income sources. The rate rises only ever keep up with the cost of living.

The Chairman asked that the Officer's estimate be approved and the 2021/22 PSCA works programme for the EA be delivered. There was a show of hands which was unanimous.

It was therefore:-

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the Environment Agency Public Sector Co-operations works estimate be approved by the Board.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that as we were running short of time, unless there were any further questions, he would take paragraphs 5 and 6 of his report as read. There were no other questions.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed.

Chairman