

# WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Board** at a Meeting held at 47 Norfolk Street, Boston PE21 6LL on  
Wednesday, 7 December 2022

Present: -

Messrs: P. Bedford M. Leggott  
B. Bowles F. Pickett  
C. Crunkhorn P. Richardson (Chairman)  
(Vice-Chairman) K. Smith  
A. Hall A. Saul  
C. Hardy P. Skinner  
A. Harrison J. Ward  
R. Hall-Jones

### 1 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### 1.1 **Neil Hastie**

The Chairman confirmed that Neil Hastie had resigned from the Board due to work commitments.

#### 1.2 **Christmas**

The Chairman sent best wishes to the staff and thanked them for their efforts this year. He also wanted to extend his thanks to Board Members for their input throughout the year.

### 2. **Apologies for Absence**

The Chief Executive confirmed that apologies had been received from T. Ashton, P. Ashleigh-Morris, J. Welbourn, R. Austin, J Woods, and J Grant. No apologies had been received from N. Jones.

### 3 **Declaration of Interest on Any General Item**

None declared.

### 4 **MINUTES**

#### 4.1 **Board Meeting – Wednesday 14 September 2022**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 14 September 2022 were submitted and agreed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

#### **Matters arising:**

The Chief Engineer provided an update to Board Members of the Incident Management which had taken place between 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022. This exercise involved a national tidal event and was to the test the resilience of IDBs and the other emergency response services. The debrief had shown that this had been a successful event but lessons had been learned and some improvements will be made. There is another exercise planned for 2023 which will be based on a national power outage to show business continuity plans.

The Chief Executive confirmed a typo on page 10, paragraph 6.4 which should read 14 pence per unit.

### 5. **MINUTES OF GOVERNANCE & RISK COMMITTEE – 16 November 2022**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2022 were submitted and agreed as accurate and signed by the Committee's Chairman.

The Chief Executive took Board Members through the proposed amendments to the Risk and the Finance Regulations confirming that all proposed amendments were highlighted in red. These amendments had all been agreed at the Committee Meeting. The Chief Executive had

been asked to obtain a quote for Cyber security which was very expensive which he would bring to the February Board meeting. It was also intended to carry out building valuations more frequently because of the rising costs of materials should it be necessary to rebuild.

*J. Ward* - queried the wording on page 15 that the HSE “seemed” satisfied. The Chief Executive confirmed that definite confirmation had not been received at the time of preparing the Minutes but had since been received. It was agreed that the word “seemed” would be removed from the Minutes.

Turning to the Financial Regulations, the Chief Executive confirmed that C. Hardy was a third signatory on the bank mandate in the event that either the Chief Executive or the Chief Engineer were unavailable.

The Committee Chairman asked for the Board’s approval of the updated Risk Register and the Finance Regulations. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That the updated Risk Register and Finance Regulations be adopted by the Board.

The Committee Chairman confirmed that the level of the General Reserve had been discussed in depth at the Committee meeting and it was felt that 20% of annual expenditure was an ever-moving target but it was decided that an additional 1% would be added to this variable each year for the next five years to get the level to 25%. The position would be reviewed thereafter. The Committee Chairman asked for the Board’s approval. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That when the budget was set each February, an additional amount would be added to the rate so that the level of the General Reserve would increase until it represented 25% of annual expenditure. This would happen over the next 5 years.

6. **MINUTES OF WORKS COMMITTEE – 16 November 2022**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2022 were submitted and agreed as accurate and signed by the Committee Chairman.

6.1 **CHIEF ENGINEER’S ESTIMATES 2023/2024**

**Weed Control Estimates**

The Chief Engineer took the Board Members through the estimates. The Chief Engineer confirmed the increases this year are not work related but as a result of costs, inflation, and future pay rises.

The Chairman asked for the Board’s approval for Weed Control and Cleansing Estimate 2023-2024 be adopted. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that the following Estimates be approved

i)	Weed Control	£959,204
ii)	Cleansing/Mudding	£362,584

6.2. **Asset Improvement Programme**

The Chief Engineer confirmed there was no change required in the estimate due to the financial situation. The Chairman asked if there were any further questions. There were none so the Chairman asked if he could ask for the Board’s approval for the Asset Improvement Programme Estimate 2023-2024 be adopted. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that the following Estimates be approved

i)	Asset Improvement	£60,779
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6.3 **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY PSCA WORKS**

The Chief Engineer felt it was important for the Board to be aware of the level of works that we were proposing to undertake in the coming year. The Chief Engineer requested the Board's authority to present the estimate to the Environment Agency.

There were no further questions and the Chairman asked if the Board were prepared to approve the Environment Agency/Co-operations Works Estimate recommended by the Works Committee. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that the Environment Agency PSCA Works Estimate in the sum of £231,527 be approved

Cllr. A. Hall joined the meeting at 2.15pm.

7. **MINUTES OF PLANT & PUMPING STATIONS COMMITTEE – 16 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2022 were submitted and agreed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

The Chief Engineer confirmed the Plant Replacement programme had been discussed in great detail at the Committee meeting.

The Chairman asked the Board to approve the 2023/24 Estimates recommended by the Plant & Pumping Committee. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That the Board agree the Estimates recommended by the Plant & Pumping Committee be approved

- (i) JCB JS145 Excavator Estimate £150,000
- (ii) Toyota Hilux 4x4 Estimate £30,000
- (iii) Valtra Tractor Estimate £128,500
- (iv) Herder Cavalier Flail Mower Estimate £90,000
- (v) Weed basket Estimate £12,000
- (vi) Vortex Jumbo Frontline 150 Flail Estimate £17,500

The Chief Engineer confirmed that a trade in price would be obtained in respect of the old equipment which would be offered for sale by tender in January. The highest price would be accepted whether that was by way of tender bid or trade in price.

7.2 **Estimate for Pumping Stations 2023/2024**

The Chief Engineer asked the Board to approve the 2023/24 Estimates for Pumping Stations recommended by the Plant & Pumping Committee. As the Board could see the increase in the running costs was mainly attributed to the increase in salary costs, insurance, and telemetry costs. The Board also had the benefit that the electric costs were fixed until April 2024 and all major works project are grant funded. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That the Board approves the Pumping Station Estimates recommended by the Plant & Pumping Committee.

	2023/24	2022/23
	Estimate	Estimate
Pumping Stations	£598,897	£565,874

7.3 **Depot Estimate 2023/2024**

The Chairman asked the Board to approve the 2023/24 Depot Estimate recommended by the Plant & Pumping Committee. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That the Board approves the Depot Estimates recommended by the Plant & Pumping Committee.

	2023/24	2022/23
	Estimate	Estimate
Pumping Stations	£43,500	£46,000

#### 7.4 **Wrangle Pumping Station Approvals**

The Chief Engineer asked the Board to approve the purchase of land required to enable the project to proceed. The Board was also asked to confirm the contribution payment of £25,000 from the Pumping Station Renewals fund. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That the Board approves the purchase of the land and the contribution payment of £25,000 to be made from the Pumping Station Renewals fund.

#### 8. **MINUTES OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – 16 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2022 were submitted and agreed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman outlined the main points covered in the Minutes of the Environment report which he would take as read. The Chairman confirmed that there was a slight increase in the estimate this year which was due to the anticipated wage increase in April 2024. He asked the Board to approve the 2023/24 Estimate recommended by the Environment Committee. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That the Board adopt the 2023/2024 Estimate recommended by the Environment Committee in the sum of £98,474.

#### 9. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

##### 9.1 **ADA Board Meeting – Wednesday, 12 October 2022**

The Chief Executive confirmed that this had been interesting as it had been held at the Dyson facility in Nocton. There was not much happening with ADA nationally and consideration was being given to the ADA conference being held at a more central location than Lincolnshire.

##### 9.2 **ADA Lincolnshire Branch Meeting – Thursday 20 October 2022**

The costs of IDBs was increasing, some looking at increases of 30% and the main aim for all was to look at ways to mitigate the increases.

##### 9.3 **Lincolnshire Local Government Pension Scheme Valuation – Wednesday 23 November 2022**

The Chief Executive confirmed that this scheme was now fully funded for the first time in over a decade and this should result in a massive reduction of the deficit in the accounts. Although the cost of pension provision had increased, the Board would save money on pension contributions – the Chief Executive was aware this was a complicated area and was open to any questions Board Members may have. Covid had had an effect on the mortality rate and general life expectancy was down by almost 2 years.

#### 10. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT**

##### 10.1 **Bank Balances**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the bank balance looked extremely healthy at the moment as we had received £500k of EA funds in advance of spending them together with £785k special levies.

##### 10.2 **Fixed Term Deposits**

The Chief Executive confirmed that interest rates had improved and the Board has £1 million which will not be needed within the next year. It was felt that one deposit of £1 million would attract a far better rate of interest than 2 x £500k deposits and the Chief Executive asked for the Board's approval to place the sum of £1 million onto deposit account with the best interest rate achievable. This was agreed by Board Members.

##### 10.3 **Payments Made**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the larger payments made were all in respect of the Wrangle Pumping Station project.

### 10.3 **Rating Income**

The Chief Executive confirmed that rating income was appropriate for this time of the year and that a further £24,000 had been recovered since the report had been prepared.

### 10.4 **Expenditure**

The Chief Executive confirmed the figures were prepared as at end of October because of the imminent Board meeting. However, he could confirm that in November the Board was at 95% of target and there were no areas of concern.

### 10.5 **Pensions Update & Pay and Conditions**

The Chief Executive confirmed that this had already been dealt with under Outside Meetings however the Chairman wanted to update Board Members regarding the pay negotiations. The Chairman confirmed that a previous offer had been put forward to the Union of 2.1% consolidated plus a one-off hardship payment of £1500.00. This sum was not consolidated. UNISON had referred this offer to their members and it had been overwhelmingly rejected. The Pay & Conditions Committee had met earlier in the week and had put forward a final offer of 2.1% increase together with a one-off hardship payment of £1,800. The union had not yet had a chance to relay this offer to their members but it had been made clear this was a final offer and nothing further would be put forward. The Committee were trying hard to stay within the formula, which had been in place for the last ten years or so, and next year it was envisaged that there would be a large, consolidated increase but by then there would be a better understanding of the general financial situation.

The Chief Executive also wanted to address the Board regarding the Engineering & Technical Services Team development. Board Members were referred to a business case which showed the requirement for a Senior Engineer/Manager following the retirement of one of the team members. The Chief Engineer required assistance in respect of delivering the Board's capital projects and it was envisaged that most of the person's costs would be absorbed into the costs of these projects. The retiree would have had a salary of £30k as at 1 April 2023 and the new salary target is aimed at £50k an increase of £20k to the technical and engineering staff costs.

The Chief Executive asked the Board to approve the request so that the position could be advertised in the New Year. *There was unanimous approval* and it was therefore:

**RESOLVED** That the Board approves the appointment of a Senior Engineer/Manager with a salary of £50k.

## 11. **CHIEF ENGINEER'S REPORT**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he would read through his report which he would take as read, provide any updates as appropriate, and would take any questions the Board Members may have.

### 11.1 **Pumping Station Operations**

The Chief Engineer confirmed pumping hours were down this year as reflected in his report. Good use had also been made of the sluice at Hobhole through the year.

### 11.2 **Rainfall**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the rainfall for November was 70.4mm (2.77"). The Chief Engineer referred Board Members to page 5 which showed a 3-year rainfall comparison.

### 11.3 **Water Level Management**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that levels were now being lowered to winter levels. The East and West Fen Catchwater levels were lower than at Hobhole Pumping Station which had been left slightly higher to enable sluicing to continue.

- 11.4 **Channel Maintenance Operations**  
The Chief Engineer confirmed the figures contained in his report were a week earlier than usual because of the close proximity of the Board meeting.
- 11.5 **Slip Repairs**  
The Chief Engineer confirmed that since his report had been prepared there had been a 20-metre slip on the Fodderdyke Bank. Repair costs would be split between the Board and Lincolnshire County Council.
- 11.6 **Planning**  
The Chief Engineer confirmed that planning remained very busy especially with regard to larger developments which were more time-consuming.
- B. Bowles* - asked with regard to the development at Wrangle whether the runoff would be into the surrounding development? The Chief Engineer confirmed there was a self-contained SUDS which went into the existing pipeline on Tooley Lane.
- A. Harrison* - asked if there was any update regarding the development at Mareham-Le-Fen as work had started again. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the developer needed to make a payment of £25k to the Board once the project started and would check the position.
- A. Saul* - confirmed the work had definitely commenced on site.
- 11.7 **Proposed two storey side extension, Centenary Close, Butterwick B/22/0341**  
The Chief Engineer referred Board Members to the planning application received. This application had been refused because the development would be within 2.9m from the centre of the pipeline and against the Board's policy. However, the homeowner was unhappy because a neighbour had built the same extension over 20 years ago before the Board's current policies were in place and had decided to seek legal advice. The Chief Engineer wanted to ensure the Board were aware of the situation.
- 11.8 **Outer Dowsing**  
The Chief Engineer confirmed that he was heavily involved with this project at this time and was awaiting the final decision regarding the grid connection location which would either be Lincolnshire or Weston Marsh.
- 11.9 **Plant Replacement**  
The Chief Engineer confirmed that there had been a number of fuel and battery thefts from the machines when they were parked up overnight. Unfortunately, there did not appear to be any way to avoid this. He was also mindful that perhaps fuel and battery theft was the lesser of two evils to the damage which could be done.
- J. Ward* - asked if the fuel at Lade Bank was protected? The Chief Engineer confirmed it was by security fencing and roller shutter doors. Hobhole was now also gated adding to the security of the site.
- 11.10 **Telemetry Update**  
The Chief Engineer showed Board Members the new updated telemetry system on the screen and ran through the various features. The Chief Engineer confirmed that this had all been paid for by Grant in Aid.
- 11.11 **Civils and Structural Design**  
The Chief Engineer showed Board Members the various designs and colours available of the Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) control building and asked them to consider what preference they may have.

*M. Leggott* - asked what the condition of the transformers for the pumps were like? Another Board had had a serious risk failure due to the age of the transformer and the position of the same in the building. He was minded to reduce any risk to staff. The Chief Engineer confirmed that this Board only had 1 transformer and that had failed approximately 5 years ago so the condition had been addressed at that time.

11.12 **Rechargeable Works**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Environment Agency works were now almost complete and would definitely be concluded by Christmas.

12. **HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The Chief Engineer said he would take the report as read and confirmed that Health & Safety was proactively managed. Only one update for the Board with regard to paragraph 4 – the incident with the overhead power line. HSE did not attend but had reviewed all the Board's procedures and RAMS and Risk Assessments. There were no resulting recommendations and everything had been fully covered.

The Chief Engineer asked if there were any questions but there were none.

13. **ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Chief Engineer briefly went through his report which he had taken as read. He confirmed that the BAP Tracker was a useful tool which would be regularly updated and would provide a full record of what had been achieved.

Additionally, the number of mink trapped had risen to 16.

14. **BOARD STRATEGIC DIRECTION UPDATE**

The Chairman referred Board Members to the briefing note provided which showed that discussions had been started with the Witham and Humber Boards as one of the various options in view of the Chief Executive's impending retirement. The Chairman wanted to stress that the Board was in a very good position and did not have to join with other Boards, it was just a case of exploring all opportunities before making a final decision which would obviously be decided by the Board. The Chairman added that Councils were working on a shared services basis and appreciated that there would be pros and cons.

The Chairman added that pump staff and district staff would not be shared services and their numbers would eventually decrease through natural wastage such as retirement and looking forward automated pumps would mean not so many staff were needed.

*B. Bowles* - said he was worried that Admin staff would be metaphorically distanced from the drain bank. The Chairman did not believe that this was an issue as it had worked well through Covid.

15. **Meeting Dates**

The Chief Executive confirmed the next meeting dates for 2023 as:-

Wednesday, 18 <sup>th</sup> January 2023	– Finance Committee Meeting
Wednesday, 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	– Board Meeting
Wednesday, 14 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	– Board Meeting
Wednesday, 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	– Board Meeting
Wednesday, 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	– Other Committee Meetings
Wednesday, 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	– Board Meeting

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman said that it just remained for him to give his best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. There was no other business and the meeting concluded at 3.30pm.

**Chairman**