

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Executive Committee

held at the Offices of the Board on
23rd September 2020 at 2pm

Members

Chairman - * Mr K C Casswell

* Cllr P Bedford

* Mr J Fowler

* Mr M Rollinson

* Mr M Brookes

* Mr P Holmes

* Member Present

In attendance: Mr I Warsap (Chief Executive)
Mr D Withnall (Finance Manager)

1640 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Agenda Item 1

There were no apologies for absence.

1641 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - Agenda Item 2

No declarations of interest were received.

1642 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - Agenda Item 3

Minutes of the last meeting held on 10th June 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record with the following amendment:

- Minute 1608 - 'The Chairman thanked Mr P Homes...' should be 'The Chairman thanked Mr P Holmes...'.

1643 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - Agenda Item 4

Confidential Minutes of the last meeting held on 10th June 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

1644 MATTERS ARISING - Agenda Item 5

(a) VIKING LINK – Minute 1623(d)

The Chairman confirmed that Chris Wray will be representing the Board in relation to the Viking Link quarterly meetings.

(b) STRUCTURAL SURVEYS - Minute 1623(e)

The Chief Executive confirmed that the initial surveys are complete, with further content to be completed which is ongoing.

(c) CONFIDENTIAL - BOARD MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT - Minute 1620

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

(d) CONFIDENTIAL - EA PRECEPT - Minute 1622

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

(e) CONFIDENTIAL - DAMAGE TO WORKSHOP DOOR - Minute 1623(a)

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

1645 TO CONSIDER PERIOD 05 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS - Agenda Item 6

The Finance Manager presented the period five management accounts, highlighting the following to the committee; there are four areas of concern in relation to overspend, giving a total overspend of £148,000 currently. This situation is looking to be improved as the quarter 2 forecast is produced at the end of the month. The Chairman noted that the written report at the beginning of the accounts are particularly helpful.

The Chairman also made reference to the Investment Summary, noting that it is a little short, with the Finance Manager noting that it could have been a lot worse.

1646 TO CONSIDER A REPORT ON THE 2020/21 BUDGET & TEN-YEAR ESTIMATES - Agenda Item 7

The Finance Manager explained that he has produced 3 options as follows;

- Option 1: Estimates based on the agreement made last year; 1.9% for one year and 2.5% the following years. This result, in year ten, is a 27.99% reserve % of expenditure and an annual surplus of £49,186.
- Option 2: Estimates based on the current direction in the financial regulations, which is 20% of reserves and a balanced income over expenditure. This result, in year ten, is a 20.69% reserve % of expenditure and a surplus of £5,714.
- Option 3: Estimates based on the 1-year benefit requested by Boston Borough Council last year with 2021/22 at 1.56% increase in the rate, resuming at 2.5% thereafter. This gives the same reserve % of expenditure (20.69%) as option 2 but gives a surplus of £25,778.

Mr P Holmes made reference to year 2023/24, noting that there is only a closing balance difference of £22,000 between options 1 and 2, adding that the difference could pay for pumping which seems to be becoming more frequently required.

The Chairman also noted that there are now more problems with maintenance of pumps that will be explained during any other business, therefore Option 1 is favourable.

All AGREED to recommend to the Board continuing with the original estimates - option 1.

(a) 2020/21 CAPITAL SCHEMES BUDGETS

(i) MAINTENANCE WORKS

The Chief Executive explained that the Summer Cutting Maintenance works are on programme, with no major breakdowns or interruptions with the plant or workforce so far.

The Chief Executive noted that the capital schemes do not commence until the summer cutting is complete. Further noting that other than the initial delays with Periods 1, 2 and 3 running into the maintenance period, in his opinion, the money will be caught up at the end of the financial year.

The Chief Executive also noted that the notices for the desilting works will be sent out early next week.

(ii) NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT - SWATON

The Chief Executive next referred to the works in Swaton, noting that Arup's, the EA's agents have now said that planning permission is required for the swales and ponds which is a 13-week minimum process. The funding for this, approx. £300,000 is already in the Board's account, if the works do not go ahead because all the criteria can't be met, then this money will be returned.

(iii) DESILTING NORTH FORTY FOOT & SOUTH FORTY FOOT DRAIN

The Chief Executive made reference to the North Forty Foot (NFF), noting that Royal Smals have commenced an 86 day programme desilting the River Steeping (9/10km), once this is finished it is planned that Royal Smals will move to the NFF. He added that they are currently talking to the landowners about the positioning of a lagoon. There are two potential sites, however, it has now been identified that at one site there are low overhead wires and at the other there is a high pressure gas main running through the middle of it.

Therefore, it may be that two smaller lagoons are constructed around the gas mains rather than one larger one. The Chief Executive also added that Royal Smals have also been storing their equipment at the depot for a number of years, which has now been moved to be used, therefore Royal Smals will be asked if they wish to rent that part of the yard, if not it will be used again for the Board's storage.

The Chief Executive further explained that, in relation to the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD), he was promised a phone call from Ade Clack which has not yet taken place. The money is ring fenced, with the worst-case scenario being that the bushing works are carried out for the next 3km this winter and desilted in November 2021.

There is still a decision to be made about whether the whole margin to margin is to be desilted or just the centre third; the surveys are still to be completed.

The Chairman noted that ADA National wanted to have an open day for the desilting of the Steeping but was unsure how this would be able to go ahead with COVID-19 restrictions. Cllr P Bedford noted that it may be that groups are invited at specific time slots.

(iv) PUMPING STATION AUTOMATION & GAUGE BOARDS

The Finance Manager gave an update on the pumping station automation and gauge boards, informing the committee that the control panels in 18 pumping stations have been changed and are ready to accept the new pump control outstations. Two sites have already been installed and are successfully running (Holland Fen and Dyke Fen). Five more outstations are on order ready for the completion of five more sites. If all goes to plan, all 18 sites should be upgraded within the budget agreed. The Finance Manager further explained, in relation to the gauge boards, that the ODN levels at all pumping stations have been checked and installation work this winter should get the agreed sites completed.

The Chief Executive, in relation to the gauge boards, explained that the EA use the hands-off level at Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston) for their abstraction licences. The Chief Executive noted that this level has no relevance, which has been repeatedly stated to the EA. Darren Smith (EA) has now requested, on behalf of the Board, some funding to install new gauge boards in around 30 new sites around the catchment which will be positioned easily for observation and give more localised hands-off levels.

(b) 2021/22 PLANT BUDGET

The Chief Executive presented the plant budget, noting that Mr M Rollinson's previous suggestion of 'smoothing out' the fluctuations between the years of net spend has been completed.

The Finance Manager explained that the plant budget presented to the Board was based on 7 year replacements for the excavators and Twigas, whereas this is based on 8 year replacements, there are 8 machines and 8 years and so, logically, one machine to be replaced each year.

The Finance Manager noted that by making these changes the JCB JS145 excavator shown on the budget due to be replaced in 2021/22 actually dropped off, and so had to be put back in.

Mr P Holmes questioned if any further progress has been made in relation to the purchase of a Drott? The Chief Executive responded that enquires have been made with merchants, but nothing has yet come back.

The Chief Executive further added that the Board's Unimog is currently transporting a Drott that is larger than the Chief Executive originally thought was able to be transported with the Boards equipment and so this will give further options. It was also noted that is has been mentioned to other IDBs, where there is an interest.

Mr M Rollinson noted that the Twigas are the highest capital cost against the least value trading in, highlighting that in two of the three years that the Twigas are traded in, there is also approx. £60,000 worth of vehicles being traded in.

The Finance Manager responded that from his point of view, the smoothing of the balance carried forward is what is desired, not what it is a year, there are no negatives.

Mr M Rollinson also questioned if the Twigas are going better this year? Mr P Holmes noted that he had spoken to a member of staff at Irelands Farm Machinery who had outlined that they are like different machines now that there are single dedicated drivers on them. The Chairman agreed that it seems to have helped.

The Chief Executive noted that the only issue that has occurred is with the 19 plate Twiga, the front window screen has broken three times in short period of time. The first occurrence was overnight, but there does not appear to be any signs to suggest vandalism. It is therefore currently being queried with Irelands Farm Machinery and Spearhead and questioned if any other IDBs are having similar issues. It was also decided at the time not to claim on the insurance to protect the no claims.

(c) CONFIDENTIAL - SALARY REVIEWS

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

1647 TO REVIEW THE POLICY ON LAND DRAINS DISCHARGING INTO BOARD MAINTAINED WATERCOURSES (POLICY No. 28) - Agenda Item 8

The Chief Executive explained that this has been presented following confusion at a previous Board meeting around when consent is required. He noted the only changes are within the introduction, highlighted in red in the agenda.

Mr M Rollinson questioned whether it is correct to name a specific manufacturer within the policy? The Chief Executive noted that additional 'or similar approved'. Mr P Holmes felt it gave definitive guideline of where to begin and by also stating 'or similar approved' it is not saying that they specifically must be used. Mr M Brookes agreed.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Land Drains Discharging into Board Maintained Watercourses (No. 28) be approved at the next Board meeting.

1648 TO RETROSPECTIVELY REVIEW THE BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN – COVID-19 (POLICY No. 47) - Agenda Item 9

The Finance Manager presented the policy, noting that there are some changes to be made to the changes, in light of the recently announced guidelines put in place since the printing of the agenda.

The Finance Manager highlighted the following;

- The symptoms have been updated to include the loss of smell and taste
- The last paragraph of section 2, the Delay Phase, needs removing, as on the 22nd September 2020, the 'Work from home if you can' guidance was reinstated
- The additional section on face coverings is in line with the law

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Business Continuity Plan COVID-19 (No. 47) be retrospectively approved at the next Board meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Finance Manager for his work in relation to COVID-19.

1649 CONFIDENTIAL - DRAINAGE RATE REVIEW REQUEST - RSPB FRAMPTON MARSH RESERVES - Agenda Item 10

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

1650 TO REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS - Agenda Item 11

The Finance Manager explained that the meeting room has been set up for the maximum amount of people it can hold with social distancing measures in place, which is ten.

The Audit & Risk Committee would be ten people including both committee members and staff, however Mr M Brookes noted that he would be happy to hold the meeting virtually, depending on what other committee members preference was. All AGREED to ask the Audit & Risk Committee their preference on holding the meeting virtually or physically.

Discussion moved to the Joint Works, with Mr P Holmes questioning if there are any regulations etc. that mean there has to be a meeting held? It was confirmed that there are no legalities, it would just mean that the Board meeting would have to be longer to address and discuss more.

The Chief Executive also noted that it is planned to introduce at the Joint Works Committee meeting the rescheduling of the summer cutting programme and then at the separate meetings of the Northern and Southern Committees in Spring 2021 to introduce the costs to discuss whether the change should be phased or all introduced at once.

The Chief Executive therefore noted that there will be a lot of visual displays for this and so members would need to be able to see a screen rather than dialling in on a phone if the meeting was to go ahead virtually. Mr P Holmes suggested that they could be included within the agenda.

Mr P Holmes suggested that the Executive Committee and staff members could attend physically and conduct the Joint Works meeting virtually, noting that it is easier for the Chair of the committee to pass over to other officers when they are all in the room together. The Finance Manager noted that it could lead to the members in virtual attendance feeling an 'outsider'. The Chairman felt this was a option, if no alternatives were available.

The Chief Executive noted that this was included in the agenda for discussion, but does not mean that there has to be a plan in place for every meeting, it may be that regulations will change again and will dictate how the meeting will be held.

Mr M Rollinson felt that the Joint Works Committee would be too many people, especially to hold virtually, and so suggested the Joint Works is split into Southern and Northern Committees, also noting that there could be apologies reducing the numbers. Mr M Rollinson felt they are the most important meetings of the year because it brings local knowledge from people that aren't on the Board, who enjoy it, also noting that there may be some agenda items that would clash between the two committees and it would be pointless discussing them twice. Mr M Rollinson concluded by adding that he is conscious that the Northern Works Committee did not have a meeting in the Spring due to COVID-19 and so felt it was very important for that Committee to have an Autumn meeting.

Cllr P Bedford noted that Zoom seems to be a good system for virtual meetings; there is a button for raising your hand and all attendees can be seen.

The Chief Executive noted that there is enough room to be able to hold the Joint Works meeting socially distanced in the Stores building to the rear of the office, with the idea that the big screen and projector could be used. The Chairman noted it would be beneficial to be able to hold a Board meeting in the Stores as well as the Joint Works. Mr P Holmes felt physically attended meetings are more productive, suggesting that the members are asked how they would feel about physically attending the meetings in the Stores, adhering to COVID-19 regulations of that time and social distancing. All AGREED to gather feedback from members about the possibility of holding the Board and Joint Works meeting in the Stores, with the option to attend virtually if they would rather.

1651 TO REVIEW THE DRAFT TIMETABLE FOR 2021 MEETINGS - Agenda Item 12

The Chairman presented the draft timetable for 2021 meetings, noting that it has been scheduled as a 'normal' year.

1652 TO REVIEW THE EXTERNAL AUDITORS OPINION FOR 2019/20 - Agenda Item 13

The External Auditors opinion for 2019/20 had not yet been received.

1653 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Agenda Item 14

(a) DUNSBY PUMPING STATION

The Finance Manager referred to Dunsby Pumping Station, a single pump station, explaining that it is believed that the bearings in the pump have failed. The pump therefore needs to be taken out at an initial estimated cost of £15,000 to repair, which hasn't been included in the budget. Due to being a single pump station, it is important to get it out, repaired and back as soon as possible. All AGREED for this work at Dunsby Pumping Station to go ahead.

(b) DOWSBY PUMPING STATION

The Finance Manager referred to Dowsby Pumping Station, a two-pump station, explaining that the motor has broken, with an estimated cost of between £2,500 to £3,000 for refurbishment or in excess of £10,000 for a replacement motor.

It is unknown if it can be refurbished until it has been taken out and in the workshop. All AGREED for this work at Dowsby Pumping Station to go ahead.

(c) PAY AWARD (APRIL 2021)

The Finance Manager (ADA Pay & Conditions Committee Secretary) informed the committee that the pay award is 4.1% for April 2021. Based on this financial year's salary rates, 4.1% is £42,873 (Admin = £15,000 and Operations = £28,000). The 4.1% is the result of a three-year agreement based on the specific formula agreed upon.

The Chairman noted that some of the ADA Pay & Conditions Committee members are not happy with the pay award of 4.1%. The Chairman felt that an agreement should be honoured, whether the formula gives the result you wanted or not. The Chairman felt the Board should honour it, noting the benefits of a settled workforce. The Chairman also noted his concern that if a lot of IDBs pull out, it could end the ADA Pay & Conditions Committee.

The Finance Manager noted that all other sectors are in minus figures because of COVID-19, the public sector have carried on working through the pandemic which is reflected in the 4.1%.

Mr P Holmes also felt it should be honoured, noting that it could have good repercussions for the Board such as being able to compete with the pay rate of the construction industry and therefore recruit more qualified workforce.

All AGREED that the pay award of 4.1% should be honoured.

(d) INSURANCE RENEWAL

The Finance Manager informed the committee that the insurance renewal is due on the 30th September 2020. Eleven days before the renewal the Finance Manager was informed that there was an issue with the combined insurance. The premiums for IDBs are agreed on the 31st March and were agreed at a very similar rate to previous years.

However, now, the combined insurance which was £22,000 in the current year has increased by £12,000, an increase of 55%. John Cooke from Towergate Insurance is working on it currently, arguing that they should honour the agreed rates set in March and will be informing the Finance Manager of the outcome by the end of the week. The worst-case scenario being that an extension will need to be agreed whilst quotes are obtained.

(e) BUSINESS RATES

The Finance Manager explained that a new business rate invoice has been received from the Boston Borough Council with an increase in the valuation of £2,000. A revaluation was requested by the Council based on that there are the solar panels on the roof, which is the reason for the increase. The Finance Manager further explained that there is a lower rate if the majority energy is exported. He was therefore going to contact the council to explain that the majority is exported, but then noted that it has only been increased from 4th September 2020 and so it could be backdated to the 1st March 2017, meaning it would cost the Board around £4,500 if it was backdated.

It will therefore be an ongoing increase in rates, meaning it will take longer to recover the installation cost. It was also noted that the office / depot is the only site that has to pay business rates, the pumping stations are all exempt.

(f) INSULATION RESISTANCE TESTS AT PUMPING STATIONS

The Finance Manager informed the committee that the Pump Engineer has been conducting insulation resistance tests on the pumping stations, currently 18 of the 34 have been completed. From the completed pumps, he has concluded that 4 are very poor and likely to fail very shortly (Dowsby Pumping Station included) and 8 that are poor and likely to fail in the next few years.

The Chairman noted this could be a result of the sheer amount of pumping having to be done in the recent heavy rainfall events in 2019.

The Chief Executive also added that work has been completed on the quantities pumped annually to be presented to the South Lincs Water Partnership (SLWP). The Chief Executive felt it would be interesting to also present this to the Board and compare to this year's figures also.

(g) WYBERTON MARSH PUMPING STATION

The Finance Manager made reference to Wyberton Marsh Pumping Station, explaining that one pump is out for repair, one is poor and the other is very poor. The Operations Manager is therefore suggesting that the Great Hale Pumping Station Weed Screen refurbishment, that is included in next years budget, is changed to refurbish the pumps at Wyberton Marsh Pumping Station. This will be proposed in the budgets presented at the Executive Committee Meeting in December. The Chairman noted the amount of pumping required from these pumps during the breach.

(h) TYTTON LANE EAST

Cllr P Bedford made reference to the dyke at Tytton Lane East, with a property owner complaining that his garden floods and has had no response from officers. The Chief Executive believed it was a riparian drain but will look into it.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:46.