

## **ROMNEY MARSHES AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

### **EXTRAORDINARY MAIN BOARD MEETING**

An Extraordinary Meeting of the Board was held at Appledore Village Hall on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 2.30 pm.

#### **PRESENT.**

Elected Members:

Mr C Body Esq., Mr S Body Esq., Mr A Clifton Esq., Mr D Cole Esq., Mr F Cooke Esq., Mr L Cooke Esq. (Vice-Chairman), Mr D Thompson Esq., Mr A Wellsted Esq., and representing Mr A Clifton Holt Esq in a non-voting capacity, Mr R Holt Esq.

Appointed members:

Cllr P Carey, Cllr P Coe, Mr A Cragg Esq., Cllr Mrs A Hicks, Cllr ARJ Hills, Cllr C Hoggart, Mr D Lovejoy Esq. (Chairman), Cllr A Mier, Mr I D Oliver Esq., Cllr Mrs S Prochak, Cllr S Scoffham, Mrs C Solly and Cllr D Wimble.

Staff:

Mrs D Chalcraft (Financial Officer), Mr R Monje (Assistant Clerk/Engineer).

Apologies were received from:

Elected Members.

Mr A Clifton-Holt Esq., Mr E Lovejoy Esq., Mr T Piper Esq., Mr S Wright Esq., Mr M Wrouth Esq.

Appointed Members.

Cllr Mrs C Creaser, Cllr C Goddard, Cllr P Osbourne.

#### **897. APPOINTMENT OF ACTING CLERK / ENGINEER**

The Chairman greeted the Board and advised that an Extraordinary General Meeting had been called to address the absence of the Clerk/Engineer on ill health grounds. He then thanked the remaining staff for their efforts during a most challenging period. The Chairman read out a statement from the Clerk/Engineer to the Board which advised of his intention to take early retirement. Cllr Mrs S Prochak asked for collective thanks and best wishes to be sent to the Clerk/Engineer. The Financial Officer then advised she was following due process with Kent County Council pensions department so that the Clerk/Engineer could make an informed decision.

The Chairman then asked the Assistant Clerk/Engineer to leave the room. He then advised that it was necessary to appoint a temporary Clerk/Engineer to ensure that normal Board business could be conducted and ensure that the accounts and paperwork for the External Auditor could be signed off in the Main Board Meeting. The Financial Officer advised that she had discussed the matter with the Internal Auditor and that this was the process that should be followed. It was PROPOSED by Mr D Lovejoy Esq., SECONDED by Mr L Cooke Esq. and agreed unanimously that the Assistant Clerk/Engineer, Mr R Monje, be appointed temporary Clerk/Engineer on an initial two-month basis, reviewable monthly afterwards. The Assistant



Clerk/Engineer was asked to rejoin the meeting and the temporary appointment to Acting Clerk/Engineer was confirmed.

#### **898. STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS**

A discussion was held to address the current staff shortage caused by the absence of the Clerk/Engineer. Mr Monje explained that sourcing experienced staff who could make a positive contribution was challenging. The Environment Agency were unable to offer any assistance due to their own staffing requirements; however the Water Level Management Alliance (WLMA) could offer Mr G Oliver for one day a week from August onwards for a period of two to three months. Mr Monje stated that the IDB's level of service could not be sustained without a full time Assistant Clerk / Engineer or Technical Officer joining the team soon but that owing to current uncertainties and complexities this matter was best discussed by sub-committee.

Mr D Lovejoy Esq. asked the Chairman of the Pay & Conditions (P&C) Committee Cllr P Coe for his thoughts. Cllr P Coe proposed that subject to the Board's constitution the P&C could broaden its remit and be reformed as the Personnel Committee to discuss the Board's options. He added that the formation of the Personnel Committee would need to be ratified by the F&GP which would necessitate an Extraordinary F&GP meeting. Cllr P Coe PROPOSED that a Personnel Committee be formed, which was SECONDED by Cllr ARJ Hills and unanimously agreed.

The Financial Officer then discussed the need for Human Resources (HR) support and advised that she and L Cooke Esq had met with an HR consultant who had advised that the situation was more complicated than previously thought. She advised it was essential that all necessary procedures were followed and there was not the full skill set in-house to ensure current employment laws were being followed. Costs were high and she recommended that alternative companies should be approached for a cost comparison before further discussion and decisions could be made. Several Board Members then offered support. Mr ARJ Hills, with the support of Cllr S Scoffham, suggested that Folkestone & Hythe District Council may be able to provide HR services. Cllr Mrs A Hicks advised she could get contact details of an organisation used by Kingsnorth Parish Council. Cllr P Coe suggested South East Employers may be able to assist. It was suggested that the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) may be able to help and whether there was some form of cover on the Board's insurance. Cllr S Prochak enquired as to whether the choice of HR support should be delegated to the Personnel Committee and the Chairman confirmed that it should be to save time. Cllr P Coe suggested that the newly formed Personnel Committee be seed funded with £3,000 for immediate HR needs. Cllr ARJ Hills PROPOSED the motion, SECONDED by Cllr C Hoggart and all voted in favour with several Board members reiterating that time was of the essence.

Mr I D Oliver Esq. (former Clerk/Engineer to the Board) raised his concerns regarding the Board's reliance on Mr David Cooke (Water Bailiff to the Board) given the physical demands of the Bailiff's role, his increasing age and the difficulty of finding a comparable replacement. Mr I D Oliver referred to a plan he had drawn up during his tenure to provide Mr D Cooke with assistance but stated that this had been rejected at the time. The Chairman responded that the areas of remuneration, staffing and future staff structure would all be discussed initially by the

future Personnel Committee with recommendations on future staff structure being presented through the normal channels.

The Financial Officer then suggested that it would be helpful if prioritised short-term objectives were agreed between the Acting Clerk/Engineer, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, allowing for the current staff shortfall. It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Prochak, SECONDED by Mrs C Solly and agreed unanimously that this is something that should be set by those outlined above outside of the meeting.

#### **899. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked the members for their attendance and contributions and the meeting ended at 2.50pm.