

ROMNEY MARSHES AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

A meeting of the Board was held at Brenzett Village Hall, on Monday 26th June 2017 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT

Elected Members:

P Boulden Esq., L Cooke Esq., S Marshall Esq., S Wright Esq.

Appointed Members:

H Bates Esq., Cllr P Coe, Cllr C Goddard, Cllr C Hill, C. Jenkinson Esq., Cllr E Last, D Lovejoy Esq. R Nickerson Esq., Cllr P Osbourne, R Patten Esq., Cllr Mrs S Prochak, Cllr Mrs C Solley and Cllr D Wimble.

Staff:

N. Botting Esq., Clerk/Engineer to the Board, Mrs D Chalcraft, Finance Officer and R Monje Esq., Assistant Clerk/Engineer to the Board.

575. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed the members to the meeting and then asked for a minute's silence for Mrs Violet Link and Mr Nick Ramus, two former Board members who had recently passed away.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Elected Members;

C Apps Esq. and A Clifton Esq.

Appointed Members;

Cllr R Bird, Cllr M Burgess, Cllr A Cragg, Cllr J Johnson, Cllr P Rolfe and Cllr R Wilkins.

576. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2017, having previously been circulated to members prior to the meeting, were taken as read. The minutes were accepted as a correct record of the previous meeting and signed by the Chairman.

577. MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk/Engineer explained that any matters arising would be covered through the meeting agenda.

578. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The Vice-Chairman made comment on the minutes of the last two meetings of the F & GP Committee; he made specific comment on the work of certain staff at the Environment Agency who had acted conscientiously in preserving water in the district after an exceptionally dry winter. He also repeated his concerns on the five De-Maining Pilot Projects taking place throughout the country between the EA and certain IDBs, including the River Stour (Kent) IDB. His main focus was based on IDB resources, which differed throughout the country, funding for maintenance and the condition of stretches of Main River.

579. ENGINEER'S REPORT

The Clerk/Engineer referenced the previously-distributed report and commented on the dry winter and also conservation where the Assistant Engineer had witnessed a poor elver run during the spring period. Cllr Mrs S Prochak asked if the Board was aware of the removal of elvers in the district; the Clerk/Engineer replied that he was unaware of such activities and added that the sites where Board staff monitored elvers were not made public knowledge to aid conservation of the species.

580. PROPOSED ADOPTION OF WATERCOURSE

The Clerk/Engineer summarised his report on the proposed adoption of 240 metres of Ordinary Watercourse at Winchelsea Beach. He explained that the watercourse had been fully desilted by a riparian owner to aid drainage in the area including a section of road gullies that discharged to the watercourse. Cllr E Last asked if the future costs for maintenance were of sufficient benefit; the Clerk/Engineer replied that the work had already proved beneficial and that costs were minimal as the Board already maintained the watercourse downstream of the new section. After further deliberation, it was PROPOSED by Cllr P Osbourne, SECONDED by Cllr C Goddard and unanimously agreed to adopt the watercourse after notifying the relevant riparian owners.

581. ACCOUNTS VOUCHERS

The Vice-Chairman presented the list of accounts paid that had already been thoroughly checked by the F&GP Committee, there were no issues raised.

582. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The Financial Officer gave a comprehensive breakdown of the Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st March 2017 and for April and May for the year ended 31st March 2018. No questions were raised.

583. FINAL ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2017.

The Final Accounts, having been previously circulated and examined and confirmed by the Internal Auditor, were presented to the Board by the Financial Officer. She gave a thorough explanation regarding the method of valuation for the Pension deficit which had increased due to a decrease in the discount rate and an increase in expected future inflation, offset by asset performance. After acknowledging the excellent work of the Financial Officer, it was PROPOSED by Cllr Mrs S Prochak, SECONDED by S Marshall Esq. and carried unanimously that the Final Accounts be approved, which were then duly signed by the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Clerk/Engineer.

The Financial Officer asked the Board if it would consider transferring a proportion of the surplus of the income for the year into the Capital Reserve Fund. After deliberation it was PROPOSED by Cllr P Coe, SECONDED by R Patten Esq. and carried unanimously that £15,000 be transferred from the Revenue Account to Capital Reserve.

584. ANNUAL RETURN & INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Financial Officer discussed the Internal Audit and drew attention to the previously circulated Internal Audit Report. She advised that there were no problems identified and that the newly-appointed Internal Auditor was satisfied with the way the Board operated. The Annual Governance Statement on the Annual Return was then presented to the Board by the Clerk/Engineer. It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mrs S Prochak, SECONDED by S Wright Esq and voted unanimously that the statement should be signed and dated by the Chairman and Clerk. The Financial Officer then presented the Accounting Statements 2016/17. It was PROPOSED by Cllr D Wimble, SECONDED by Cllr P Coe and voted unanimously that the statements be signed and dated by the Chairman.

585. ELECTION 2017

The Clerk/Engineer reported that he had posted the Notice of the Register of Electors on the Board's website at the requisite time with no issues raised. He then asked the Board to approve the register to allow for the second notice to be published on the website; subsequently it was PROPOSED by S Wright Esq., SECONDED by L Cooke Esq. and unanimously agreed that the Clerk/Engineer post the second election notice. Lastly, the Clerk/Engineer informed the Board that Mr Richard Frith, an Elected member from the Romney District, had left farming and had subsequently resigned from the Board in writing meaning a vacancy now existed in the Romney District.

586. REPORT ON CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW

The Clerk/Engineer asked if the members had thoroughly digested all the paperwork associated with the agenda item which stated that a member of the Board had, in the opinion of the independent assessor, breached the Board's Code of Conduct by pleading guilty to an offence under the Countryside and Management Act 1981. On receiving assurance, the Clerk/Engineer explained that the members had to decide whether the Board wished the Clerk/Engineer to write to the member concerned asking for him to consider his position; or whether the Board believed the matter had been sufficiently dealt with through the independent report in which the member had stated that he did not intend to resign. The Clerk/Engineer also suggested that the members attending the meeting could defer a decision to a full postal ballot should they wish. After due deliberation which included critical comment on the efficacy on the code of conduct, the members agreed that, in the first instance, by asking an independent assessor to review the matter and recording the process in its minutes, the Board had acted in a transparent manner. Secondly the members were of the opinion that as the member in question had stated to the independent assessor and the Chairman that he did not intend to resign his position on the Board, there was little point in holding a postal ballot to ascertain if a majority of the Board wished for a letter to be sent, asking the member to consider his position. Based on the aforementioned, with one abstention, the members present agreed that the matter had been adequately addressed through a transparent process and no further action was required.

587. ADOPTION OF GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

The Clerk/Engineer read through the previously-distributed report on the adoption of governance documents that offered further transparency and accountability of the Board's operation. He added that the F&GP Committee had endorsed the adoption of the documents which consisted of a Whistle Blowing Policy, a Gifts and Hospitality Policy, an Anti-Bribery Policy and an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. Recognising the need for the Board to keep its governance arrangements in line with other authorities it was Proposed by L Cooke Esq., Seconded by D Lovejoy Esq. and resolved unanimously that the policies be adopted by the Board.

588. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was resolved that the next meeting of the Board would be held at 2pm on Wednesday 15th November 2017 at Brenzett Village Hall.

589. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Assistant Clerk/Engineer informed the Board of a meeting to be held the following Wednesday afternoon at the Dungeness Nature Reserve. The meeting was being held by the Kent Wildlife Trust regarding the Living Landscape Project, part of which focused on watercourse restoration. The Assistant Clerk/Engineer suggested that there may be opportunities for farmers to liaise with the Trust to obtain funding for improvements to Ordinary Watercourses on their land and that they could also meet Natural England team leaders.

The Vice-Chairman wished again to endorse the hard work conducted by the Responsible Financial Officer who had, over the years, made the process of understanding the finances of the Board easier to understand for all members. This sentiment was echoed by all the members present who extended their appreciation for her excellent standards.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 1510hrs.