

ROMNEY MARSHES AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

A meeting of the Board was held online, on Wednesday 27th January 2021 at 2.00 pm.

PRESENT.

Elected Members:

A Clifton Esq., A Clifton-Holt Esq., D Cole Esq., F Cooke Esq., L Cooke Esq., E Langrish Esq., Mrs H Langrish, J Langrish Esq. E Lovejoy Esq., A Wellsted Esq. and S Wright Esq.

Appointed Members:

Cllr G Allison, Cllr M Burgess, Cllr P Coe, Cllr A Cragg, Cllr K Gandy, Cllr C Goddard, Cllr ARJ Hills, Cllr C Hoggart, D Lovejoy Esq., Cllr A Mier, R Nickerson Esq., Cllr Rev H Norton, Cllr P Osbourne, Cllr S Prochak and Cllr D Wimble.

Staff:

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

733. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed the members to the meeting and requested the Clerk chair the meeting, who then gave apologies from those who were unable to attend.

Apologies were received from:

Elected Members;

P Boulden Esq., D Thompson Esq. and M Wrout Esq.

Appointed Members;

Mrs C Solly.

734. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 25th NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2020, 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 would be signed by the Chairman after the meeting.

735. MATTERS ARISING

725. Engineer's Report – Cllr ARJ Hills reported that he intended to raise the subject of the Agency's new weedcutting standard at the next meeting of the Southern Region Flood and Coastal Committee. Secondly, he informed the Board that planning permission had now been granted for the Lydd Ranges Sea Defence Scheme.

728. Purchase of Replacement Works Vehicle – The Clerk/ Engineer stated that a replacement Landrover had been procured and the old vehicle had sold at auction.

736. APPROVED MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE.

The approved minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee recent meetings were taken as read.

737. ENGINEER'S REPORT

The Clerk/Engineer read through the previously-distributed report and highlighted the recent flooding at Robertsbridge and Hamstreet. Cllr Mrs S Prochak stated that 29 properties were affected at Robertsbridge, caused by run-off from the A21; she explained that the Highway Authority had been informed and would be investigating the matter.

738. ACCOUNTS VOUCHERS

A list of accounts paid since the last meeting had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The Financial Officer explained that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had scrutinised the accounts paid and asked if members had any question; there were no issues raised.

739. RATES TO BE WRITTEN OFF.

The Financial Officer asked the Board to consider the writing off of two small accounts, after brief debate it was **PROPOSED** by S Wright Esq., **SECONDED** by Cllr C Goddard, and agreed **UNANIMOUSLY**, that both accounts be written off.

740. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.

The Financial Officer gave a breakdown of the Income and Expenditure since the last meeting. No questions were raised.

741. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT.

The Financial Officer informed the Board that the External Auditor's report had now been received, a copy of which was included in the paperwork. An "except for" matter was highlighted that made mention of the requirement for certain figures to be stated net of VAT, and that amendments be made the following year. This was duly noted and it was explained that the figures had been reworked in preparation for the following year's Audit Report and would also be shown to the Internal Auditor on his next visit.

742. INTERNAL CONTROLS REVIEW.

The annual review of the organisation's internal controls was presented to the Main Board by the Financial Officer which considered financial risks and appropriate insurance review arrangements, and asked that the Board consider its adoption. It was subsequently **PROPOSED** by Cllr P Coe, **SECONDED** by F Cooke Esq. and agreed unanimously that the document be approved and signed.

743. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2021-2022

The papers detailing the revised estimates for 2020-21 and the proposed annual estimates for 2021-22 had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The Clerk read through the statement and explained that the F&GP Committee had recommended a 2% increase in the penny rate for the following financial year. Cllr Mrs S Prochak asked why the inflationary increase to staff salaries was higher than local authorities; the Clerk/Engineer replied that the question had been raised with the ADA Lincolnshire Branch who set IDB inflationary increases. He explained that the increase was part of an agreed three-year plan and had been informed that unless IDBs were directed otherwise by Central Government, the increase would apply. A Clifton-Holt Esq. asked for further clarification on the Board's proposed desilting works for the following year; the Clerk/Engineer replied that stretches of the Brook Petty Sewer, Vane Court Petty Sewer, Abbatridge Lesser Sewer and the 1st Brenzett Lesser Sewer had been identified for such works. A Clifton-Holt Esq. stated that he believed that no increase should be applied to the drainage rate considering the potential financial pressures farming faced, with changes to the Basic Payment Scheme and subsidies. The Chairman of the Board replied that the Board should be prepared for the future and steady, small increments to the rate were financially prudent. After further discussion, which recognised potential future financial pressure on the Board's resources, it was **PROPOSED** by L Cooke Esq., **SECONDED** by Cllr C Goddard and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

- (i) that the financial estimates for the year ending 31st March 2022 be approved and adopted;
- (ii) (a) the Special Levy on Ashford Borough Council shall be £11,544
(b) the Special Levy on Rother District Council shall be £131,796
(c) the Special Levy on Folkestone and Hythe District Council shall be £482,847

(iii) the Board do hereby make a drainage rate of 5.69p in the pound in respect of Agricultural Land and Buildings for the year commencing 1st April 2021;

(iv) the purposes for which the said Special Levies and Drainage Rate are made and the amount in the £ for each of those purposes are as hereunder set out: -

	p	p
Expenses of Administration	1.625	
Works of Maintenance	1.787	
New and Improvement Works	-	
Environment Agency Precept	<u>2.511</u>	5.923
<u>Less:</u>		
Government Grants	-	
Environment Agency Contribution	0.263	
Other Income	<u>0.014</u>	<u>0.277</u>
		5.646
<u>Add for Adjustment to Balance</u>		<u>0.044</u>
		<u>5.690</u>

744. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next Main Board meeting would be held at 2 pm on 23rd June 2021, venue to be confirmed.

745. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr K Gandy asked that a member of staff attend a site in Lydd where alleged infilling of a watercourse had occurred, the Clerk/ Engineer agreed to check the watercourse concerned.

The Assistant Clerk/Engineer alerted members to a meeting of the Fifth Continent (FC) regarding watercourse improvements for conservation; a number of members expressed interest in attending the meeting. Cllr A Cragg added that the meeting would be focused on the legacy left by the FC and its partners as well as looking how the new Environmental Land Management Scheme would work for farmers.

R Nickerson asked for an update on the Wallsfoot Lesser Sewer outfall; the Assistant Clerk/Engineer replied that the EA were to conduct a full survey of the structure as the door was not sealing properly.

Lastly, the Clerk/Engineer informed the Board of an email received from the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) regarding proposed changes to the use of red diesel. He explained that IDB usage of red diesel from April 2022 would not be permitted as our work was not classified as an exempt activity, and ADA had written to the Treasury's Energy and Transport Tax Team to request that the date be extended and that our activities be treated the same as agriculture, which would be exempt. He stated that if the extension or exemption was not granted, the cost to the Board for weedcutting could increase by approximately £16,000.00 for the year 2022/23. Members asked that ADA be supported in their efforts and the details of the situation be forwarded to them to allow lobbying of MPs. The Clerk/Engineer said he would send all the information he had to all members after the meeting.

There being no other business, the Clerk closed the meeting at 1500hrs.