

LOWER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the **BOARD**
held at **The Boards Offices, 13 Conqueror Court, Sittingbourne**
on **Monday 28 November 2022 at 1pm**

Members of the Board Present

Chairman: S Mair
Vice-Chairman: J Mair
Cllr M Bonney (remotely)
Cllr H Browne
Cllr C Buckwell
Cllr D Carnell
G Fulton (remotely)
R Hall
J Hinge
Cllr K Ingleton (remotely)
J Lewis
T Malpas
Cllr R Palmer
Cllr K Rowles

In attendance

P Haselhurst – Clerk
C Longden – Finance Officer
L Rowland – Office Manager
W Smith – Works Manager
A Soloman – Technical Officer

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and introduced the new Technical Officer, Anita Soloman who joined the Board a couple of months ago.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from D Davis, G Etheridge and B Stone.

No response was received from P Marchington.

3. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION

R Palmer declared that he works for a company that provides health and safety training.

The Chairman declared an interest in the depot lease via his company George Webb Finn that is in the process of completing.

4. MINUTES

RECEIVED (Appendix 1) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 25 April 2022.

These minutes were circulated to Members via email on 24 May 2022 with a request for any amendments to be advised by 24 June 2022.

There were no further comments on the minutes, and they were considered officially approved.

5. ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

RECEIVED (Appendix 2) a copy of the Action List of the Board held on 25 April 2022.

The Clerk talked through the outstanding items on the action list with Members as follows:

Hybrid Meetings – guidance not completed yet and is on the list to do before the next meeting.

Health and Safety Rep – would like to address this later in the agenda, under AOB along with any other link Member requirements.

Board Member Vacancies – currently one landowner vacancy which is being advertised on the website. James Attwood had been invited to attend today's meeting, but he was otherwise engaged.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY

RECEIVED (Appendix 3) a copy of the amended Health and Safety Policy document.

The Clerk explained that she had revised the Health and Safety Policy in order to cover all aspects of Health and Safety and to define roles and responsibilities.

The Clerk confirmed that J Lewis has made her aware of a few typos which will be amended.

The Clerk explained that the policy had been expanded and the Health and Safety Policy Statement sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Board, the Clerk and Officers. She explained that the General Arrangement section which explains the processes and procedures section is in draft at the moment as she may need to add a bit more detail to that section.

The Clerk said it was over to the Board to sign off and be happy the Health and Safety Policy Statement. She asked Members if they had any questions?

The Chairman asked if we have first aiders and fire wardens?

The Clerk confirmed that we have first aiders and staff had done a fire safety course, however this didn't include fire warden training, and this has been booked for all staff in January 2023.

G Fulton asked about NEBOSH qualifications for current staff and if there was a requirement for us to engage external expertise?

The Clerk confirmed that she had already completed an appropriate health and safety course prior to joining the Board, and the Works Manager has also completed an IOSH course in the last six months. She confirmed we would be looking at NEBOSH at a later date. She also explained that we have had an external consultant undertake a health and safety audit, which will be ongoing on an annual basis which has been successful, and that she is very confident in the way we are managing and auditing our own health and safety processes.

On a proposition by H Browne seconded by R Palmer, it was **AGREED** to approve the Health and Safety Policy subject to correction of raised typos/general arrangement additions.

The Chairman asked for an update on health and safety auditing and any incidents.

The Clerk confirmed there had been a couple of near misses and these were detailed in the Works Manager Report, and we have looked at/reviewed our processes since then. She asked the Works Manager to give an overview of the near misses.

The Works Manager explained that the first near miss was a depot water leak. He explained that a water pipe supplying the depot failed at its outside connection resulting in water entering the building inside the electrical box. The workforce was inside the depot at the time of failure and acted swiftly to ensure the incident did not escalate. He believes this was poor workmanship by the company who installed the canteen and water supply to have a water pipe enter the building inside the electric cabinet. The pipe was re-located and now enters the building in a safer place away from the electrics.

The Works Manager explained that the second near miss was with a flail mower and hidden debris on watercourse 2C. He explained that a piece of barbed wire approximately 6"-8" in length was mowed over during annual maintenance of this watercourse. The metal was hidden amongst the vegetation and was ejected approximately 20m and landed on a low voltage power line. It did not fall back off the line due to the barbs. The operator informed him what had happened and UKPN was immediately called and removed the debris within 2 hours. His investigation concluded that this was a 'freak' incident and could not have been avoided as the metal object was hidden amongst the growth and too small to visually see. All staff were reminded about the dangers of working close to overhead cables and although the works were in accordance with the HSE and safe working distances, we have taken the decision to increase these distances to further mitigate the risks of material being ejected close to overhead cables.

The Chairman thanked the Works Supervisor and Clerk for putting the improvements in place.

7. BIODIVERSITY UPDATE

The Clerk said that Members may recall that prior to her arrival Carol Donaldson had undertaken some work for us looking at the condition of sluices across the Luddenham and Blacketts Marsh and wanted to update Members on that. She explained there are two projects. The first being the replacement of a sluice where the culvert has broken and the second, the installation of a solar pump to help shift water around into some scrapes to create habitat for breeding and wintering waders. She explained we wanted to do both of these projects this year, but this was not possible, and that is intending to get this complete over the next calendar year and will be working with the RSPB.

T Malpas declared an interest as this is on GH Dean's land who he represents.

The Clerk confirmed that our Technical Officer is now reviewing the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) that we do have in place, and we are going to be monitoring that and putting in place some of the quick wins and identifying opportunities there are across the marsh that are cost effective/won't cost us too much money. The Clerk confirmed we will come back to the Board and report on this in the April Board meeting.

The Clerk also confirmed that the North Kent Marshes IDB have just gone out to tender for a Biodiversity Action Plan.

8. ESTIMATES AND SPECIAL LEVIES

RECEIVED (Appendix 4 and 4a) summary of figures and recommendation from the Finance Committee for the 2023/2024 budget.

The Chairman said that he hoped that Members have had the opportunity to read the very important documents that had been put together by the Officers and Finance Committee.

The Clerk said that as this was only her second Board Meeting and she's yet to get to know some Members a bit better. She thanked Members for attending today and that really helps to build that relationship.

The Clerk said before we go onto any discussions regarding Estimates, she wanted to remind everyone of the ADA Good Governance, in particular paragraph 3.5 that states *"Discussions and decisions taken by your IDB should not be influenced by external or political influences unrelated to the functions of the IDB. All Board Members of your IDB are required to take any decision in the best interests of the IDB and Internal Drainage District, its drainage rate and Special Levy payers, and the local community it serves. In doing so, you should take into account the full range of factors, including the need to deliver effective land drainage and flood management, the importance of promoting biodiversity, and the need to deliver value to both the local agricultural community that pays drainage rates, and to the wider local community on behalf of which the Special Levy is demanded from Councils."*

The Chairman said that we have a recommendation from the Finance Committee for a proposed increase of 5%.

The Chairman asked the Clerk to read out an email that had been received from G Etheridge as he was unable to attend the meeting today.

The Clerk shared the Estimates paper on the screen and read out the following email from G Etheridge:

For the Chairman and the Board in my absence.

“Unfortunately, I’m unable to attend today’s meeting, especially in regards to the discussions about to take place in regards to budgets and proposed penny rate increases. I bring forward my own personal experience of working in blue chip companies for over 30 years before my retirement. The company’s concerned were not only just ‘high street banks’, but also those involved in technical research and development. I fully appreciate that there are currently some sections of our communities that have concerns in relation to a cost of living and inflation issue and have a mistaken belief that they can avoid it. However, in reality, compared to the 14% inflation and bank rate issues experienced back in the late 80’s, when we experimented with linking our economy with rest of Europe, our current situation is far more controllable.

For those here today that can not only recall those days, but also lived through them, will recall the number of business and trusts that failed, and did so, due to their inaction to ensure that they had sufficient funds within their reserves to weather the storm. More importantly, thousands lost their homes and voluntarily returned their keys to the mortgage lenders and just walked away. Once again, it was the live for today mentality, that resulted in the eventually loss of home that occurred.

Exactly the same scenario is before you today, and personally, based on my own business experience, fully recommend that you propose, vote for and accept the 5.5% as listed. If for any reason, you feel that cannot be justified, and I repeat justified, then as a full back scenario, the 5% option is available.

Anything less than that, will I’m afraid ensure, that this Board will be unable to function financially, but will also degrade a number of services that require to be actioned. The decline will not be noticeable in the short term but will significantly be brought to your attention within the next 12-18 months, and you will have a more difficult position to try and reverse from.

If I was able to attend today, I certainly would propose and vote for the 5.5% as listed in your board papers today.”

H Browne wanted to know the process around the discussion and to understand what the current reserve position would be for each option.

R Palmer did not think it was an appropriate time to raise the precept to a level that increases the reserves and felt we could probably get by with a balanced budget on a 2% increase or less. He wanted the Board to think about this very carefully in these tough times.

The Chairman said this was a good time to explain the asset management plan. He said the Board has 4 pumping stations. At the moment Bells Pumping Station is very good but it has the potential for flaws as all pumping stations do. He explained the Board will shortly be receiving a new pumping station at Rushenden and the remaining two, Harty and Leysdown need to be replaced. He said that Bells Pumping Station cost around £2,500,000 several years ago. He said that the Board have to balance the books so if there is a failure, the Board have the ability to meet that failure. This is why the Clerk is going to put in place

an asset management plan and look at what needs to be managed going forward to inform the Asset Reserve.

The Clerk thanked R Palmer for his comments and said she empathised with the councils and landowners in the current economic climate. She said that the Chairman had rounded off the asset side of things very well and thought it was worth mentioning that the ADA Good Governance Guide states that we should have at least one year's operational funds in our bank accounts and went on to say that based on current budget projections to the end of the financial year, we should be able to achieve 98% of this. She said that Harty and Leysdown Pumping Stations really do need replacing and they are going to cost us a hefty amount, and on top of that we have two other pumping stations we are maintaining that need ongoing maintenance and we don't have an evidence base for the amount of money or any money set aside for ongoing whole life costs for those assets. She said in terms of our reserves, we are actually short and are already operating at risk. She explained when we come to replace Harty and Leysdown Pumping Stations we are hoping to use a Public Works Loan which is great as we can pay it off long term, but our reserves are not quite there.

H Browne asked about the reserves and the terminology surrounding the reserves and said it would be good for Members to understand the different type of reserves and for the Board to understand what we are planning and have responsibility for in the future, for example the replacement of assets and why the reserves are important.

The Clerk confirmed that this is all in the draft Reserves Policy and explained this as follows:

- General reserves – One years' operating costs including some of the ongoing maintenance costs of the pumping stations, but not the replacement of them.
- Emergency reserves – 20% of the general reserve which is for any unexpected flooding.
- Plant reserve – depreciation costs, for replacement of plant on a three to four year basis.
- Asset reserve – this is the risky one where the Board are lacking in funds and where a balanced approach plan needs to be put in place.

M Bonney stated that the office is an expensive asset.

R Hall asked that we look at the Reserve Policy before we look at setting the penny rate.

The Clerk shared the Capital Financing and Reserves Policy on screen, and she highlighted in particular section 4 which sets out what our reserves should be. She explained that there is currently a gap in our knowledge with regards to the asset reserve and it has been agreed with the Finance Committee to undergo a quantity surveying exercise to inform any asset reserve based on what the asset is, the whole life cost of the asset and how much money we should be putting aside. She also highlighted the Development Reserve, Plant Reserve, General Reserve and Revaluation Reserve areas.

R Hall asked if we could understand the figure against each reserve.

The Clerk explained the general reserve is one years' worth of expenditure, which at this point sits at just under £1,700,000. The emergency reserve is 20% of that and this is a general approach taken by IDBs. She went on to say that the Board will hopefully have 98% of this by the end of the financial year.

M Bonney asked how much our expenditure has changed over the last 5 years.

The Clerk said that expenditure generally sits at around £1,600,000 to £1,700,000 which can be confirmed from the IDB1 forms that are submitted to DEFRA.

M Bonney felt it was difficult to make a judgement when there isn't historic evidence and build up to understand the position.

The Chairman said it will be very helpful once the quantity surveying exercise is complete, and we know what our immediate cost liability is.

The Clerk added that she had done a huge amount of work with the team to fully estimate the budget for the following year and she is quite confident in it.

The Chairman confirmed a lot of work had gone into it and asked if Members had any other questions?

R Palmer raised the brought forward figures on the AGAR and said it looks like our reserve is on the increase and his concern was putting up the precept for the sake of it to increase our reserves.

The Chairman thanked R Palmer for his comments. He said in terms of going forward with the Estimates and the reserves that we need, the Board clearly needs to do some more work so that we have more facts and figures. In terms of the Reserve Policy, the Clerk has mentioned we are under reserved on the assets and asked do we know the breakdown of the reserves and what their allocation is?

The Clerk displayed on screen the breakdown of the future and capital budgets that have been agreed and have been included with the papers. She confirmed this included provision for a new depot, plant reserve, Bells generator replacement and specific projects like biodiversity and water control structures.

The Clerk confirmed that a breakdown of each bank account has also been submitted to the Finance Committee in order to inform this decision.

J Mair raised that in a previous meeting there was a proposal to increase the reserves to £3,200,000. The Clerk confirmed this and mentioned it would be subject to identifying what the Boards asset reserve should be.

C Buckwell said that there are two aspects to this, firstly the capital projects which is set out and secondly, there is also a level of reserves that is good guidance, and it would seem that would be the right thing to do.

R Hall said in context we should be aiming to meet the advice in the ADA reserve level stated in their good guidance, and it would be appropriate to look at what funds could be raised against the office as an asset should there be a significant credit crunch.

M Bonney raised some items she felt were one off items on the annual budget including land registry fees and vehicle warranties.

The Clerk confirmed that she has spent a long time with the team going over the estimates and making sure it is a sustainable budget for us next year. She confirmed that land registry fees and vehicle warranties are both ongoing costs and not one off items. She explained the only one off cost is the cost for the Harty and Leysdown replacement project. She said

it was also worth pointing out when setting the estimates, she had to consider that inflation is sitting at 11% at the moment, and whilst it would not be sensible to ask for an 11% increase, it was a case of setting a sensible budget that works, but also recognising the slightly under par reserve as well.

H Browne that it is the role of the Board is to make the decision of the estimates today. She said it is the job the Finance Committee to go into the detail and the detail is then presented to the Board. She reminded Members we are being asked to approve the Capital Financing and Reserves Policy and to agree the penny rate.

The Chairman asked the Board to make a decision on the Capital Financing and Reserves Policy before looking at the penny rate.

R Hall said that the policy does not recognise the office as an asset, and he proposed an amendment to include the value of the freehold of the office premises.

The Clerk asked for clarity on the office building being included in our reserves. She was concerned that in future the Board may decide we do not any cash reserves because we could mortgage the office, and this would put us in a very tight position she was not comfortable with.

A long discussion was held, and the conclusion was that the Capital Financing and Reserves Policy would be recognising the office as an asset to acknowledge that capital could be raised by selling the building or re-mortgaging and is just a possibility and it was important for this to be recognised.

On a proposition by R Hall seconded by R Palmer, it was **AGREED** to approve the Capital Financing and Reserves Policy subject to including the freehold value of the office premises.

7 Members were in favour, the remaining 7 Members abstained.

Action – Clerk to raise the approval of the Capital Financing and Reserves Policy again in the June 2023 Board meeting due to the vote not having a majority vote, which was not realised until after the meeting.

A detailed discussion then took place regarding increasing the penny rate.

The Chairman requested that we hear from someone from the Finance Committee to hear their views as they had done a lot of hard work in bringing their recommendation to the Board.

J Mair said that the last Finance Meeting was a difficult meeting, with lots of different points of view because of pressures of interest rates and the way the economy is, but in terms in the right way forward for the Board the investment in assets, replenishing compensations, increasing our reserves etc, the Finance Committee felt it was the right thing to do to recommend a 5% increase.

J Lewis added that if we get short of money and have to mortgage the office building, we will have to repay the re-mortgage money and the interest on in, interest rates are likely to go up considerably and that would mean we would have to put the penny rate up even more.

R Palmer suggested an amendment and proposed increasing the penny rate by 2%. M Bonney seconded the amendment. 3 Members were in agreement, 9 Members were against. Unsure of the remaining 2 votes due to meeting being a hybrid meeting.

C Buckwell said that we have a Finance Committee for a purpose and there would need to be very strong reasons for the Board to depart from following the recommendation from the Finance Committee and he would give weight to their recommendation.

J Lewis and H Browne proposed increasing the penny rate by 5% as per the Finance Committee's recommendation.

On a proposition by J Lewis seconded by H Browne, it was **AGREED** to increase the penny rate by 5% and set the penny rate at six point nine six eight (6.968) and that the Clerk and the Chairman should sign the Drainage Rates & Special Levies Certificate.

8 Members were in favour, 5 Members were against, and 1 Member abstained.

The Clerk informed Members that she had sought some advice from ADA surrounding Special Levies. She said that ADA has issued a statement in conjunction with the District Councils Network which recognises the challenges and the lack of transparency in how the Special Levies are approached (i.e., not being referenced on council tax bills), and therefore it makes it very difficult for Local Authorities when Levies are set above their standard Council Tax rate. She said there is also a lack of recognition in communities and with local authorities about the good work that IDBs do because of this lack of transparency. She confirmed the advice received from ADA was, if local authority members have any concerns and wish to change things/makes things more transparent they should go to their local MPs and ADA would support them in a motion to disaggregate the Special Levy from the Council Tax.

M Bonney confirmed that the Swale Borough Council's Finance Director has already responded directly to government regarding this in order to try and get the legislation changed.

9. CHAIRMAN REPORT

The Chairman gave the following report:

Another year has passed, and I am pleased to say that following the substantial changes which were being concluded just over a year ago, the operation of the Board has settled and sits well in the hands of our Clerk and Engineer Priscilla. We have however seen the resignation of the landowner Stephen Attwood, who was struggling to manage the commitments of the Board with his business operations. However, I'm delighted that following the retirement of Duncan Dewar-Whalley and Stephen Batt, their positions have been replaced by Tim Malpas and John Hinge. However, we remain short of one landowner Member for the Board to have full complement of members and we were hoping James Attwood would be able to join us today, we will continue to make contact with him to see if we can introduce him to the Board at a later date.

Since our last meeting, I am delighted to welcome Anita Solomon, a Technical Officer to the team. Anita was formerly employed by the Environment Agency and worked with Priscilla

and is fitting into her new role extremely well, working with Will, Lisa, and Carrie. With regard to the outside staff, we continue to employ four within the team. However, following the very short employment of Gareth Hopkins, James Backhouse now forms part of the team of outside operators.

Following the turbulent period prior to our meeting of this time last year, I'm pleased that matters have settled down and the team and members of the Finance Committee have been able to concentrate on the operation of the Board and its future. Not only has Priscilla been getting to grips with understanding her new district, but she has also been re-working and bringing up to date policies of the Board, improving budget monitoring processes and transparency, dealing with the day to day operations and overseeing the completion of the replacement Rushenden pumps, which are to be handed over from Homes England to the Board in the near future. Priscilla has also been working on the replacement of the Harty and Leysdown pumps and is looking into potential grant funding, which might reduce the Public Works Loan required. In addition to this, she has been putting in place plans to secure mobile pumps to assist in the removal of water from Capel Fleet and Great Bells, should any of the pumps fail or there is a power outage, whilst continuing to manage the operations of the North Kent Marshes Board under the PSCA Agreement.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff of the Lower Board who have worked tirelessly during the last year and finding the time to improve the look of our new offices. I would also like to thank my Vice Chairman and members of the Finance Committee and Council and landowner members for all of their assistance in the last year. In the last six months, the lease of the first floor of the Board's premises at Conqueror Court have been let to Jarmans Solicitors at an annual rent of £40,000 and the sale of 17 Albion Place.

The Board's occupation of Units 8 and 9 at Stickfast Farm continues and despite initial concerns that the unit may have been on the large side, it is now fully utilised.

To conclude, I have enjoyed working with Priscilla and her team during the last year, as we have been able to focus on the operation of the Board and I would like to thank them for all for their excellent work.

10. CLERK REPORT

The Clerk gave the following report:

Firstly, I would like to thank the Board, and particularly members of the Finance Committee for their support and advice as I have got to grips with my new role as your Clerk.

I am proud of the strong team that we have built up over the last year and confident that we can continue to go to strength to strength in the forthcoming year. Since I started, my key priority mentioned during my interview has been to assess how we are operating as a Board, benchmark us in terms of our operations and approaches and establish where there are any gaps that need further work. I could not have done this without the support of the entire team so extend my thanks for their enthusiasm and hard work as we have tackled many new challenges together and been really thrown into the deep end.

On a personal level, as one of a handful of female Clerks working across the 112 IDB's in England, and as a committee member on the Women in FCERM group I am keen to raise

the profile of IDB's. The WFCERM group was formed in 2018 and has a focus around networking and mentoring for women across the industry and I will be supporting the Committee as an IDB rep. I will also be continuing to act as the ADA SE Director and have recently been appointed as an Independent Member on the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

Over the next year, there is still a lot more work to do strategically including our Corporate Strategy and further work on Governance and process. Once completed, the Corporate Strategy will provide the Board some key objectives and actions to work towards and a draft strategy will be brought to the Board in April. The strategy will build upon our substantive role as an IDB, but also seek to approach the water cycle holistically, consider how we can be prepared for climate change adaptation, and have a stronger partnership focus.

Climate Change adaptation and partnership working is key to our water environment and so with that in mind I would like to explore what opportunities there are for further work with the Environment Agency under PSCA agreements, primarily around main river maintenance but also to better understand how we can steer precept spend to achieve mutual goals.

I am also keen for us to further getting to know the area and the opportunities to improve water level management and deliver outcomes on the ground. This will involve reviewing our extant water control structures and working with landowners to come up with a 'wish list' of improvements.

In summary I have really enjoyed the challenge over the last year and looking forward to steering us into a position to deliver some positive and tangible outcomes.

11. PLANNING AND CONSENTS

RECEIVED (Appendix 5) the Technical Officer's Planning and Consenting Report.

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

12. WORKS SUPERVISOR REPORT

RECEIVED (Appendix 6) the Works Supervisor Report Numbers 174.

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

The Works Manager took the opportunity to thank the workforce for their hard work and wanted to officially recognise that they had gone above last year's completion figures.

13. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

The last two remaining forms were completed and collected from J Hinge and K Rowles at the meeting.

14. GOVERNANCE UPDATE

RECEIVED the following policies which were emailed separately to Members from the agenda for Member's review/information:

- Scheme of Delegation.
- Finance Regulations.
- Financial Risk Assessment.
- Capital Financing and Reserves Policy.

The Clerk explained that she has been doing a detailed review of all of our governance processes.

The Clerk displayed the Scheme of Delegation on the screen and explained because of the departure from the Upper Board and our structure has slightly changed, there are quite a few changes that have been made, specifically she has added in delegations for the rest of the Officers because their delegations had previously sat under the Clerk.

The Clerk asked Members if there were any questions regarding the inclusions in the Scheme of Delegation?

No questions raised.

The Clerk confirmed that the Chairman had already mentioned adding in that she is acting agent for the lease of the depot which will be added.

On a proposition by the Chairman seconded by R Palmer, it was **AGREED** to approve the Scheme of Delegation with the added amendment of the Clerk acting as the agent for the lease of the depot.

The Clerk displayed the Finance Regulations on the screen, she confirmed there were a few changes but not as many as the Scheme of Delegation. She explained J Lewis had already contacted her about some typos to be amended and they have been highlighted on screen.

The Clerk asked Members if there were any questions regarding Finance Regulations?

No questions raised.

On a proposition by D Carnell seconded by K Ingleton, it was **AGREED** to approve the Finance Regulations.

The Clerk displayed the Financial Risk Assessment on the screen, and she confirmed this has previously been reviewed by the Finance Committee. She said there had been limited changes and asked Members if there were any comments?

No comments raised.

On a proposition by R Palmer seconded by G Fulton, it was **AGREED** to approve the Financial Risk Assessment.

The Capital Financing and Reserves Policy was approved under Item 8 (Estimates and Levies). The Clerk confirmed this will come back to the Board annually for review and she will ensure this will sit ahead of any discussions surrounding estimates going forward.

The Clerk explained that herself and the Office Manager have been working on a governance work plan, and at the beginning of the calendar year this will be sent out and details what each meeting will include and what policies will need to be ratified in each meeting.

15. FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

RECEIVED (Appendix 7, 7a and 7b) Finance minutes from 6 May, 20 June 2022 (previously circulated by email) and 17 October 2022.

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

16. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

RECEIVED (Appendix 8) internal auditor's end of year report for 2021-22.

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

17. END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT (AGAR)

RECEIVED (Appendix 9) end of year accounts for 2021-22 and External Auditor's report/annual return (AGAR) for 2021-22 including conclusion (part 1 to 3).

The Clerk confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions. She said that there were no real issues noted in the report, apart from the publishing of dates and she was really pleased with the report.

No questions raised.

18. IDB1 FORM

RECEIVED (Appendix 10) completed IDB1 Form for 2021-22.

The Chairman confirmed this item was for information and asked if Members had any questions.

No questions raised.

19. FORWARD LOOK AND APPROVAL OF 2023 MEETINGS

RECEIVED (Appendix 11) proposed meeting dates for 2023 as follows:

Meeting	Date	Time
Q3 Finance Meeting	30 January	12pm
Q4/Year End Finance Meeting	12 June	12pm
Interim Board Meeting	12 June	1pm
Q1 Finance Meeting	24 July	12pm
Q2 Finance Meeting	16 October	12pm
AGM Board Meeting	27 November	1pm

No concerns were raised with the above proposed dates, and they were considered approved.

C Buckwell raised the practical point that some Councillors may not be re-elected to the Board next year and he requested that the local authorities be made aware of the Board meeting dates in those cases.

The Office Manager confirmed that she would make sure this was done.

20. ADA UPDATES

The Clerk confirmed that she was unable to attend the online ADA Conference but there is going to be a Flood and Water Show Live in Lincolnshire in May/June 2023.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Thank you

C Buckwell said that Members didn't make any comments after items 9 (Chairman Report and 10 (Clerk Report) and he thought it would be lacking of the Board if some comments were not made. He went on to say that this has been a phenomenal year in terms of the work that was placed on the Clerk and her team and also the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

He said just moving premises would be enough for some companies, but way more than that has been done, subletting, appointments of new members of the team, keeping all the practical work running etc and it's all been done in a very competent and modest way. He said he would like to record the Board's tributes to the team to getting us where we are today in a short period of time.

K Rowles said he would like to repeat what C Buckwell had said on behalf of Swale Borough Council.

The Clerk spoke of her plans to support the Governance process which included creating roles as 'link Members' who would take the lead in a specific area of the Boards business at a strategic level. She explained that at this point she would particularly like a volunteer who could take the lead on Health and Safety matters. R Palmer volunteered for this role with the support of Members.

22. PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

The Works Manager, Technical Officer, Finance Officer, and Office Manager were asked to leave.

A private and confidential matter was discussed and recorded separately.

23. CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at and thanked the Board for their attendance.