

NORTH KENT MARSHES INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD VIA TEAMS CONFERENCE CALL ON MONDAY 18 JANUARY 2022 AT 1PM

Members of the Board Present

Chairman: Cllr G Etheridge

Cllr H Browne

Cllr C Buckwell

Cllr H Craske

D Long

J Nash (part of the meeting)

J Nottage

Cllr J Wallace

B Wright

In attendance

P Haselhurst – Clerk

L Rowland – Office Manager, Lower Medway IDB

K Boon, Environment Agency (part of the meeting)

K Sheehan, JBA (part of the meeting)

1 Apologies

A Bates

Cllr L Croxton – GBC

2 Welcome and introductions

3 Items of interest declaration

No items declared.

4 Minutes of last meeting and actions arising

Received the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2021 - Appendix 1, Page 5.

Received the updated Action Tracker - Appendix 2, Page 10.

No items arising from the minutes.

On a proposition by B Wright, seconded by Cllr J Wallace it was agreed to approve the minutes from 7 June 2021.

5 Clerks update

The Clerk gave an update since formally agreeing to move over to the Lower Medway IDB confirming the following:

- We are still in a transition period with the accounts still being run by Medway Council and work is continuing for Medway Council on a consultancy basis.
- The intention is that a new Handelsbanken bank account will be set-up and will be used from the new financial year.
- The next internal audit will be undertaken by Medway Council for the financial year 2021-22 as it is the Medway financial system that has been used to manage the accounts.
- There have been two resignations from Lower Medway IDB, the Financial Officer and the Works Manager who are moving to the Upper Medway IDB.
- Advertisement is live for a part-time Finance Officer, and we will potentially be recruiting internally to replace the Works Manager with the intention of recruiting a graduate officer in the future to take us back up to a full complement of staff.
- Confident in the six months we will have a full complement of staff and will be operating as a distinct board from the Upper Medway IDB.
- This is not impacting the NKM IDB, and we are still sorting out the maintenance requirements and looking to do some work on behalf DP World like last year, on top of our ordinary maintenance programme.
- We need to sign Service Level Agreement with the Lower Medway IDB which will take us up to December 2022 and this will be reviewed in the January 2023 meeting.

Action – Service Level Agreement with Lower Medway IDB to be signed.

- Plans over the next year is that we will have a full complement of staff, have resilience within Lower Medway IDB, and to run the two Boards concurrently.
- Between months 6 and 12, the intention is to draw up a corporate strategy which includes the interests of the NKM IDB and start to get some consistency in the way we are working.

The Chairman requested that the Clerk reminds Members what her financial responsibilities were previously and how authorisation worked.

The Clerk confirmed that previously we used the Medway Council accounting system and she had approval for up to £10,000 spend. Anything over £10,000 spend would have to go to the Budget Manager for approval. Propose we keep a similar authority going forward, meaning internally herself and a Finance Officer can raise, verify, and authorise a payment up to certain amount. Larger amounts either Chairman or Vice Chairman would need to approve. Will discuss further later in the agenda.

6 Health and Safety updates

The Chairman asked for confirmation that on any further contracts taken out that we will ensure they have the necessary health and safety protocols in place, and we have checked them.

The Clerk confirmed this would be the case and should there be any scope in the future for the Lower Medway IDB to undertake works for the NKM IDB, we have our own internal risk assessments in place.

7 Governance

Received the Governance checklist - Appendix 3, Page 12, Members Code of Conduct - Appendix 4, Statement of Internal Control – Appendix 5, Financial Regulations – Appendix 6, Scheme of Delegation, Appendix 7, Financial Risk Assessment – Appendix 8 and Risk Management Strategy including Risk Register – Appendix 9 & 9a.

The Clerk talked through the policies that required review and displayed on screen the various policies that required updating with the proposed changes highlighted.

J Nash joined the meeting at 1.22pm.

The Board discussed the Statement of Internal Control and the current £10,000 approval limit.

On a proposition by Cllr H Browne, seconded by Cllr H Craske it was agreed to increase the approval limit to £20,000 on the Statement of Internal Control and approve all other amendments.

On a proposition by Cllr H Craske, seconded by Cllr J Wallace it was agreed to approve the amendments to the Financial Regulations.

The Board discussed the Scheme of Delegation, confirmed that Keyman Insurance will be in place via the Lower Medway IDB. The Clerk proposed changes to the current process for approving land drainage consents and suggested that consents are determined at an executive level by the Clerk and provided at meetings for the Board's information, as opposed to approval which is the current process.

K Sheehan joined the meeting at 1.33pm.

On a proposition by Cllr H Craske, seconded by Cllr J Wallace it was agreed to approve the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation.

The Clerk talked through the amendments to the Financial Risk Assessment.

On a proposition by J Nash, seconded by Cllr H Browne it was agreed to approve the amendments to the Financial Risk Assessment.

The Clerk confirmed there are no changes to the Risk Management Strategy, however, wet signatures are required for this document.

Action – wet signatures required for Risk Management Strategy.

The Clerk talked through the Risk Register amendments.

On a proposition by Cllr H Craske, seconded by Cllr J Wallace it was agreed to approve the amendments to the Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register.

8 Activity Report

Received the Activity Report - Appendix 10, Page 14.

The Clerk provided an update on the Activity Report.

The Board discussed the Lower Thames Crossing and the fact it has gone very quiet.

The Clerk confirmed that the watercourse management was behind because of COVID and there are works planned at Allhallows Marsh, Cooling, and Curtis & Harvey in Cliffe ahead of the end of February. Works in Cooling are being undertaken on behalf of DP World.

The Clerk discussed the opportunity to undertake main river maintenance under a PSCA at Cooling and will be liaising with the Environment Agency.

Action – Clerk to re-send map of targeted area to K Boon.

The Clerk confirmed they had received two quotes for work in accordance with the Finance Regulations. The total costs of the works exceeded the approved budget by £2,000. The Finance Regulations require that Chairman approval is sought for these instances. The Clerk has gained this approval prior to the meeting from the Chairman and has increased the maintenance budget for 2022/23 so that the budget is not exceeded in the future.

The Water Level Management Plan is ongoing and due for completion in Autumn 2022. A troll was stolen from a ditch and has since been replaced and hidden.

K Sheehan, JBA gave an update on the Water Level Management Plan.

The Clerk gave an update on the Hoo Water Level Management Partnership. An initial workshop was held in November 2021 and a further 2 meetings are planned annually. With the next meeting in March 2022.

The Clerk gave an update on the programme of works for 2022/23.

K Sheehan left the meeting at 2.10pm.

The Clerk gave an update on planning applications including the contentious sites around Cliffe. She confirmed Medway Council are working with Esquires and Redrow and some objections have been put in.

9 Environment Agency update

Received EA Planned Precept Spend 2021-22 - Appendix 11, Page 23.

Received EA Draft IDB Annual Precept Report 2022-23 - Appendix 14.

K Boon talked through the Draft IDB Annual Precept Report 2022/23.

The Clerk raised the issue of the Shorne and Higham track repairs and asked if the track is EA owned? K Boon confirmed they are partly owned by the EA, RSPB and others.

The Clerk asked about the possibility of having the seeding costs upfront. K Boon confirmed this has been noted and would ensure this would be the case going forward.

The Clerk raised that it would be useful to know if Southern Water are going to compensate the EA for the leak around Mill Marsh and questioned if it was appropriate for this to come out of the precept spend.

Action – K Boon to provide an update on the precept as and when more information is available.

KB left the meeting at 2.23pm.

B Wright confirmed that the sea wall had been breached at Cliffe Creek recently.

The Clerk confirmed she is aware and has still not had contact with Bretts to discuss the wider concerns in the area.

Action – The Clerk to follow up with Bretts.

10 Finance Report

Received the Finance Report - Appendix 12, Page 24.

Received the External Auditor Report and Certificate 2020/2021 - Appendix 13.

The Clerk updated Members of the outcome of External Audit. Confirmed the Risk Register must be reviewed annually and will be done every January going forward for consistency.

The Clerk updated Members on the drainage rates collected and confirmed a landowner that owns a large area of land is questioning the parcels and we are going through this at the moment. Another large landowner has just informed us that they had sold some plots some years ago and some land they haven't owned at all, therefore a rebate will be due and issued before the end of the financial year. Ongoing investigations happening with land that landowners are unknown. Just found out that new payers for April 2022, would have had to be informed prior to 31 December 2021 which was only confirmed in January. Monetary wise this equates to £1,200-£1,300.

The Board discussed land that has not been mapped and the Clerk confirmed we can only charge for land that the EA passed over to us, we are unable to charge for parcels that were missed off.

The Clerk talked through the 2022/23 budget and presented a 2% and 3% increase option, recommending a 2% increase to the penny rate.

The Board discussed the £100,000 reserves. The Clerk confirmed it is the Board's policy to have at least 1 years' worth of operating costs in reserves.

On a proposition by J Nash, it was agreed to increase the penny rate by 2%, setting the penny rate at 7.4 and that the Clerk and the Chairman should sign the Drainage Rates and Special Levies Certificate. Confirmed a £15,000 deficit will be added to Water Level Management Plan that will come out of the Reserves which has been budgeted for priorly.

All Members agreed.

Action – The Clerk and Chairman to sign the Drainage Rates and Special Levies Certificate.

11 Forward look and approval of meetings for 2022

Next meeting agreed for Monday 13 June at 1pm to be held at Lower Medway IDB offices and lunch to be provided.

12 ADA updates

ADA have launched a biodiversity action plan for IDBs. Link shared with Members.

13 Member training – Role of LLFA

The Clerk requested this item be delayed to the June 2022 meeting.

Action – add Member training to next meeting agenda.

13 AOB

B Wright asked about the item in the activity report relating to the installation of a tilting weir at Shorne Marshes. The Clerk confirmed she is looking into this and it has been accounted for in the budget.

Action – The Clerk to arrange meeting with B Wright in the next couple of weeks and also engage J Nash for his opinion.

The Chairman questioned the current policies within the Medway Council Local Plan relating to flood risk and asked if there were any conflicts with us as an IDB. The Clerk confirmed that she wrote the policies and there are no conflicts.

Signed version to follow: