

MINUTES OF THE AXE BRUE FINANCE AND WORKS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM ON 17 JAN 22

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr J Fear Mrs P Thorne Mr D Tratt Mr M E Wall Mr M Watts	Appointed Members: Cllr A Gilling Cllr W Human Mr R Keen Cllr A Matthews	Officers: Mr I Sturdy Mrs M Hammond Mr R Kidson Mr P Brewin Mr M S Wall Mr R King Miss N Cornish	Public:
Apologies:			
Cllr L Scott			

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	<p>1.1. Apologies as per the above Attendance List.</p> <p>1.2. Nominations were presented as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cllr Gilling, Proposed by Jeff Fear and seconded by Martin Watts <p>1.3. With no other nomination received, Cllr Gilling was elected as the Chairman of the Axe Brue Board Finance & Works Committee for this Meeting.</p>	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1. No additional items requested.	
3. Declarations of Interest	<p>3.1. Mr Watts specifically commented that he currently supplied a number of Contractors with building materials.</p> <p>3.2. Mr Tratt declared an interest in anything relating to Bristol Water.</p>	

	<p>3.3. Mr J Fear declared an interest in the culvert for West of Elm Tree Farm.</p> <p>3.4. Cllr A Gilling declared a personal interest in all matters pertaining to Ashford Solicitors.</p>	
4. Approval of Minutes	4.1. The Minutes of the Finance & Works Sub-Committee Meeting of 14 Jun 21 were accepted unanimously as a true and accurate reflection of the Meeting with a small correction on page 5 item 7.1 of competed to completed.	
5. Matters Arising	<p>5.1 Action from previous minutes has not been taken forwards: 20210614-01: The Clerk to undertake a Land Registry search for Landowners either side of Bleadon Sluice to ascertain if there were any easements in place.</p> <p>5.2. Mr J Fear queried whether this action 20210614-01 is still relevant after the meeting with Bristol Water and the Environment Agency because they made their point very clearly. IDS said he will make a note of Mr J Fears point but would leave the action on there for now. Mr D Tratt said he appreciates what Bristol Water are saying but what is the likely impact on the Board long term managing water levels. IDS responded he is just as concerned as DT but at the meeting Bristol Water were portraying a very firm line although they hadn't really completed much technical work on what they were considering so he wouldn't want to accept what was said at the meeting. The action is around easements and the Boards need to engage with the EA and Bristol Water to push them in the right direction.</p> <p>5.3. Cllr A Gilling proposed to 'maintain pressure on Bristol Water, seconded by Mr J Fear</p> <p>5.4. Cllr A Gilling, as a Local District Councillor who attends various Parish Council meetings would like clarity on how confidential the fact</p>	<p>Action 20210614-01: Clerk Ongoing</p> <p>Action AB/20210118/01: On-going</p> <p>Action AB/20220117-01 IDS to Contact Bristol Water</p>

	<p>that Bristol Water are proposing to decommission the sluice. IDS will seek clarification.</p> <p>5.5. Action AB/20210118/01: (Deputy Clerk to investigate County Court Small Claims with ADA Policy & Finance Committee and report back to the Boards.); The Clerk reported that the ADA Policy & Finance Group would be held 15 Jun 22, therefore this Action was on-going.</p>	
6. Finance	<p><u>Quarterly Reconciliation of Bank Statements</u></p> <p>6.1. Dir Fin, as the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), reported that a full bank reconciliation by Officers had been completed up to the 31 December 2021 and they have been countersigned by Cllr W Human.</p> <p>6.2. Dir Fin reported there were no issues with the bank statements and in both the current account and deposit account there was a total of £1,338,336.16.</p> <p><u>Axe Brue Quarter 4 Financial Status and End-of-Year Forecast</u></p> <p>6.3. Dir Fin informed the Board there were an estimated out turn surplus of £977 and a budget deficit of £11,598 so for now they are not too far away from the budget position.</p> <p>6.4. Mr M Watts queried the SDBC budget for administration charges of £574,215 as many staff have now left. Dir Fin confirmed at the moment the Consortium budget shows an underspend of £54,000 which will be shared out at the year end according to the consortium agreement. Mr M Watts said the underspend did not cover Mr R Burges salary but Dir Fin said some staff are being paid honorarium to act up. He further queried staff recharge and Dir Fin explained at the moment Axe Brue have no</p>	

	<p>costs for any employees as they are all in the Consortium, however there is an agreement with National Grid that any work done within the Axe Brue area we can recharge to National Grid.</p> <p>Mr M Wall joined the meeting</p> <p>6.5. Mr W Human informed the Board he would have to leave at 11.50 and queried whether as the accounts were being talked through line by line could Chair confirm they would not be doing it again at Full Board meeting to which Chair confirmed.</p> <p>Cllr A Matthews joined the meeting</p> <p>6.6. Mr D Tratt said the engineering report and the accounts do not tally. Dir Fin, informed Members this is because of the sale of machinery and amount showing is profit.</p> <p>6.7. Dir Fin reported the estimated out turn for maintenance budget is £292,413 against an annual budget of £302,840 so there is an underspend of just over £10,000. Mr Watts queried the repairs and maintainance total of £3,616 as there was no tractor. Dir Fin replied the tractor needed some work before it was sold also MSW reported there was some outstanding maintenance invoices from George Gain .</p> <p>6.8. Mr M Watts questioned what EIA is, IDS responded Environmental Impact Assessments.</p> <p>6.9. Mr M Watts enquired about the Bank Interest Committee which was talked about being set up. Dir Fin reported this was still an ongoing task and would be done as soon as she had the capacity. Cllr A Gilling suggested inviting Cllr W Human to any meeting for his input.</p>	
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	<p>6.10. Dir Fin talked through the budget, when discussing insurance, Mr M Watts asked whether the insurance covered everything including inside the building. The Dir Fin confirmed it was just buildings cover as the landlords.</p> <p>6.11 Mr M Watts questioned what the professional fees were for to which the Dir Fin responded it was for data protection and GDPR which was now required.</p> <p>6.12 Dir Fin reported after speaking with the insurance company, they have suggested there will be a significant increase in insurances for all IDBS so that budget has increased. Mr M Watts asked if the insurance covers board members when they are out on board business and Dir Fin confirm it did.</p> <p>6.13 Mr M Watts asked why the land and building depreciation was so high. Dir Fin said the figure is based on the cost of Bradbury House and the various works which have been done to it and its depreciated over 50 years.</p> <p>6.14 Mr M Wall queried why there was no bad debt write off in the budget. Cllr W Human asked if there was a history of bad debit every year and whether it would be worth including in as a budget amount. The Dir Fin said she would speak to Deputy Clerk and see if a budget is required for this but could check back for the last five years. Mr M Watts responded that the Deputy Clerk let debt get to a certain amount before she took Court action so there is money outstanding. Mr M Watts proposed and Mr M Wall seconded a £500 bad debt budget be included in the budget for 2022/23.</p> <p>Vote for £500 – 6 for & 1 against</p>	
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	<p>6.15 Cllr A Gilling queried whether the increasing cost of energy has been budgeted for to which Dir Fin informed that was in the SDBC budget.</p> <p>6.16 Dir Fin reported an allowance of 5.5% CPI in this years budget for maintenance contacts. Mr M Watts asked if ADA had given an indication on the use of white diesel. IDS said there may be some circumstances when red diesel will be used but it's not fully clear so we should budget for higher costs. MSW said contractors can renegotiate their contracts for diesel due to the change in legislation around red/white diesel. Current tenderors are being asked for prices based on the use of white diesel. They may allow red diesel on some areas but not both diesels in one machine.</p> <p>IDS suggested the board goes with the proposed budget.</p> <p>6.17 Mr M Wall questioned what was the percentage increase in the contractors charge excluding the white/diesel and might the other contractors increase their costs due to one of our current contractors to which MSW reported £11,286 increase on a budget of £216,478. The board are looking at new contractors and have had interest. Mr M Watts noted £33,000 had been allowed for diesel which he thought was a lot of miles and questioned how much they do on a litre of red. MSW said it varied between contractors.</p> <p>6.18 Mr M Wall commented that he thought the pipe/culvert budget was so high. IDS suggested that the budget is about the same as the previous year but we do try to use this money on culverts that the Boards Contractors are likely to use for maintenance access.</p>	
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	<p>6.19 Cllr A Gilling queried whether contractors have their own spill kits. IDS said they do but it is good for the board to have their own supply for any incidents that Area Supervisors may come across</p> <p>6.20 Mr M Watts asked about the £12,000 budget for telemetry. PAB informed him it was for equipment, maintenance & installation. About £3-£4,000 was for data management and web services. Mr M Watts told the board he couldn't see the point of having telemetry at Long Drove. IDS & PAB will investigate the need for telemetry at Long Drove. IDS said telemetry was useful because information could be looked back on historically for queries and the units are portable so they can be moved from site to site which is useful for operational and investigative needs. Mr J Fear aid the use of telemetry was very useful when there was an issue in his area.</p> <p>6.21 Mr D Tratt noted the budget for environmental issues had so far not been spent. IDS responded there will be an expectation to have up to date and and actively promoted bio-diversity action plans and water level management plans. Current WLM plans are very old and need to be updated in the future and to re-write them will cost all the budget. Mr M Watts asked how many years have the board been raising money and not spending it. Dir Fin reported there was a budget in 20/21 & 21/22 but nothing was spent in 20/21 and forecast not to spend in 21/21 – so at the moments there is £15,000 in free reserves. IDS said environment issues budget could go back in as a ring fenced reserve or as a general reserve but then we will need to raise the money to work with others to do our water level management plans and bio-diversity action plans. If it goes as ring fenced reserve we get £15,000 plus anything we choose to raise this</p>	
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	<p>year. Mr M Watts asked why is the board holding onto public money and IDS said the Board is working towards building safe levels of reserves and around the risks the Board might have. The £15,000 has not been spent yet but our external Partners and the public will expect work to be done in the future and this money could go towards Consultants. Cllr A Gilling responded to say there is a spotlight on environmental bodies such as ours and funds need to be in place so we can demonstrate our capabilities.</p> <p>6.22 The Dir Fin reported there is no budget for schemes in the next financial year. Mr M Watts asked if that is because there are schemes that haven't finished and need to caught up on. IDS said there is a significant reserve at the moment and there are still some bids being made to the SRA for localised work.</p> <p>6.23 Mr M Watts queried whether any work had been done by the SRA in the Axe Brue area. IDS informed the Board Members there had been a few localised works completed by the SRA and that it was better to be involved than not.</p> <p>6.24 Mr M Wall questioned whether another cost could be reduced rather than re-doing the figures to include the bad debt budget. Dir Fin left the room to re-do the figures. Dir Fin said the penny rate was rising by 4.604% but Mr M Watts wasn't happy with the rise as the Council are only raising by 2%. Mr D Tratt said that bigger increase is due to the rise in fuel and questioned whether there was any reaction from the Council. The Dir Fin had made contact with the Council who did query the bigger rise but following her explanation she has heard nothing back.</p>	
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	<p>Mr D Tratt proposed and seconded by Mr J Fear ‘The recommendations that are being made by Dir Fin’</p> <p>Vote : Unanimous</p>	
<p>7. Operations & Engineering</p>	<p><u>Engineering & Maintenance</u></p> <p>7.1. Mr M Wall, Contracts Manager, reported the maintenance was going well although there were a couple of locations where contractors have not been able to get access mainly in Biddisham and Mark. Damian Rousell will be starting tree work next week.</p> <p>7.2. IDS informed Members the Board was no longer using the fuel price escalator and instead will use CPI due to the change in the law around the use of white diesel. Going forward Contractors will provide quotes on both red and white diesel. MSW also reported that the Board are actively seeking new contractors and one has been asked to tender for future maintenance works. Mr D Tratt asked whether the new contractor has experience of work in other Drainage Board areas and MSW replied that his work has been checked and references have been requested.</p> <p>7.3. Mr R King, Area Manager, reported the Area Supervisors are working their way through minor repair works and they would be taking part in spill kit training later on in the month.</p> <p>7.4. IDS informed the Board Members that Officers ensured figures in the finance report matched the project engineers program.</p> <p>7.5. Mr M Wall queried whether the Bason Bridge drainage improvements need to be carried out as there seems to have been no issues with the rainfall we have had.</p>	

	<p>7.6. Mr D Tratt suggested approaching the SRA for funding on West Rhyne crossing at Diamond Farm but IDS said the SRA were used for culverts that aren't part of improvement schemes and the West Rhyne project would be fully Board funded. Mr J Fear declared an interest in the new culvert for West of Elm Tree Farm and suggested an alternative route was sought which would benefit three other rate payers. IDS said he will investigate it.</p> <p>7.7. IDS informed the Members that Jenna George was going to be working with the current arrangements for one more month and Andy Sherwood is back temporarily helping with consents. Currently the Development Control Team are not responding in detail to planning matters and instead were sending out standard advice. IDS further reported there was still a vacancy for Consents Officer. Cllr A Gilling suggested when the councils merge there may be people who might be a good fit for the Drainage Board.</p>	
8. Risk Review	8.1. The biggest risk at the moment is the lack of CEO, Clerk and general loss of staff. Cllr A Gilling said he's sure everybody is behind IDS and would do what they can to help.	
9. Any Other Business	9.1. No 'Any Other Business; items were raised.	
10. Date of Next Meeting	<p>10.1. The Date of the next Finance & Works meeting was reported as being 21 Mar 22.</p> <p>10.2. Future key dates in the short-term were highlighted as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axe Brue Full Board: 31 Jan 22 <p>10.3. Members and Officers were thanked for their attendance, the meeting was closed at 1240.</p>	

Annex:

A. Axe Brue F&W Meeting – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIRMAN.....DATE

**ANNEX A TO
AXE BRUE F&W COMMITTEE MINUTES
DATED 17 JAN 22**

AXE BRUE F&W MEETING – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
AB/20220117-01	To maintain pressure on Bristol Water and to make contact	IDS
AB/20210614-01	To investigate County Court Small Claims with ADA Policy & Finance Committee and report back to the Boards.	Deputy Clerk
AB/20210614/01	To undertake a Land Registry search for Landowners either side of Bleadon Sluice to ascertain if there were any easements in place	Clerk