

MINUTES OF THE SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE, 33-34 MARKET STREET, HIGHBRIDGE ON THURSDAY 27 JULY 2023 AT 14.30.

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr B Bryer Mr T Bush Mr J Fear (Vice Chair) Mr A Franks Mr A Gilling Mr C Passmore Mrs W Welland Mr R Coombes	Appointed Members Cllr P Burden Cllr P Clayton Mr S Kingham Cllr R Keen	Officers: Mrs M Hammond Mr I Sturdy	Public:
Apologies:			
Mr T Bradford (Chair)	Cllr R Wilkins		
Non-Attendance:			
Mr A Mead	Cllr A Hendry		

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. In the absence of the Chairman (Apologies sent) the Vice Chairman took the Chair 1.2. Attendance & Apologies as per the above.	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1. As per the register.	
3. Approval of Minutes	3.1. The Minutes of the SDBC Management Committee held on 24 January 2023 were accepted as true and accurate. All in Favour	RESOLUTION 01
4. Matters Arising	4.1. Wendy Welland asked for an update on item 8.2 The Clerk agreed to send all staff details to all members. 4.2. <u>Review of outstanding actions:</u> SDBC/20190729-02 – To invite NSLDB Contractors to complete Pre-Qualification Questionnaires for admittance to the Boards Approved Supplier List.	ACTION: SDBC/20230727-01 – To send to all members a list of staff and their contact details. ACTION: SDBC/20190729-02 - Ongoing

	<p>The Clerk confirmed that we continue to do this. Sub contractors get approved if one of the main contractors ask to sub contract and they are suitable. Some of the smaller contractors are not on the list at the current time. The questionnaire that needs to be completed is not a difficult form and we can help contractors with it if needed. This action is ongoing</p> <p>SDBC/20220929-01 – To monitor and adopt a resolution at the January meeting for any surplus to be held in reserve to smooth out the impact of budgetary increases.</p> <p>This action has been superseded and subsequent discussions confirmed that the money has to go back to the boards, which it has. Should the consortium require additional funding then we would go back to the boards and agree additional funding. This item will be picked up later in the meeting under item 5</p> <p>SDBC/20230124-01 – To investigate finding an insurance specialist in Drainage Boards.</p> <p>No further action on this item and we continue to use Towergate as our broker.</p> <p>SDBC/20230124-02 – To make enquiries for a pumping station at Dunball.</p> <p>We have been working with the EA on their flood recovery project to feed in that suggestion, amongst others. It is very unlikely that the EA will show an interest in this. If the Parrett Board are serious about this proposal it is a piece of work that the drainage board may have to do a feasibility study on.</p> <p>Barry Bryer asked 'Who is Andy Wallis (from 8.3 of the previous meeting minutes). The Clerk confirmed he is the modeller who led on the Parrett model after the 2013/14 floods. This model was approved by DEFRA's chief scientist. Mr Wallis has done modelling for us and is currently doing modelling for the SRA on the Brue.</p> <p>Stuart Kingham asked if we put a pumping station in wouldn't we be in conflict with the EA. The Clerk replied we would not put in a pumping station, we would need to persuade the EA and others that there is a good case for them to build a pumping station in that area.</p>	<p>ACTION: SDBC/20220929-01 - Closed</p> <p>ACTION: SDBC/20220124-01 - Ongoing</p> <p>ACTION: SDBC/20220124-02 – Closed</p>
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<p>5. SDBC Finance Report</p>	<p>5.1. Margaret Hammond (MH) presented a slide on the assets held by the Consortium. There has been one disposal and five acquisitions. The disposal was an old vehicle used as a trade in against one of the new acquisitions. There was a surplus on disposal of £771.74 which was reported in the 2022/23 accounts. Since September 2022 there have been five acquisitions. Four second hand vehicles have been purchased, 2 in each of the financial years. New mobile phone handsets for the field workers have also been purchased (classed as one asset). These new handsets will have the new field reporting “app” added so the field workers can report defects, safety inspections, completion of contractors work etc.</p> <p>The Chairman asked if the information collected on the new handsets comes back into the office. The CEO confirmed that the purpose of the app is to allow the fieldworkers when they find problems to record it properly and it then comes back to the office and goes onto the asset register. The asset register is scrutinised on a periodic basis and a defects list is produced. The defects are then prioritised by the contracts and operations managers and dealt with under the repairs and renewals budget. The app is also used to actively monitor the work of the contractors and the health and safety measures of the contractors on the ground.</p> <p>Stuart Kingham asked if there were any blind spots for the handsets. The CEO confirmed that the app stores the information and uploads it when there is a signal.</p> <p>MH confirmed that the handset are depreciated over four years and that the vehicles are being depreciated on a reducing balance so a value is always held for the vehicles.</p> <p>5.2. MH advised members that the current staff handbook says ‘the salary scales, grades and spine points are those used in the Somerset County Council “Salaries for Green Book Staff”’ As there is no Somerset County Council following the introduction of a Unitary Authority for Somerset we will keep an eye of the new Somerset Council’s terms and conditions to make sure that they are still appropriate to the Drainage Board to adopt. There is an opportunity to buy into the ‘White Book’ which is a set of terms and conditions from ADA that several drainage boards use. We have already adopted some of those terms and conditions around standby and call out in the recruitment and retention work recently undertaken. If we change the staff terms</p>	
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	<p>and conditions it will be a considerable task requiring consultation with staff etc.</p> <p>There is a salary committee scheduled for January 2024 and we hope to have greater clarity at that point.</p> <p>5.3 Funding for a new service provider which crossed over with item 8 on the agenda (Staff and Engineering Services) to some degree was discussed.</p> <p>A proposal was shared with the most recent Finance & Works Committees and the subsequent Full Board meetings to engage Calm Engineering as our external engineering providers. They are an association of Civil Engineers led by Caroline Murray who has been doing work for the SRA and for the last 8 years work for Mendip DC. The association has grown to include a number of Chartered Civil Engineers. The proposal to appoint them as our engineering services provider was approved at each of the Full Board meetings due to the inability to recruit engineering professionals to work directly for us as employees. They are now engaged to work with us and are providing services to development control, operations the programmes of schemes for the three Boards.</p> <p>There is no defined value for the contract and it is not an exclusive arrangement. Should we recruit to the vacant engineering posts we would carry on using CALM as there is work to catch up on. The CEO confirmed we are still looking to employ engineers, technicians and a Clerks Assistant</p> <p>The funding of this service is from a predicted underspend of staffing budgets, of £243,730 where vacant posts are predicted to be filled from Christmas 2023. Iain also reminded members of the staffing underspend of £240,976 from 2022/23 that had been returned to the boards at the year-end. There is considerable resource available to us to fund Calm Engineering. The funds returned to the Boards at the end of 2022/23 need to be discussed at Full Board meetings should access to this funding be required.</p> <p>Stuart Kingham asked what are we using Calm Engineering for at the moment.</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alex Purcell – SRA dredging (back funded to SRA)	
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- Jane Moon – support Alex and environment aspects of dredging
- Claire Wasiak – Development Control 2-3 days per week
- Caroline Murray – engineering project work
- Alex Hughes – engineering project work

Andrew Gilling asked if there was a resource pool following the creation of the Unitary Authority in Somerset? The Clerk confirmed that the new Unitary Authority is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and they currently do not have staff to populate their LLFA team. The Chairman confirmed that we have been advertising our vacant posts but no applications had been received.

Alan Franks asked regarding the new engineering solution, what do you think it will cost before coming back to the Boards? The Clerk said he believes we will spend all of this years' salary budget. If we recruit permanently at that point we would not pull back and do what we intended to do and use some of the underspend in salaries last year to make sure we can carry on at a good pace.

Alan Franks asked if it would be a good idea to ask the Boards to ringfence the underspent salaries from last year. The Clerk said that this would be a good decision. At the beginning of this process he had thought SDBC should hold onto the money to smooth out the impact of the business transition. This was correctly questioned by a Board member and it was agreed that the underspend should go back to the Boards. It was explained at the time what the need might be for the surplus to be returned to the boards.

After discussion the Clerk suggested that at the October round of Full Board meetings to recommend that the money from the salary variance that was returned to the Boards at the end of 2022/23 be ringfenced to feed back to the consortium should the need arise for engineering purposes.

Proposed by Cllr P Burden, seconded by Mrs W Welland **'That at the next Full Board meetings each Board is asked to consider ringfencing the salary underspend returned to them at the end of 2022/23 for the Consortium to draw upon for engineering services should the need arise.**

Vote: All agreed

RESOLUTION 1

<p>6. Meetings Calendar 2024</p>	<p>6.1. The Clerk reported that especially around April, May and June each year there is a lot of meeting congestion. No sooner have we had a board meeting then we were almost straight into starting to prepare papers for the next round of meetings. The Clerk asked for thoughts on the potential to reduce the number of meetings that we have each year in order to free up staff time and costs and reduce the attendance burden on members.</p> <p>In 2016/17 we had 3 Board meetings in a year. If we were to do that, we would require meetings in January, June and October. We currently have a meeting in April, for which we do not prepare any financial figures or accounts. These are reported in the June meeting for year end, and new year for budget monitoring.</p> <p>Tim Bush – Was happy to reduce finance meetings to 3 but there is a considerable gap between June to October when there are no meetings. There is a lot of work that has happened with no chance to discuss it. He suggested 4 meetings a year with one of them not discussing finance at all.</p> <p>Stuart Kingham – do you need to have 3 meetings a year could be 2. The Clerk expressed a concern that with too few meetings there is insufficient opportunity for member’s input. There is a balance to be struck</p> <p>The RFO pointed out that currently with Full Board meetings in February, April and June there are 3 meetings in less than 6 months with a significant gap from June to October.</p> <p>Tim Bush asked is it any easier to have a Board meeting that doesn’t include finance?</p> <p>The Chairman asked if the April and June meeting could be moved into one meeting in July. The RFO pointed out that the deadlines for completing the annual return means that a meeting for the accounts must be held in June.</p> <p>Barry Bryer – it seems to me that if we are a drainage board, we need to look at the winter and what has happened on order to make preparations for the coming winter.</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that the difficulty in having lots of meetings for officers is the preparation of reports and minutes, confirming who needs hard copies,</p>	

	<p>collating reports. There are also finance and works meetings 2 weeks before the Full Board meetings, and these papers are also updated for the Full Board, so reports are written or edited twice over. Members and staff value meaningful operational discussions, so if we reduced the number of formal meetings we could have an un-minuted works meetings that didn't require the formality of papers, minutes and approval of previous minutes, but which discussed operational issues</p> <p>Tim Bush agreed and said previous NSLIDB meetings didn't have such an emphasis on reports, but verbal updates were given. This encouraged people to attend the meeting to find out what was happening. He was happy to go down to 3 full meetings if we could have 1 or 2 other informal meetings to hear what's been done on the ground.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that this is for 2024 and suggested that members take some time to think about the timings of meetings.</p> <p>Alan Franks said that in the past over the many years discussion was about what was happening on the ground, what had gone wrong and what was happening to put it right. Members had a lot of interest in that. But in recent years the comments were that 'we talk about the same old things.'</p> <p>More discussion about drainage and water flow would entice more members to attend meetings. He also agreed that finance and governance issues are necessary.</p> <p>Jeff Fear said it is about accountability. As a public body we need to be seen to be running the affairs of the Board even more so than in the past., which without doubt involves the finance and governance.</p> <p>The Clerk said we should be fulfilling all of our obligations as a public body in the meetings, but we should use the time and limited resources wisely.</p> <p>Cllr Peter Burden agreed with the Clerk but also that Members interest has declined.</p> <p>Colin Passmore commented that environmental issues require scrutiny. Different work that we have not been involved with will become a bigger issue for the Boards in future.</p> <p>The Chairman asked for members of the committee to come up with one or two alternatives on how to</p>	<p>ACTION: SDBC/20230727-02 – Members to</p>
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	<p>proceed with the number of meetings and report to him before the next round of board meetings.</p>	<p>consider meeting calendar alternatives</p>
<p>7. New Member Combined Induction and Member's Information Packs</p>	<p>7.1. The Clerk confirmed we have a reasonably stable Board Membership now with new appointed and elected members.</p> <p>The New Member Pack has been completed. The proposal was for A single induction for all new members is planned but not hold 3 separate meetings for individual Boards. It will be held before the October Full Board.</p> <p>Peter Burden asked if it could be opened up to all members, but if it was going to be in Highbridge, then that would limit the numbers that could attend.</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed we could go offsite for the induction if needed and any members would be welcome to attend as a refresher</p> <p>Peter Burden – there is merit in offering briefings to existing members.</p> <p>Wendy Welland - Do you want any present members to be at the induction to help and give their perspective although if you open it up to all members there should be present members there.</p> <p>The Clerk said it was a good opportunity for a refresh for members.</p>	
<p>8. Staff and Engineering Services Provider update</p>	<p>8.1. The Engineering Service update was covered in item 5 above</p> <p>8.2. <u>Staff Update – Vacancies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSLIDB admin Kay has handed in her notice but will not be replaced at the moment 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptionist (Nicky Cornish has moved to the new Ratings Assistant post) • Assistant to the Clerk • Senior Engineer • 2.5 Engineers • Engineering Technician • Operations Technician • Consents and Enforcement Officer • 1 Deputy Area Supervisors (the other 2 DAS are doing really well) 	
9. Register of Members' Interests (ROMI)	<p>9.1. There are still some declarations that have not been returned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AB = 14 outstanding • Par = 17 outstanding • NSL = 10 outstanding <p>The Clerk will write to those members who have not returned their forms. There maybe a misunderstanding with appointed members who have registered their interests with the Council, but they are required to completed the IDB form as well.</p> <p>Andrew Gilling – There is no legal right for Drainage Boards to keep a register of members interests.</p> <p>The Clerk advised that Drainage Boards do require members to declare their interests.</p> <p>Alan Franks - When was the last time Elected members needed to complete a form? The Clerk confirmed that this was with 28 days of their most recent election to the Board.</p>	<p>ACTION: SDBC/20230727-03 – The Clerk to write to those members who have not yet returned their ROMI</p>
10. Date of Next Meeting	<p>10.1. Wendy Welland asked are they going to be pumping water to the new Gravity site?</p> <p>The Clerk advised that the site will require an “industrial scale” water supply, but will advise further when details are known</p>	<p>ACTION: SDBC/20230727-04 – The Clerk to investigate pumping to the Gravity site</p>
11. Date of Next Meeting	<p>11.1 Next meeting is Tuesday 12 Dec 2023 and SWADA AGM is 29 Nov 2023</p> <p>11.2. The Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was closed at 15:55</p>	

Annex:

A. SDBC – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIRMAN.....DATE

**ANNEX A TO
SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
DATED 27 JULY 23**

SDBC – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
SDBC/20190729-02	To invite NSLIDB Contractors to complete Pre-Qualification Questionnaires for admittance to the Boards Approved Supplier List.	Clerk – Ongoing but no longer a new action Closed
SDBC/20230124-01	To investigate finding an insurance specialist in Drainage Boards	Director of Finance
SDBC/20230124-02	To make enquiries for a pumping station at Dunball	Clerk : closed
SDBC/20230727-01	To send to all members a list of staff and their contact details	Clerk
SDBC/20230727-02	Members to consider meeting calendar alternatives	Committee Members
SDBC/20230727-03	To write to members who have not returned their declaration of interests forms	Clerk
SDBC/20230727-04	To report on water supply details to the Gravity site when known	Clerk