

MINUTES OF THE PARRETT FINANCE AND WORKS SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2025

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr A Betty Mr T Bradford Mr C Passmore (C)	Appointed Members: Cllr M Caswell Mr S Kingham Cllr G Wren	Officers: Mrs M Hammond Mr I Sturdy (Clerk) Mr M Wall	Public:
Apologies:			
Mr J Winslade	Cllr N Cavill Cllr M Stanton		
Non-Attendance:			

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. Apologies as per the above Attendance List.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1. There were no items additional to the agenda.	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. None	
4. Minutes of the Parrett F&W Meeting held on 04 June 2024	<p>4.1 It was pointed out that Anthony Betty is an elected member not a Councillor and Stuart Kingham is an Appointed Member.</p> <p>4.2 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2024 were signed as a true and correct record</p> <p>Proposed by Tony Bradford and seconded Stuart Kingham “to sign the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting” All in favour</p>	RESOLUTION 01
5. Matters Arising	<p>5.1. The outstanding actions were discussed.</p> <p>P/20240604-01 - To make the results of phosphate water testing available at the Full Board Meeting on 18 June 2024 – Ongoing but is not a Finance & Works matter.</p> <p>There was a significant discussion around phosphates with the following being mentioned</p>	

Each Board is a statutory public body with responsibilities for flood protection, land drainage and the environment.
All are members of the Association of Drainage Authorities.

<p>6. Finance Report</p>	<p>6.1 MH handed out a revised budget paper to reflect the known increase in the Environment Agency precept.</p> <p>6.2 MH advised that the bank reconciliations have been made up until 31 December 2024 and Stuart Kingham has countersigned these to the 30 November 2024 and there are no issues to report.</p> <p>6.3 MH discussed the first column of the report which showed a position as at the end of November, which was a surplus of £296,364. A surplus would be expected at that time of year as the special levy and the majority of the rates had been received but there was still four months of expenditure still to pay including the second instalment of the EA Precept. The third column of figures shows the forecast year-end position, a surplus of £78,328. It was stressed that this is a forecast and would probably change.</p> <p>6.4 A question was asked about the drainage rate position. As at 14 January 2025 there was £9,822.71 outstanding. This time last year £8,748.14 was outstanding. MH will be attending court on 21 January 2025 seeking 15 liability orders for outstanding Parrett drainage rates.</p> <p>6.5 MH discussed sixth column of figures the 2025/26 proposed budget.</p> <p>She asked members to look at rows 1-18. Admin costs are up, the main reason for this is SDBC charge for staff, vehicles and general administration charges. MH asked members to look at the commentary sheet for more information.</p> <p>MH has made an assumption of a cost of living pay award of 2%. MH highlighted the increase to employers NI contributions as a result of the recent government budget.</p> <p>MH said bank interest rates should be reducing and this has been reflected in the budget as well. A new budget has been added for consultant fees to enable David Colbourne to investigate if DAMS computer system can be helpful for the wider business currently (only</p>	
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used by Development Control team). The other large increase was in the Chairman's Allowance reflecting the decision made at the November 2024 Full Board meeting.

6.6 The Maintenance Budget

Rows 19 to 32 cover maintenance. Routine Maintenance was increasing by £16,211 which included an assumption for the new tenders that have gone out and an assumption for April CPI.

Row 28 The cost of electricity for Podimore Pumping Station has increased as we have moved to a new contract. We had been sheltered from the recent increases by our previous deal but the new contract has higher costs.

MH said the telemetry budget has increased by £5000. Phil Brewin has advised that this budget would need to be doubled over the next two years.

6.7 Environment Budget

Rows 33 to 26 cover Environment Costs. There is an underspend, as there was last year. It is proposed that this underspend is ringfenced and we will therefore not require a budget next year. IDS explained that we have completed a lot of water related work. These budgets were to enable us to do a re-write of both the Water Level Management Plans and Biodiversity Action Plan. To re-write them now would be a bit premature as there is a lot of high-level thinking going on and a lot of interest in water level management and biodiversity in and around the area. Staff members have been working on a plan that all stakeholders can agree upon but workload pressures have been impeding this work.

6.8 EA precept

Row 37 is a 5 % increase on the precept based upon the latest information from the agency and will be considered by Wessex RFCC at their next meeting.

6.9 Board Schemes

Row 38 remaining the same as this year. A further discussion will be held later in the meeting regarding Board Schemes.

6.10 SRA

Row 40 Reflects the SRA schemes for 2025/26. This has a corresponding income line on row 42.

A question was asked about the work on River Cary (Main River). It was confirmed that we hope this will be funded through a DEFRA flood recovery grant and not impact the budget for 2025/26. We have influenced both the EA and SRA, the EA to make a bid and the SRA to include it in their programme for just over £500k to fund work on main rivers that the Agency are not currently funded for.

A conversation was had about the EA work on main rivers, funding and the future maintenance and the need for a strategy going forwards for this work.

6.11 Income

Rows 41 to 45 shows the other income. The only change in other income is the SRA funding reflecting the change in Row 40. MH suggested the bank interest is kept the same. This year's interest is forecast to be more than budget and with expected reductions in the Bank of England base rate it was felt that the budget should remain the same.

6.12 Rates and Levies.

To achieve an additional funding to close the budget gap to zero the new penny rate increase is 6.85% giving a new penny rate of 9.889 rising from 9.255

This increase is less then advised to Somerset Council

6.13 A question was asked about the use of reserves to modify the penny rate. MH advised,

7. A.O.B.	7.1. Stuart Kingham asked a question about ownership of a structure on Mark Moor that has been damaged for ages. IDS confirmed that it was in the Axe Brue area, but would check what is happening.	NEW ACTION P/20250104-01
8. DONM	<p>8.1 The next meeting is Tuesday 03 June 2025</p> <p>8.2 There are a number of visits planned to the water injection dredging on Friday 17 January 2025. The MP Mr Ashley Fox will be in attendance and IDS understands that the BBC has shown some interest. Tony Bradford will try to attend this event as well.</p> <p>8.3 The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.</p>	

Annex:

A. Parrett F&W Meeting – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIRMAN.....DATE

**ANNEX A TO
PARRETT F&W COMMITTEE MINUTES
DATED 14 January 2025**

PARRETT F&W MEETING – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
P/20240604-03 –	Use contacts to investigate how other similar organisations invest money. This is ongoing	Maggie Hammond -RFO Ongoing
P/20250104-01	IDS to check details of damaged structure on Mark Moor	Clerk