

**MINUTES OF THE SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE, 33-34 MARKET STREET, HIGHBRIDGE ON TUESDAY 23 JULY 2024 14.30**

<b>Attendance:</b>			
<b>Elected Members:</b> Mr T Bradford (Chair) Mr Stuart Kingham Mr Alan Franks Mrs Wendy Welland Mr Tim Bush	<b>Appointed Members</b> Cllr Alistair Hendry	<b>Officers:</b> Mrs M Hammond Mr I Sturdy	<b>Public:</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>			
Mr Colin Passmore Mr Barrie Bryer Mr Roger Coombes Mr Jeff Fear Mr Andrew Gilling Mr Alistair Mead	Cllr Peter Burden Cllr Peter Clayton		
<b>Non-Attendance:</b>			
Mr Roger Keen			

<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Detail:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
1. Attendance and Apologies	<p>1.1. Attendance &amp; Apologies as per the above.</p> <p>1.2. The Chair welcomed the members to the meeting and explained that even though the meeting was not quorate there are some important updates that needed to be shared.</p> <p>1.3. The Chair said he would like to add an agenda item – Terms of Reference.</p> <p>1.4. Alistair Hendry attended the office but was unexpectedly called away before the start of the meeting.</p> <p>1.5. Iain Sturdy (IDS) gave the committee an update on Jeff Fears health. IDS had spoken to Jeff Fear recently and he had expressed that he would like to keep his seat on the Board but for the time being will need to take a step back from Board duties.</p> <p>Andrew Gilling is acting Chair of the Axe Brue Board in the interim.</p> <p>IDS said the election process for Axe Brue Board will start in April 2025 and we can look further into Jeff Fear's intentions nearer this time.</p>	

	<p>The Chair agreed that this seemed to be suitable but that would be up to the Axe Brue Board.</p> <p>The Chair said the committee sent their best wishes to Jeff Fear.</p>	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1. None.	
3. Approval of Minutes	<p>3.1. <i>'The minutes of the SDBC Management Committee meeting held 12 December 2023 are a true and accurate reflection of the meeting'</i></p> <p><b>Prop: Tim Bush</b>  <b>Sec: Stuart Kingham</b>  <b>All in Favour</b></p>	<b>RESOLUTION 1</b>
4. Matters Arising and updates	<p>4.1. The Chair went through the previous minutes page by page.</p> <p>4.2 The Chair mentioned the subcommittees on page 3. The last one he attended was not quorate and it's not the first time this has happened which is concerning. Committee members are expected to be present and to contribute. Members cannot just turn up when it interests them.</p> <p>The Chair said he felt that sub committees should be stopped and business should be conducted through Full Board meetings. The Chair stated that the Finance and Works rate setting meeting is crucial though.</p> <p>Tim Bush (TB) said that the Finance and Works (F&amp;W) meetings have now been reduced to 2 a year so they are only held when needed.</p> <p>Maggie Hammond (MH) added that she finds the October F&amp;W meeting important to be able report finance progress mid financial year.</p> <p>The Chair stated that attendance is not just an issue with subcommittees, the full board meetings are also poorly attended.</p> <p>4.3 The Chair discussed the outstanding actions from the previous meeting.</p>	

SDBC/20230124-01 -  
To investigate finding an insurance specialist in  
Drainage Boards.

MH reported that currently she hasn't been able to get any further with this, but will work on this over the summer.

SDBC/20230124-02 -  
To make enquiries for a pumping station at  
Dunball

IDS said this has been done and the action is now closed

SDBC/20230727-03  
To write to members who have not returned their  
declaration of interest forms

IDS said this has been communicated to members. MH added that some forms still haven't yet been returned. Action closed.

SDBC/20230727-04  
To report on water supply details to the Gravity  
site when known

IDS said that we are involved with Gravity, Somerset Council planning department and the EA. The short-term water requirements will be met by Wessex Water. Gravity are currently in the process of defining what their water quantity needs will look like. They are currently reporting that they will return the water in similar quantity but better quality than it was when abstracted. The EA and IDB concerns are that there isn't enough water in the system to meet all needs. Stantec are Gravity's consultants for this. They currently don't want to use the King Sedgemoor Drain for abstraction and are still focusing of taking all water from River Huntspill.

Tim Bush (TB) asked if the Huntspill River is supplied naturally or pumped.

IDS replied it can be fed via the River Brue through the Cripps diversion route. In addition to this, there is pumped water from the South Drain through Gold Corner.

TB asked is there a proposed reservoir?

IDS replied no this will be a proposed direct abstraction from the Huntspill River via a pipeline adjacent to the reedbeds.

IDS explained, it is proposed that the extracted water will go to the industrial cooling process and will be returned to the system in better quality. The difficulty for the Huntspill River is that it is already a reservoir to supply the agricultural need and , it can at times, already be hard to fulfil that need.

IDS has raised these concerns with the project liaison team.

Alan Franks(AF) asked how much water was taken by the old ROF factory?

IDS responded that they will be working on the same quantities as the old factory.

AF said if the water is needed for the peat areas, then surely the factory can't have it.

IDS agreed it is a concern he shares.

The Chair mentioned there are visions for a large housing estate opposite the site. There will be run off and will need a large attenuation pond.

AF said as a drainage board none of these things should be allowed to happen unless you have a well maintained river system in the first place.

Regarding the discussion about Peat, the Chair said the last government gave £9.2 million to offset phosphates. You can't harvest miscanthus on peat. The chair said that he has strong opinions on this subject which IDS is aware of. IDS stated it's an ongoing piece of work and will keep the board updated.

SDBC/20231212-01

Add agenda item to next Full Board meetings to discuss ringfencing the salary underspend.

Ongoing consideration at the moment.

SDBC 20231212-02

To make tentative enquiries into whether there is a more affordable pension scheme for new members of staff.

MH reported that there are a lot of schemes available but the existing LGPS administered by Peninsular pensions is a good offer to prospective employees. MH said she would not

	<p>recommend a 2-tiered workforce. The Chair agreed with MH and said that wouldn't be fair.</p>	
<p>4 a Terms of Reference (added Agenda item)</p>	<p>The Chair suggested that subcommittees are scrapped or we reduce the number of people who need to attend. Poor attendance sometimes means we aren't quorate, and we can't make decisions.</p> <p>IDS said that according to the Consortium agreement, we have to have an SDBC Management Committee and an AGM. We can look at what quorate numbers are needed.</p> <p>Wendy Welland (WW) suggested we have deputies in place that can be contacted when necessary.</p> <p>IDS said that there are no deputies at present as no one volunteered for this. But we could look into that again.</p> <p>AF asked if there is a reason for the lack of attendance today?</p> <p>The Chair said the time of year has an impact. The Chair asked can the terms of reference be changed. IDS replied yes at the AGM which is next March.</p> <p>WW mentioned that it is mainly Councillors who have not attended.</p> <p>AF asked what is the root cause of lack of attendance?</p> <p>IDS said it may just be lack of time and the weather and farming commitments.</p> <p>TB said he felt that those land owners dealing with water should be getting involved. It is a civic duty.</p> <p>IDS wondered if it was because people want to be more involved in the detail of what is happening on the ground and operationally.</p>	

	<p>The Chair felt that we discuss finance, environment, health and safety but not drainage. The new Moors Associations have been set up and are becoming like the old fashioned drainage boards. The Chair felt the drainage boards would be undermined by these Moors associations. Certain members will only participate if there are issues being discussed that directly involves them.</p> <p>The Chair felt that other IDBs have attendance issues too, perhaps not as bad as we do. These other IDBs don't have sub committees but they have an all-day meeting with lunch provided and this could be an option going forward. We can consider alternatives.</p> <p>SK pointed out in the past smaller committee meetings were held, but the main meetings held in village halls were always very busy.</p> <p>IDS said that looking at the attendance records on AB board there were 12 members who hadn't attended a single meeting this year.</p> <p>Tim Bush added that there was no one else to take their place, so these members roll over despite not attending.</p> <p>IDS said that he would write to those not attending regularly.</p> <p>The Chair said that the reconstitution had affected the drainage board. He asked if there is any appetite to change the quorate numbers or terms of reference?</p> <p>The Chair said a lot of effort goes into the administration of papers and the agenda and then members don't turn up, that's not good enough.</p> <p>AF suggested initially highlighting low attendance directly with members.</p> <p>The Chair added that we lost a lot of good people with the re-constitution and this didn't help the boards. The Chair said that IDS should write to the Council and highlight Councillors that aren't contributing or attending and we need people with an interest in what we do and turn up. The Chair said they don't need to be Councillors but people with an interest in the drainage boards can still be appointed.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> <b>SDBC/20240724 – 1</b> <b>IDS</b></p>
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	<p>The Chair said if the meeting becomes smaller with the Chair, Vice chair and Deputy – perhaps meetings don't need to be set in stone a long way in advance - this could be decided according to availability.</p> <p>MH said that if July is not a good time of year – we should look at another more feasible time of year.</p> <p>The Chair said that subcommittee attendance needs to be addressed too if they continue to happen.</p> <p>IDS said the Environment Committee is very well attended. IDS said the way forward could be to combine the F&amp;W meeting with the full board meetings but that would make very long meetings</p> <p>The Chair said that a budget setting pre meeting was still important.</p> <p>MH said that she wants the Board to approve the budget as its their budget. Tim Bush agreed the Finance element is extremely important.</p> <p>The Chair said that the way MH presents the figures is self-explanatory that he believes this could come into a Board meeting easily.</p> <p>IDS said if this was to happen it would need strong Chairmanship to ensure things were kept on track.</p> <p>MH added that there may be times when questions can be asked before as sometimes, she may not be able to answer the questions then and there in a meeting. MH said that she would do whatever the Boards agree.</p> <p>The Chair asked that subcommittees should be added to the next board agenda.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> <b>SDBC/20240723 -2</b></p>
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<p>5. Update following the unscheduled meetings of 16 January and 20 March 2024</p>	<p>5.1 IDS discussed the previous extra ordinary meetings.</p> <p>IDS asked if the committee are satisfied that brief sets of minutes are prepared covering why the meeting was called, the general discussion and the outcome.</p> <p>The committee were all in agreement with this. IDS advised these minutes would be brought to the committee to sign at the next management committee meeting.</p>	<p><b>Action SDBC/20240723 – 3 - IDS</b></p>
<p>6. SDBC Finance Update</p>	<p>6.1. MH Discussed the accounts for 23/24 – these have already been shared at the full board meetings. The surplus has been shared back amongst the 3 boards in accordance with the Consortium agreement. The paper shows the reason for the underspend. This year MH doesn't expect a large surplus.</p> <p>AF asked are the engineering projects going ahead?</p> <p>MH responded yes the Oct F&amp;W meeting will show the finance forecast.</p> <p><u>6.2 Pension Scheme</u> MH discussed the pension scheme and new options available to staff. (See the paper supplied for details) A shared cost salary sacrifice scheme was discussed, details were given to the members in the pension paper provided by MH. MH advised that a company called My Money Matters that could help us to offer this to our staff if recommended by the committee. MH said this is a good option to be able to offer our staff as there is no risk to the Board and could actually make a saving on employers NI contribution.</p> <p>Tim Bush feels like this is sensible to be able to offer this and staff can choose if they want to take this up on not.</p> <p>MH said several staff members are planning and looking ahead to putting more in their pension pots.</p>	

	<p>The Chair suggested that this be agreed but the committee wasn't quorate to be able to approve this recommendation. The Chair suggested that members who couldn't attend could be emailed to ask if they were in agreement with this to move this forward without waiting for the next management committee. This was agreed by members.</p> <p>It was decided that members would have 2 weeks to respond to this email.</p> <p><i>'All members present were in agreement with the pension recommendation proposed by Maggie Hammond'</i></p> <p><b>Prop: Tim Bush</b>  <b>Sec: Stuart Kingham</b>  <b>All in Favour</b></p> <p><i>'To write to those members who didn't attend this meeting asking them to express support or otherwise for this recommendation within 2 weeks'</i></p> <p><b>Prop: Wendy Welland</b>  <b>Sec: Alan Franks</b>  <b>All in Favour</b></p> <p>6.3 <u>Extra Leave Day</u> – MH said that for the 2023/24 pay award we have followed the pay scales from the Council but we haven't followed the additional day that the Council received last year. Therefore, our staff of all grades are down one leave day in comparison to Local authority employees.</p> <p>The Chair felt that if we follow the council for pay scales, we should follow the leave as well.</p> <p><i>'The Committee decided to write to those members not in attendance to ask them if they were agreement with the recommendation paper to add an additional leave day for employees'</i></p> <p><b>Prop : Tim Bush</b>  <b>Sec : Stuart Kingham</b>  <b>All in Favour</b></p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 2</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 3</b>  <b>Action:</b>  <b>SDBC/20240723-4</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 4</b>  <b>Action:</b>  <b>SDBC/20240723-5</b></p>
<p>7. EA Maintenance funding and Joint EA IDB Bid for flood recovery funds</p>	<p>7.1. IDS gave a verbal update on the Defra grant for farming and rural communities recovery.</p>	

	<p>We did not bid for Money for Flood flood recovery Operational costs as we only have one pumping station to operate. The EA own and operate them.</p> <p>However IDS spoke to ADA and EA colleagues and was encouraged to put in a joint bid to cover EA operational and repair costs. Our bid is for just over £600,000 and we hope to hear the outcome shortly.</p> <p>The Chair thanked IDS for working so hard on this.</p> <p>Regarding EA Maintenance – The Chair said it seems that the EA have no money for annual maintenance on the Brue. He hoped that some of this money, if received, could be used on this. A list of things that need to be done should be looked at and apply to the SRA if necessary.</p> <p>AF observed that the EA pumping station at North Drain is still not fixed.</p> <p>IDS said he would ask again about this as now it is overdue.</p>	
8. Peat Workshop	<p>9.1. IDS updated members on the peat workshop. He felt that this was not well informed yet but there was widespread enthusiasm at many levels.</p> <p>It is early days in their understanding of water levels management, IDS has shared ADA 1996 reports, which had already looked into this.</p> <p>IDS said if water is going to be held higher the watercourses and main river system needs to be well maintained so that excess water can be removed efficiently.</p> <p>The money on offer to land owners is attractive.</p> <p>The Chair said they don't care about the condition of the peat they just want the money. Its financially right but morally wrong. It frustrates him that they want to do these trials, but they have no idea of the realities of the situation.</p> <p>AF agreed that this is being pushed hard in all directions. AF asked how does it influence the Boards?</p>	

	<p>The Chair responded that we would be obliged to supply water to these areas and to the rate payers.</p> <p>IDS said that there are two pieces of work funded by DEFRA going on at the moment, Landscape recovery projects. One is being run by the Wildlife trust in Brue valley and the other being run by the RSPB in the Parrett Catchment. They have received funding for 2 years to develop potential and investigate the possibilities. IDS is expecting a proposal to come forwards and we are engaged with both projects.</p> <p>The Chair asked where is the excess water going to go in times of flooding? People aren't thinking about this, landowners are just thinking of the money. This will be detrimental.</p> <p>AF said he's involved with DEFRA, Somerset Wildlife Trust own land around his land and feels he may be forced into a situation because of this.</p> <p>The Chair felt its essential that IDS attends these meetings to keep us abreast of this situation.</p>	
9 SRA Update	<p>9.1 SRA update relates to Axe Brue and Parrett Boards. IDS said that he had been unpopular in the last SRA meeting with regards to his comments about the Brue Model. He reported that he had been criticised for instigating a technical conversation but held ground to say these conversations were needed. They will now look at some quick wins alongside the wider catchment work.</p> <p>AF said the modelling was already there before.</p> <p>IDS said that the model had been improved by SRA and it will be helpful to support the case for work that needs to be done. Somerset Council are leading on the project and want to model across the catchment as a whole. It was a difficult conversation.</p> <p>IDS added regarding the Parrett board, the two outfall structures the EA had failed to deliver have now been redesigned by the IDB. We now have designs that will work and will provide cost savings. Four contractors had expressed interest in tendering for the work. IDS said he was hopeful the work would be completed within the existing budget.</p>	

	<p>King Sedgemoor Drain bank survey update – IDS said geo technical engineering investigation has been completed and calculations to show the peat can be used to reshape the banks. This should lead to a more cost-effective outcome. We are still aiming for a construction start next July 2025.</p>	
<p>10. Communications with new MPs</p>	<p>10.1 IDS mentioned there is a dual approach to this.</p> <p>The Chair had asked IDS to write a letter to MPs and shortly after this ADA made available a template of a letter that they had sent that could be modified by IDBs. IDS is currently in the process of writing to all local MPs to invite them to meet the Boards.</p> <p>Emma Hardy MP and floods minister has recently been down to Somerset to visit the EA and it was disappointing we weren't invited to this.</p> <p>The Chair said that it would be nice if she could visit the IDBs , if the SRA are involved in this visit we need to be careful they don't take over the conversation. We need to show her the consequences we are suffering from no maintenance on Main Rivers.</p> <p>IDS said ADA have organised an ADA LGA group in the House of Commons on 8<sup>th</sup> October which the Consortium are invited. Its an evening special meeting group. The Chair confirmed that he could attend.</p>	
<p>11 Meetings Calendar</p>	<p>This was discussed previously in the meeting</p>	
<p>12 Attendance and Board Meetings</p>	<p>This was discussed previously in the meeting and IDS will write a letter.</p>	
<p>13. Staff Update – Assistant Clerk Vacancy</p>	<p>13.1 IDS said, apart from the engineering vacancies that the vacant Assistant Clerk post is the one vacancy that is causing the greatest inconvenience on many fronts.</p> <p>After discussing with Nick Stevens and MH, he has decided to call the position a Senior Governance Officer to make it more of an attractive post for candidates.</p> <p>IDS said he won't advertise a salary as this will depend on experience and capabilities and he doesn't want to limit interest in the post.</p>	

IDS said there is a good internal application but that person would need development and support in the role to grow into the post. She also had family commitments and was unable to work full time at the moment, which would be preferable for this post.

The Chair replied that as Nick is here, it would be better to get someone in the post soon so that information can be transferred before Nick retires fully.

The Chair commented that its critical that this post is filled. He said that his preference is that the internal candidate could be offered the role and start the ball rolling asap. The Chair said that he prefers the title Deputy Clerk and asked IDS what can be done today to start this process?

IDS said having spoken to Nick Stevens about it he wonders if there may be someone available from the ongoing Council redundancies that had experience in a governance role that would have more capability from the beginning.

The Chair asked if we are looking for something instant rather than growing someone internally?

IDS clarified he would like to see who else is available and make comparisons.

SK asked if a gap would be left if the internal candidate was to take up the new position. IDS replied yes but he felt it would be an easier position to fill than the Senior Governance Officer role and he asked MH if she agreed.

MH said it was difficult to fill the receptionist role last time and that we were very lucky with the staff member we got for this role. IDS added that when that staff member was interviewed, he had suggested offering her the Assistant Clerk role, but MH had wanted her for reception.

The Chair said that she had done a fantastic job so far and his concern was that if another candidate was found for this role, this staff member may miss the opportunity to progress at the Board and therefore leave for bigger opportunities externally.

MH agreed that she was doing a wonderful job and would make a good Assistant Clerk but that she is currently working 5.5 hours a day as she

	<p>has a young family and could not work full time for the immediate future.</p> <p>Tim Bush added we need to make allowances with ladies with families, as this is how talent has been lost previously in businesses.</p> <p>The Chair said he felt that we have a good candidate why not move forward with this application.</p> <p>Tim Bush said that the decision must be left with IDS and MH.</p> <p>IDS concluded that for the sake of a few weeks and seeing who else may be available its wise to advertise. The internal applicant's application will be held and be treated fairly alongside the external applicants.</p>	
<p>14. A O B</p>	<p>14.1 IDS said we now have a new enforcement officer, George Maltby – he's settling in to the role. What we have found is that our enforcement procedures need to be reviewed if we are likely to be prosecuting cases in future. IDS has asked Ashfords for a price for training and to update procedures. The cost is around £8k to £10k, which is unbudgeted for.</p> <p>The Chair suggested looking at ADA for a template that could be modified – Action IDS.</p> <p>The Chair said the Enforcement officer must have the right tools to do the job effectively.</p> <p>The Chair said if ADA doesn't have a template then quotes should be sought for this.</p> <p>IDS said that there are enforcement issues whereby a current section of society feel that they can buy land and do what they like which it and not adhere to the rules. There is an issue in the Parrett area and in NSL areas. IDS said he is worried about putting staff in harm's way.</p> <p>IDS said he will bring this issue to the individual boards for discussions. We need to find a way of dealing with this as it can be very frightening for staff.</p> <p>WW asked if our Officers wear body cameras? As these can provide proof. IDS said no but we have visit in pairs systems.</p>	<p><b>Action:SDBC/20240723</b> <b>– 6</b></p>

	<p>AF left the meeting at 16.55.</p> <p>The Chair said firstly an enforcement policy needs to be in place.</p> <p>14.2 IDS mentioned the RFCC and he had recently met the new Chair, Ravel Gavey, at a latest meeting.</p> <p>The WRFCC is supportive about the need for Main River maintenance. All RFCC Chair people across the country are taking this issue up with new government, and to ADA and the EA - so momentum is gathering.</p> <p>14.3 Tim Bush had mentioned the tour of inspection. MH said that the costs will be shared between the 3 boards. The Chair felt that the Tour of inspection is long overdue.</p> <p>14.4 WW mentioned that Hemlock Water Dropwort has spread, WW said that they have lost two calves to this as its poisonous. It's coming up everywhere. A lot of people don't recognise the plant and fail to understand how poisonous it is.</p> <p>The Chair suggested bringing this up in the Environment committee.</p> <p>The Chair closed the meeting at 17.10pm.</p>	
15. Date of Next Meeting	10 <sup>th</sup> December at 14.30pm.	

Annex:

A. SDBC – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIRMAN.....DATE .....

**ANNEX A TO  
SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES  
DATED 23 JULY 2024**

**SDBC – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
SDBC/20230124-01	To investigate finding an insurance specialist in Drainage Boards	Director of Finance - Ongoing
SDBC/20230727-02	Members to consider meeting calendar alternatives	Committee Members
SDBC/20230727-04	To report on water supply details to the Gravity site when known	Clerk - Ongoing
SDBC/20231212-1	Add agenda item to next Full Board meetings to discuss ring fencing salary underspend.	Clerk - Ongoing
SDBC/20240724 - 1	To write to members not attending regularly.	Clerk
SDBC/20240724 - 2	Discuss Subcommittees and attendance during the November Board meetings	Clerk
SDBC/20240723 - 3	Produce brief sets of minutes from the Extra-ordinary meetings for the committee to sign at the next SDBC Management meeting in December 2024.	Clerk
SDBC/20240723 - 4	To write to absent members asking them to express their view on Resolution 3 re pensions	Clerk
SDBC/20240723 - 5	To write to absent members asking them to express their view on Resolution 4 re additional leave	Clerk
SDBC/20240723-6	To explore ADA Enforcement template options .	Clerk