

MINUTES OF THE SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE, 33-34 MARKET STREET, HIGHBRIDGE ON TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2024 AT 14.30.

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

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted his disappointment that the meeting was not quorate. 1.2. Attendance & Apologies as per the above.	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1. As per the register.	
3. Approval of Minutes & 4. Matters Arising	3.1. The Chairman asked that item 3 and 4 be considered at the same time. 3.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2024 could not be approved as the meeting was not quorate, however all those members in attendance did review the minutes and were happy to recommend their approval at the next meeting of the SDBC Management Committee, which was confirmed as being Tuesday 22 July 2025 and the AGM is Tuesday 11 March 2025 3.3 It was felt that this was too far in advance and another meeting would be required as the position of Chair and Vice Chair runs out in January. A special meeting may need to be called.	

	<p>3.4 A question was asked about the replacement for Nick Stevens. IDS said that Nick was temporary until we could fill the post of Assistant Clerk. Re-naming the post to Senior Governance Office has been discussed and there are 3 applicants for the job, with interviews to be held in the new year.</p> <p>3.5 Item 14.1 under AOB IDS confirmed that the Enforcement Officer G Maltby has left to go to a new role within a firm of surveyors in Surrey.</p> <p>3.6 Following discussions about non-quorate meetings the possibility of allowing substitutes/deputies was raised. It was pointed out that there is an agenda item about this later.</p> <p>3.7 TB mentioned the action about a pumping station at Dunball. IDS confirmed we have made enquiries and that this item is now closed until another opportunity rises. A pumping station at Dunball was discussed with the local MP. This is not a new item. The reality is it would cost £100m expenditure plus running costs. This topic crops up now and again.</p> <p>3.8 TB and CP attended a Peat and Phosphate meeting and it was useful to be there. A significant discussion was held with the conclusion that as Drainage Boards, water quality is not our issue, our role is flood risk and water level management and we can only get involved when it impacts our function. It was requested that an elected board member attends the Peat meetings along with the Ecologist, Phil Brewin.</p> <p>3.9 WW asked now the tour of Inspection is cancelled, will it be rearranged? IDS confirmed yes, if there is enough interest. TB asked if the tour is grand enough? IDS said with a good lunch and inspections across the consortium area it was felt to be a good tour. TB suggested an afternoon/early evening tour starting at 3pm and asked that this is asked at the individual Full Board meetings.</p> <p>3.10 Table of Actions;</p> <p><u>SDBC/20230124-01</u> <u>To investigate finding an insurance specialist in Drainage Boards.</u></p> <p>MH has contacted ADA and is waiting for a response</p>	<p>ACTION: SDBC/20230124-02 Closed</p> <p>NEW ACTION: SDBC/20241210-01</p> <p>ACTION: SDBC/20230124-01 Ongoing</p>
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	<p><u>SDBC 20230727-02</u> <u>Members to consider meeting calendar alternatives</u></p> <p>There was debate amongst the Boards but there was no consensus therefore four Full Board meetings will continue.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20230724-04</u> <u>To report on water supply details to the Gravity site when known.</u></p> <p>This has been done. We are still engaged with the EA, the planning authority and Gravity. We continue to share our concerns regarding abstraction but have been told not to get in the way and make it work.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20231212-1</u> <u>Add agenda item to next Full Board meetings to discuss ring fencing salary underspend</u></p> <p>This was not required. The vacancies have met the need of funding of external engineering services</p> <p><u>SDBC 20240724-1</u> <u>To write to members not attending regularly</u></p> <p>IDS takes every opportunity to remind members of poor attendance. A letter re non-attendance can be counterproductive. There is no supply of people wanting to join the boards.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20240724-2</u> <u>Discuss Subcommittees and attendance during the November Board meetings</u></p> <p>This happened. There is a paper which will be discussed later</p> <p><u>SDBC 20240723-3</u> <u>Produce brief sets of minutes from the extra-ordinary meetings for the committee to sign at the next SDBC Management meeting in December 2024</u></p> <p>Completed and attached to the papers</p> <p><u>SDBC20240723-4</u> <u>To write to absent members asking them to express their view on Resolution 3 re pensions</u></p> <p><u>SDBC20240723-5</u> <u>To write to absent members asking them to express their view on Resolution 4 re additional leave</u></p>	<p>ACTION: 20230727-02 Closed</p> <p>ACTION: 20230727-04 Ongoing</p> <p>ACTION: 20231212-1 Closed</p> <p>ACTION: 20240724-1 Ongoing</p> <p>ACTION: 20240724-2 Closed</p> <p>ACTION: 20240723-3 Closed</p> <p>ACTION: 20240723-4 Closed</p> <p>ACTION: 20240723-5 Closed</p>
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<p>5. Governance</p>	<p>5.1 Not quorate therefore unable to elect a Chair or Vice Chair</p> <p>5.2 Future of sub committees Iain's paper about an option. The big word is Amalgamation, what is the appetite for this? The paper explains this thinking. ADA's buzz word is amalgamation.</p> <p>The big example of amalgamation is Middle Level Commissioners with 40-50 amalgamating. Middle Level is no longer going to host services for these IDB's and the boards are moving to their own amalgamation.</p> <p>Iain spoke to his paper about the future of sub committees where one of the options to reduce the complexities of consortium business and the number of meetings by considering the overall advantages and disadvantages of amalgamating the three boards into one Somerset Drainage Board. Those at the meeting were asked their views with the following comments being made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The calendar of meetings shows that all these meetings cannot go on • There appears to be no appetite to attend the meetings • We need to be one board earlier then later • Non-quorate meetings show we have a problem • One of the current boards could be a problem • Attendance going down • Levels of work going up • Members could be paid for attending meetings • There are similar agendas across the boards, but different decisions are made. • An online option is something to offer • There will be problems getting to a full amalgamation (a step too far for some members) • We have amalgamated, re-constituted and yet attendance is going down. • Would you need 3 sub-committees for work if you are one board? • Need members who are interested in running the whole area and look at the greater good. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No differential rating • Could have electoral districts • Ask IDS to look into the process and timescale, including statutory items to complete • If we want to do more EA work we need to be a serious organisation <p>5.3 An additional meeting of the SDBC Management Committee is required in early January to consider this further. A paper, that is well written and subtle pointing out that there is a problem with attending management meetings can then go to the Full Board meetings</p> <p>IDS is requested to write a paper on the process, timescales involved and the benefits & disbenefits of amalgamation and when it is ready call a SDBC Management Committee, single item meeting so all members of the SDBC Management committee have an opportunity to vote on the matter.</p> <p>There could then be a discussion at the SDBC AGM.</p>	<p>NEW ACTION: SDBC/20241210-03</p>
<p>6. SDBC Finance Report</p>	<p>6.1 Maggie Hammond explained that the bank statements have all been reconciled and there was nothing else to report in this regard.</p> <p>6.2 Maggie Hammond referred to the Budget documents. The current forecast year-end position is surplus of £74k. This has changed from the figures shared at the 3 Full Board meetings. The major change is on salaries as the pay award is now known and is less than the budgeted 5% award. Any underspend at the year-end is split across the 3 boards based on the consortium agreement.</p> <p>6.3 <u>Proposed Budget for next year</u></p> <p>Maggie Hammond drew attention to the staff costs There is an assumption regarding pay progression for staff not at the top of their grade and an assumption re a pay award of 2.5%. These 2 assumptions increase the gross salaries budget by £78k. The Employer NI has increased by £38k reflecting the change in the rate and point at which employers start paying NI following the recent budget (£29k) the rest due to the increase in gross salaries. The pension budget has increased as this is based on the gross salaries budget.</p>	

	<p>The Chairman pointed out to the committee that there is a member of staff that has gone above and beyond their duties and who was instrumental in the work on the River Cary and is also working hard on the River Axe which is proving to be difficult. The Chairman would like to increase this person's salary from 1st April 2025 to the top of his grade. MH confirmed that this was affordable within the proposed budget.</p> <p>Peter Burden was concerned about how this is being done. IDS confirmed that each year staff have an annual performance review/appraisal and people are recognised for their contributions. The budget is being set before those appraisals have been conducted and the budget assumes one increment where staff are not at the top of the grade. Some people may stay on their current salary where others may exceed one spinal point progression through their grade.</p> <p>The post in question will not be regraded, but movement within the grade will change to recognise performance.</p> <p>MH confirmed that there were other far smaller changes in the proposed budget except for depreciation.</p> <p>The proposed depreciation budget increases by £10k. There is an increase in vehicle depreciation as there is an assumption about replacing older vehicles, whose depreciation figure will be larger than the current older vehicles. There is a plan to purchase new IT equipment for the meeting room, microphones and a smartboard.</p> <p>Bank Interest has been decreased as we are not expecting to reach this year's budget and due to expected changes in the bank interest rates for 2025/26.</p> <p>The balancing item to achieve a balanced budget is the administration change to the boards. This in increasing by £153,309 an increase of 8.97%.</p> <p>MH will write to those members not present to ask them if they approve the budget.</p> <p>A question was asked about the funding for Calm Engineering. MH pointed out that the budget is for a fully populated staff structure and the current vacancies will pay for Calm Engineering services.</p>	<p>NEW ACTION: SDBC/20241210-04</p>
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	<p>It was pointed out that there are two big risks at the present for the Consortium. One is relying on external contractors for engineering services and the other is relying on one contractor do complete a lot of the boards work. These will need to be addressed going forward.</p> <p>It is recorded that those members present were in favour of the proposed budget.</p>	
7. Meetings Calendar	<p>7.1. Those present at the meeting were happy with the proposed calendar of meetings.</p> <p>Parrett Finance & Works 1 or 2 could be dropped and it was asked if we could do this as and when required. It was said that they are better to be in the diary and drop if there is nothing to discuss.</p> <p>The location for the SDBC AGM – The Canalside no longer provides food in the evening. Officers are looking at other venues for this meeting. The room at the top of Wembdon Village Hall has been looked at but it is not available on the Tuesday but could do a Monday. They can provide food and is £35 per hour.</p> <p>Officers to find a suitable venue for the SDBC AGM sort.</p>	<p>NEW ACTION: SDBC/20241210-05</p>
8. Staff Update	<p>8.1 The resignation of George Maltby had already been discussed earlier in the meeting.</p> <p>8.2 The Clerk Assistant/Senior Governance Officer had also been discussed earlier in the meeting.</p> <p>The software that Nick Stevens trialled for help with the minutes did not work very well. The SRA have been trialling some new AI to help with the writing of minutes.</p>	
9. Policies for Approval	<p>9.1. There was a revised IT and Mobile phone policy shared with the papers. The amendments to the policy have been suggested by our data protection officers.</p> <p>Those present at the meeting were happy with the revised IT and Mobile Phone Policy.</p> <p>It was agreed, as with the proposed budget, that MH will write to those members not present to ask them if they are happy to approve the revised policy.</p>	<p>NEW ACTION: SDBC/20241210-06</p>

10. Website Improvements	10.1. There is a budget of £10k in this year's budget for the construction of a new website. There has been a tender process and the supplier has been confirmed and conversations are starting about the look of the new website.	
11. A.O.B.	<p>11.1 The Chairman advised that ADA are holding an Environment Day on 05 February 2025 and he would like to attend. It is an opportunity to talk with boards that are amalgamated or have recently amalgamated.</p> <p>11.2 IDS has had discussions with DEFRA and the EA re the Flood Recovery Fund. They have agreed to make £75k available towards the cost of our work on EA rivers (Cary, Mark Yeo and Axe).</p> <p>No matter how much it costs it was felt that this work will do the Drainage Boards a lot of good in PR. The Chairman would like this put into the ADA Gazette and local papers once the work has been completed along with before and after pictures. This could also be included in the Newsletter that goes with the drainage rate demands.</p> <p>Once the works have been finished then it will be time to share the good news story.</p> <p>When the banks on the KSD have been completed this will also be a good news story.</p> <p>11.3 The new RFCC chairman has resigned. They are currently without a chairperson and at the same time are recruiting new members to the committee. It was felt that there should be an IDB representative.</p>	
12. DONM	<p>12.1 The SDBC AGM is currently 11 March 2025</p> <p>12.2 There being no more items for discussion the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and wished everyone a Healthy Christmas.</p>	

Annex:

A. SDBC – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIRMAN.....DATE

**ANNEX A TO
SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
DATED 10 DECEMBER 24**

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 MH to speak with Innes Thompson at ADA to ascertain what other drainage boards do.
SDBC/20230727-04	To report on water supply details to the Gravity site when known	Clerk - Ongoing
SDBC/20240724-1	To write to members not attending regularly	Clerk - Ongoing
SDBC/20241210-01	To ask at the next Full Board meetings if an afternoon/early evening tour of inspection would be suitable	Clerk
SDBC/20241210-02	Contact Wilkin Chapman re enforcement procedures	Clerk
SDBC/20241210-03	Clerk to write a paper re amalgamation and call an 'Additional' SDBC Management Committee meeting	Clerk
SDBC/20241210-04	Write to those members not in attendance at the meeting of 10 Dec 24 to ask them if they are happy to approve the proposed budget	R.F.O
SDBC/20241210-05	Officers to find a suitable venue for the SDBC AGM	Clerk
SDBC/20241210-06	Write to those members not in attendance at the meeting of 10 Dec 24 to ask them if they are happy to approve the revised IT and Mobile Phone Policy	R.F.O.