

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE, 33-34 MARKET STREET, HIGHBRIDGE ON TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2025 AT 14.30.**

<b>Attendance:</b>			
<b>Elected Members:</b> Mr T Bradford (Chair) Mr B Bryer Mr T Bush Mr R Coombes Mr A Franks Mr A Gilling Mr R Keen (from 15.00) Mr A Mead (part) Mr C Passmore Mrs W Welland	<b>Appointed Members</b> Mr S Kingham Cllr M Stanton	<b>Officers:</b> Mr N Stevens Mr I Sturdy	<b>Public:</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>			
Mr J Fear	Cllr P Burden	Mrs M Hammond	
<b>Non-Attendance:</b>			
	Cllr P Clayton Cllr A Hendry		

<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Detail:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
1. Attendance and Apologies	<p>1.1. The CEO took the Chair as the meeting was called to elect the Chair and Vice Chair for the next two years and the CEO would conduct the election procedure. However as the meeting was not quorate at 14.30, the election was delayed until another Axe Brue member attended.</p> <p>1.2. Due to the disruption to SDBC business caused by a number of non-quorate meetings, members considered revising the quorum numbers set out in the Consortium Agreement. It was agreed that the matter would be referred to the AGM on 10 March 2025 with a recommendation that quorum numbers should be set at Axe Brue 3 Parrett 2 and North Somerset 1.</p> <p>1.3. Until the meeting became quorate it would proceed on matters not requiring a decision/vote.</p> <p>1.4. Attendance &amp; Apologies as per the above.</p>	
2. Declarations of Interest	<p>2.1. As per the register.</p> <p>2.2 Tim Bush (TB) enquired if Mr Bradley Fowler had received his Register of Members Interests paperwork. The CEO confirmed that he had.</p>	



	<p>Proposed :Alistair Mead. Seconded : Tim Bush.</p> <p>All in favour.</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 4</b></p>
<p>4. Matters Arising</p>	<p>4.1 Matters arising were for the Minutes of the meeting of 10 December 2024 only.</p> <p>4.2 Item 3.9 Page 2 The Clerk advised that the tour was cancelled due to poor take up by members. He further advised that setting up tours was time consuming and an unnecessary drain on resources if they are not taken up by members.</p> <p>4.3 item 3.8 page 2. The Chair advised the meeting that he and Colin Passmore had attended a Phosphate Meeting that morning. Phil Brewin was also present from the Boards. The meeting was also attended by Natural England, Environment Agency, Wessex Water and NFU The Chair summarised his understanding of the meeting outcome as problems of nutrients and phosphates were entering the water in the upstream catchment and being deposited in the lowlands, making the lowlands look like the problem area.</p> <p>Barrie Bryer (BB) had experience of inaccuracies in recorded nutrient data for his farm as no artificial fertilizer had been applied for 20 years.</p> <p>Wendy Welland (WW) suggested that the discharge from septic tanks and their registration must also be a consideration.</p> <p>(Note from Clerk – The management and registration of septic tanks will depend on whether they were installed or altered before October 2023 or after 23 October 2023. See <a href="#">Septic tanks and sewage treatment plants: what you need to do: Overview - GOV.UK</a></p> <p>4.4 page 8 Item 9.1 - Roger Keen advised that he had not seen a copy of the IT and Mobile Phone Policy. The Chair advised that it was sent out and those not at the last meeting were asked for their approval outside the meeting by Maggie Hammond if they were contactable.</p> <p>4.5 Item 11 AOB page 9 – The Chair had attended the ADA Environment Day with other members and officers and that he found it a very worthwhile experience. Of particular note was that the environmental work done was well recorded with the data gathered, allowing a change in practices to achieve maximum benefit. He felt Somerset had a long way to go to catch up with east coast practices. Particularly with Mink control.</p> <p>A further presentation on the increasing presence of beavers had shown that in Kent where beavers have been present for some time there has been damage to</p>	

	<p>water control structure and banks. The Chair felt there should be careful management and control jointly by all relevant bodies of this species to stop them from damaging water infrastructure.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the AGM will have a presentation from the Mink Project Team and that the Fenland Flora Team would be asked to attend SWADA on 7 May.</p> <p>4.6 Table of Actions;</p> <p><u>SDBC/20230124-01</u> <u>To investigate finding an insurance specialist in Drainage Boards.</u></p> <p>Recommended by ADA to retain our existing broker who is the top specialist. Complete.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20230724-04</u> <u>To report on water supply details to the Gravity site when known.</u></p> <p>On going</p> <p><u>SDBC 20240727-1</u> <u>To write to members not attending regularly</u></p> <p>The CEO confirmed he had written to some members but will write to the rest in due course.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210-01</u> <u>To ask at the next Full Board meetings if an afternoon/early evening tour of inspection would be suitable.</u></p> <p>On going to be done.</p> <p>Members to note that the April meeting dates have been changed.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -02</u> <u>Contact Wilkin Chapman re enforcement procedures</u></p> <p>The CEO confirmed he has contacted the solicitors. They are currently assisting the Board on a particular case and are likely to be the future choice. Complete.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -03</u> <u>The Clerk will write a paper re amalgamation and call an additional SDBC Management Committee meeting.</u></p> <p>Procedural one available now but business case to follow.</p>	<p><u>ACTION</u> <u>SDBC/20230124-01</u> <u>- complete</u></p> <p><u>ACTION</u> <u>SDBC/20230727-04</u> <u>- ongoing</u></p> <p><u>ACTION</u> <u>SDBC/20240724-02</u> <u>- ongoing</u></p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210-01</u></p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -02</u> <u>Completed</u></p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -03</u> <u>Ongoing</u></p>
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	<p><u>SDBC 20241210 -04</u>  <u>Write to those members not in attendance at the meeting of 10 December 2024 to ask them if they are happy to approve the proposed budget.</u></p> <p>Completed by Maggie Hammond (MH)</p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -05</u>  <u>Officers to find a suitable venue for the SDBC AGM .</u>  Completed. The Green at Wembdon.</p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -06</u>  <u>Write to those members not in attendance at the 10 December meeting to ask them if they are happy to approve the revised IT and Mobile Phone Policy</u></p> <p>Completed by Maggie Hammond (MH)</p>	<p><u>SDBC 20241210 -04</u>  <u>Completed</u></p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -05</u>  <u>Completed</u></p> <p><u>SDBC 20241210 -06</u>  <u>Completed</u></p>
<p>8. Options and processes for amalgamation</p>	<p>8.1 Colin Passmore (CP) asked that this agenda item be brought forward whilst Alistair Mead was still present.</p> <p>8.2 The Chair opened the debate by referring to the lack of a quorum for this meeting and the continuing low attendance at this and other meetings. The Boards rely on a core of enthusiastic members so one way to utilise this core membership would be for them to sit on an amalgamated board and for them to take an interest in matters across the whole wider board district. There are a large number of meetings in total and a degree of repetition occurs for members as well as staff. The Chair saw that discussion within the Boards was essential to gauge appetite and this is voluntary process.</p> <p>8.3 The CEO agreed that there are currently about 30 meetings a year that the staff have to prepare for and attend. This is a very early stage of discussions and agreed with the Chair over issues of multiple meetings and duplication of work. However he cautioned members that the reduction in the number of meetings going from 3 to a single amalgamated board would lead to a significant freeing up of officer time and resource to do additional work, more influencing and increased efficiencies and draw in additional resources but would not lead to significant cost savings. Officers will plan the process and assist the boards and members wherever possible.</p> <p>8.4 The Chair went on to say that there would have to be consultations with ratepayers.</p> <p>8.5 TB mentioned the example of the NFU changes to a regional organisation that occurred some years ago which did cause a loss of local interest. More remote makes it harder with engagement.</p> <p>TB made a number of suggestions to encourage travelling and attending board meetings of a larger board area. We needed ratepayers/people to have a reason to be a member. He suggested the possibility of</p>	

paying members. Members would be taking a role akin to Board Directors.

8.6 Roger Keen (RG) thought that the reduction in members/membership might lead to some loss of the local knowledge base and with a smaller number of members what security is that those members will attend in sufficient numbers.

8.7 The Chair reminded members of the changes that occurred to the Parrett amalgamation 20 years ago and the limited impact that it had on the operation of drainage. Attendance dwindled as members only attended on matters of very local (to them) interest. It was the reconstitution in 2018 with the 50% reduction in numbers of members that made him realise there were a small core of members that were enthusiastic and took a significant interest in the running of the board. The Chair reflected on the funding and prioritisation situation for the Environment Agency and saw that worsening for rural areas and that another body would need to step up and fill the void created by the reduction in maintenance funding in rural areas. He understands that De-maining is being discussed at national level again and sees this a better way of going forward as the overheads and controls with PSCAs are prohibitive.

8.8 Alan Franks (AF) said that he predicted the need for one drainage body across the county 7 or 8 years ago as he has witnessed the reduction in work programme in the Brue Valley and the increasing flood risk that is impacting the local farming industry. A smaller board with dedicated enthusiastic members to help improve conditions is the way forward.

8.9 Mike Stanton (MS) made two key points.

(a) what will be different on the ground with one board, it's the same group of ratepayers receiving the same service. It's the duty of the organisation to provide the services in the most cost-efficient way.

(b) Councillors for the new unitary council are extremely busy with meetings internally and at parish councils and they often have clashes of meeting that affect attendance. Less meetings would lead to less clashes and non-attendance.

Council amalgamation has resulted in greater savings than predicted however increasing social care liabilities has completely masked the financial savings.

8.10 Barrie Bryer (BB) was also concerned about loss of local knowledge and the increasing role for Moors Associations eroding IDB areas of interests.

Alistair Mead left the meeting at 15.55.

8.11 CP thought amalgamation is important for financial reasons as he believed that maintenance costs will rise as contractor's costs increase rapidly. Efficiencies and better working are required. He saw the financial constraints on the Councils as likely to limit future Special Levy increases.

8.12 The Chair reflected on the catchment meetings that were put in place at the last reorganisation to offer better contact with ratepayers. He also reflected on the mentality within some members of the farming community over the funding opportunities and its impact on normal farming conditions.

8.13 RK and AG pointed out that the ratio of elected to appointed members on a drainage board is set out by legislation. Boards have some discretion in the overall size of any proposed board. MS cautioned on having too large a board as large boards do not usually work well.

8.14 TB asked that officers come to the boards with information on the advantages and disadvantages of amalgamation in a report.

8.15 The CEO observed that one of the benefits of a Somerset wide board was to have more authority to influence. A larger organisation will have increased capability to undertake more both works and planning. IDBs locally and ADA are having some success with influencing the debate with politicians and government over funding and environmental matters and particularly the issue of the balance between capital and revenue spend. As a result of climate change impacts funding may well be forthcoming differently.

8.16 AG pointed out that the Agency seemed to have different legislation that resulted in their effort being focused entirely on the protection of people. The CEO explained that this is the result of limited budgets and although the protection of land can be worthwhile, the available funding is taken up by more beneficial activities like protecting people, property, businesses and infrastructure.

8.17 The CEO also recognised the concerns about loss local knowledge with reducing numbers of board members but it is always emphasised to new recruits that gaining local knowledge is key to their jobs. He also observed that members who might stand down will still be available to be consulted. The emphasis has always been on solving problems at local level by the Supervisors and he believed that problems and issues from members are not being raised with him very often. After the amalgamation in 2012 catchment meetings were initiated but interest diminished quite quickly with attendance reducing over the years. There can be similar initiatives again and the concept of surgeries in the office for members and ratepayers is one that has merits.

8.18 AG felt that amalgamation at this time might be viewed in the context of the troubles at Somerset Council. MS pointed out that the amalgamation of the 5 authorities had gone well with well in excess of the predicted £18M saving being achieved. The financial problems had occurred due to rapidly escalating costs of Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

8.19 The Chair suggested that the issue could be taken to the AGM on Monday 10<sup>th</sup>. March and possibly on to

**ACTION SDBC  
20250304 - 1**

	<p>the full boards after that. However he was keen to emphasise that this all needs to be done in a way that does not divide boards.</p> <p>His suggestion was put forward as a proposition by Wendy Welland which was seconded by Stuart Kingham All were in favour.</p>	<b>RESOLUTION 5</b>
5. Staffing	<p>(Continuing from earlier items 5.1 to 5.3 on page 2.)</p> <p>5.1 The CEO informed members that the new Senior Governance Officer will be starting on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March and is likely to be in attendance at the AGM that day.</p>	
7. Main River maintenance and funding	<p>7.1 The CEO informed members of some good financial news in that the North Somerset Board had been awarded £365k from Tranche 2 of the IDB Defra national funding for the refurbishment of Crossman’s Hatch. This is a scheme that the NSLIDB were planning to start shortly and which was going to put the Board under financial pressure. This was a good outcome for the Boards with Giles and CALM Engineering instrumental in gaining this funding.</p> <p>7.2 On main river work AG wished to express his thanks for the efficient way the Mark Yeo had been done by the team. The Chair commented that this and similar works are down to an appetite by this organisation to step in where Agency funding was not available. He applauded the initiative and saw it as a success story with the need to do further such work. The exercise should be the subject of an article in the ADA Gazette and wider exposure in the media.</p> <p>7.3 The CEO advised that the exercise had been raised with the local MP Sir Ashley Fox and can be placed in the annual newsletter. MS advised that if reported at the SRA meeting it may be picked up by the local press.</p> <p>7.4 The CEO also reported that the Agency were also using SRA Enhanced Maintenance funding for maintenance.</p> <p>With regards to the IDB SRA funded Parrett Dredging work for 2025/2026, it will have to be the subject of a market testing tender as the current contract with Van Oord has terminated. MS wished to see the benefits of enhanced maintenance work made very clear to communities.</p> <p>7.5 The Chair asked that a trial be undertaken on the effects on siltation of Parrett in channel reed cutting.</p> <p>7.6 BB advised that the rainfall totals at his property are the 3<sup>rd</sup> worst in 30-40 years and there has been limited flooding so far last winter.</p> <p>7.7 The CEO reported that the Brue Model was ready to be used for options investigation in the Brue Valley. He will be meeting with the Project Engineer to discuss options the IDB would like to see investigated.</p>	
11. A.O.B.	<p>11.1 The CEO has received a copy of the ADA response to the Environmental Audit Committee call for evidence which can be made available to members.</p>	

	<p>11.2 SK reported bad flooding in the Glastonbury Street road area resulting from bank deterioration.</p> <p>11.3 The CEO advised that the Brue Model would be able to investigate flood modelling on a catchment basis. The model runs from Highbridge Clyce to upstream of Glastonbury.</p> <p>AF observed that he did not believe just improved maintenance will cope with the additional flows resulting from climate change.</p> <p>11.4 Wendy Welland (WW) advised the meeting that she will be involved in Otter Surveys on 6 April and Beaver Surveys on 19 March and that she would ask all members to report sightings or these species alive or road kill to be reported to the office or her and she will pass on to the organising group for possible analysis. She also sends her apologies for the SDBC meeting on 22 July 2025</p> <p>11.5 The CEO will circulate the presentations from the ADA Environment Day.</p> <p>11.6 CEO to take copies of minutes to Chair for signing.</p>	<p><b>ACTION SDBC 20250304 - 2 ACTION SDBC 20250304 - 3 ACTION SDBC 20250304 - 4</b></p>
12. DONM	<p>12.1 The SDBC AGM is on 10 March 2025 at The Green at Wembdon</p> <p>12.2 There being no more items for discussion the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 16.45.</p>	

Annex:

A. SDBC – Table of Outstanding Actions

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

**ANNEX A TO  
SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES  
DATED 4 MARCH 2025**

**SDBC – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
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 - Ongoing
SDBC/20241210-03	Clerk to write a paper re amalgamation and call an 'Additional' SDBC Management Committee meeting	Clerk - Ongoing
SDBC/20250304 - 01	To prepare a report that investigates the advantages and disadvantages of amalgamation.	CEO
SDBC/20250304 - 02	Apologies from WW from SDBC meeting of 22 July 2025	Specialist Adviser
SDBC/20250304 - 03	Circulate copies of ADA Environment Day presentations	CEO
SDBC/20250304 - 04	Provide the Chair with fair copies of 3 previous meetings minutes for signing.	CEO