

## MINUTES OF THE PARRETT FINANCE AND WORKS SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2024

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

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. Apologies as per the above Attendance List. Unfortunately, the Clerk has got Covid.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1. Maggie Hammond (MH) reminded Members the January F&W minutes need to be signed because the last meeting was not quorate.  2.2 MH would also like to talk about the Chairmans allowance.	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. None	
4. Minutes of the Parrett F&W Meeting held on 04 June 2024	4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2024 were signed as a true and correct record  <b>Proposed by Tony Bradford and seconded Stuart Kingham "to sign the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting"</b> <b>All in favour</b>	<b>RESOLUTION 01</b>
5. Matters Arising	5.1. Tony Bradford said there is a phosphate meeting on the 4 November 2024 in Taunton and Phil Brewin has ask for himself and Colin to attend. Colin Passmore said there was a piece in the Sunday Times stating that agriculture is responsible for 68% of nutrient loads across all affected	

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>catchments but for sewage treatments it is 23%. There was discussion about phosphates with Tony Bradford saying all the samples were taken from raised water level areas with no flowing water or drainage and to get a fair picture they should test areas outside of raised water level areas.</p> <p><b>P/20240604-01</b> - To make the results of phosphate water testing available at the Full Board Meeting on 18 June 2024 – Ongoing</p> <p><b>P/20240604-02</b> – Include a % and accurate visual representation on the graph included within the Finance report. Maggie Hammond said next time there will be a % and the report will be more reflective of how big the various pots of money are.</p> <p><b>P/20240604-03</b> – Use contacts to investigate how other similar organisations invest money. This is ongoing</p>	
6. Health & Safety update	6.1. There is no update but this will be discussed at the Full Board meeting	
7. Finance Report	<p>7.1. MH said the external auditors are happy with the accounts but wanted to bring to the attention of the Board that there are a few policies which are out of date. MH is hoping to bring them to the January Full Board meeting.</p> <p>7.2. MH said the forecast based on information she had at the time of writing the budget was for the Consortium to have an underspend of £19k on a budget of £1.7 million. This underspend will come from salaries which is offset by an overspend in professional fees due to paying for CALM Engineering. Cllr Gwil Wren asked if there were any rules about how many percentage points the budget should be in by. MH said there are no targets and any underspend gets split across the three Boards based on the Consortium agreement as would any overspend. There was discussion about how much the EA precept would increase by with Tony Bradford saying when he was at the House of Commons they discussed special levy and how much Councils paid to Drainage Boards. The percentage in Somerset was very minuscule but other places are paying as much as 70% of their budget. MH said the percentage increase in the special levy forms part of their cap so putting the levy up by 5% impacts on savings the Council has to make.</p> <p>7.3. MH said the Parrett forecast an underspend of £45k. There is income coming in from the peat grant</p>	



	<p><b>All in favour</b></p> <p>7.7. It was mentioned that the reserves are looking healthy but Colin Passmore said there won't be an increase this year. MH agreed saying there needs to be a balance between ratepayers not paying enough so there is an overspend or paying too much so there is an underspend. The budget needs to be set to what the Board thinks it needs. Colin Passmore said a lot depends on renewing contractors contracts and asked MSW about to update them. MSW said there are three small areas coming up for renewal this year and a large area next year. Tony Bradford added there is also the situation with the EA to think about.</p>	
<p>8. 2024/25 Main River Maintenance and Water Injection Dredging Contract on the River Parrett</p>	<p>8.1. MSW updated Members saying the Board has issued instructions to JD Pope &amp; Sons to undertake 14.5 km of maintenance on the River Cary which hasn't been done for about 2/3 years. The Cary is overtopping and flooding adjacent farmland and water is struggling to get out of Somerton Moor area and back into the KSD. Colin Passmore asked what the budget was for undertaking this work and MSW said it will be done on an hourly rate at about £1.50 per metre. Colin Passmore said it will be about £20k and asked if the Board was allowed to instruct someone to do the work without competition. MH said they had asked contractors who would be available to do the work and also had the capacity to complete it within the timeframe. The only contractor to come forward was Pope's and they used to do the work for the EA years ago. The budget for the work is coming from an underspend on the maintenance budget. Colin Passmore said he received a call as people are not happy this work is being done and as it could set a precedent and there are many areas, possible more important not being maintained. Tony Bradford said the EA needs to have a better working relationship with the IDB as the money offered to them had not even been seen by the Finance Officer, Ian Hodges. Tony Bradford suggested holding the amount of funds used for the River Cary maintenance back from the EA precept money. Tony Bradford said he thought they should maintain the critical areas this year to give some breathing space to lobby someone from the Government to switch capital expenditure to the maintenance budget. There was discussion about MP's having no understanding of the situation with MH saying IDS is trying to get all the local MP's together for a meeting but it is proving hard. Tony Bradford said the EA will demain the areas they cannot maintain and the IDB will have to take over maintenance but the rates will have to increase to cover it. Colin Passmore asked</p>	

	<p>whether the IDB could get into trouble if it's not careful and would internal works alleviate the problem. MSW said there is so much water coming out of the Cary they would not be able to get a machine out there. Also, the Cary maintenance will help the IDB carry out their maintenance. The EA have been made aware it is a one off for this year and they will try to get SRA funding for maintenance next year. MH said in her opinion, if main rivers don't get maintained and there is more rain on already saturated ground there could be an awful flooding situation and what we are trying to do is stop us getting to this position by doing some work that we believe might make a difference to the ratepayers. The EA only look at houses and people when dealing with flooding situations not agricultural land and farmers. Cllr Anthony Betty said the IDB need to publicise that they are doing the work because the EA aren't. MH said a notice can be put in the newsletter which goes out with all drainage rate demands. MSW showed Members a video clip of the River Cary taken by Nick Lockyer the Area Supervisor. Colin asked for a proposal to take to the Full Board.</p> <p>There was discussion about whether you could withhold money from the precept and the terms of the PSCA. MH said if the forecast she showed Members at 7.3 above is correct this project can be afforded from the underspend but if the underspend is £0 and £20k has been paid out then the money can be replaced over several years by increasing drainage rates and the special levy.</p> <p><b>Proposed by Stuart Kingham and seconded by Cllr Norman Cavill “the work is to start as soon as possible in the event that the EA could not fund the maintenance of one of our main rivers therefore the IDB have decided as a one off to undertake the maintenance for one year only and to be reimbursed by withholding the amount spent on the precept in accordance with the PSCA”</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p> <p>8.2. MH said the Water Injection Dredging this year will cost in excess of £500k and this will be paid for by the IDB but claimed back from the SRA. This will require the Full Board to sign off as it is not within the scheme of delegations for the Chairman or the Clerk to sign off. Tony Bradford said the trial of the shoulder work was very good and critical work. Colin Passmore asked about the Sowy Banks and Tony Bradford said this will be done next year by CALM Engineering and there is budget for it.</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 04</b></p>
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	<p>8.3. MH discussed the precept from EA saying in recent years the precept has gone up by 2% but this year they are talking about putting it up by 5%. This will be an increase of £10k for the Parrett but this will not be set until the end of January 2025.</p> <p>8.4. MH updated Members on the Drainage Ratings System (DRS) saying it is currently supplied and supported by Water Management Alliance (WMA). WMA have advised that from April 2025 they will no longer support DRS. ADA have looked into developing a system but they don't have the expertise to do it. The WMA have developed a new system based on the old one and they have made it available to drainage boards at an increased cost. There are several options going forward but we do not want to lose all the information on the current DRS system.</p>	
<p>9. IDB Funding for Main River maintenance incl. PSCA schedule 3 and specification.</p>	<p>9.1. Tony Bradford said it looks like the ADA subscription with rise by 6.5% next year.</p> <p>9.2. Stuart Kingham asked how the maintenance and dredging was going on the River Parrett. MSW said routine maintenance is going ok despite the weather. He has no concerns. There will be a fuller update at the Full Board meeting and CALM can give an update on the dredging.</p> <p>9.3. Tony Bradford said there does not seem to be a very good job done with the maintenance on raised water level areas. Colin Passmore said it was discussed at the last meeting and contractors are saying where there are carrier rhynes through raised water level areas they are only being allowed to dip in the centre of the carrier when they really need to be properly dredged. MSW said there is a requirement to get a certain specification with the SSSI areas and if improvements are needed it will have to be reviewed. They discussed the benefits of dredging to the environment, the specifications of the SSSI area and delivery of environmental requirements regarding water voles. The Members agreed that they should discuss dredging of raised water levels as opposed to just a weed cut.</p> <p>9.4. Tony Bradford said the Area Supervisors need to report problems to the Board so they are aware. MSW said he can report back to IDS and RCK but there is an app that the Area Supervisors use to report issues. MSW updated Members on the two incidents in Axe Brue &amp; North Somerset saying appropriate measures have been taken.</p>	

10 Environment Agency Precept for 2025/2026	10.1 This item was discussed under item 8.3	
11. AOB	The Chairman thanked Matt and Maggie for standing in for the Clerk.	
12. DONM	The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.	

Annex:

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

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

**ANNEX A TO  
PARRETT F&W COMMITTEE MINUTES  
DATED 22 October 2024**

**PARRETT F&W MEETING – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
<b>P/20240604-01 -</b>	To make the results of phosphate water testing available at the Full Board Meeting on 18 June 2024 – Ongoing	Iain Sturdy - CEO
<b>P/20240604-03 –</b>	Use contacts to investigate how other similar organisations invest money. This is ongoing	Maggie Hammond -RFO Ongoing