

**MINUTES OF THE AXE BRUE FINANCE & WORKS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING  
02 JUNE 2025 10.30AM AT BRADBURY HOUSE, HIGHBRIDGE**

<b>Attendance:</b>			
<b>Elected Members:</b> Mr A Gilling (C) Mr D Tratt Mr M Watts Mrs L Scott	<b>Appointed Members:</b> Mr B Filmer Mr J Cousins	<b>Officers:</b> Mrs M Hammond Mr I Sturdy Mrs K Carleton	<b>Public:</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>			
<b>Non-Attendance:</b>			
	Clr N Cottle Clr R Keen		

<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Detail:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. The meeting started at 10.37 1.2. Apologies as per the above Attendance List.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1. No additional items requested.	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. None made.	
4. Previous Meeting Minutes	4.1 'That the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting held 13 January 2025'  <b>Proposed: Liz Scott</b> <b>Seconded: David Tratt</b> <b>All in favour</b>	<b>RESOLUTION 01</b>
5. Matters Arising	5.1 The Chair went through the minutes from the last meeting page by page.  5.2 Martin Watts (MW) referred to Page 3, Paragraph 3 asked if Iain Sturdy (IDS) had had any luck with Mr Hooper.  John Cousins (JC) entered the meeting at 10.39  IDS referred MW back to the minutes and felt the matter had been resolved.  MW stated that he has heard that Mr Hooper now has a financial officer/scrutineer to check his spending.	

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>IDS explained that if there was any suspicion of misspending, an officer would be suspended. Spending is always scrutinised, as it is in our and any other public body.</p> <p>The Chair stated that MW's comment is hearsay which is not allowed.</p> <p>IDS confirmed that he will not approach the EA on the matter without evidence as it could be viewed as libel, and he would need to know where the alleged information came from.</p> <p>MW said he would not disclose this.</p> <p>The Chair stated that any accusation needs to be backed up with evidence, and advised MW not to be guided by gossip.</p> <p>IDS concluded that if MW is asking what the precept was spent on, then we already have that information and will summarise it for the board meeting.</p> <p><b>5.3 Review of Actions</b></p> <p><b>AB/20230116-01</b> Margaret Hammond (MH) advised this is still ongoing, but she will be able to dedicate more time to it once this year's accounts are done.</p> <p><b>AB/2024102-01</b> MH advised that unless we are told about a change of land use, we don't know. We do talk to Area Supervisors and deal with changes as we find out about them.</p> <p>LS asked if we are cross referenced on planning notifications.</p> <p>MH advised that we do not as we are not a statutory consultee.</p> <p>LS asked if this meant we may be losing revenue.</p> <p>IDS explained with the split between the drainage rate and special levy, the risk is of the ratepayer paying more than they should. A review of the area is needed using a GIS satellite imagery analysis to back up and keep up to date.</p> <p>There was discussion around land in the peat area that has gone into special levy, but has not been dug. Land goes into special levy as soon as it is no longer being used as agricultural and is developed. Once it has gone into special levy, it stays there.</p> <p>MW queried whether land opposite Glastonbury Rugby Club (Lowerside Road) is agricultural or special levy.</p> <p>IDS advised that if MW can show officers the land in question on a map, it can be checked and action taken if needed.</p> <p>MW asked if it is possible to provide Area Supervisors with maps of special levy areas for them to check and advise of any changes.</p> <p>Bob Filmer (BF) asked if there is a reporting mechanism, and if not could this be it.</p> <p>MH noted that we currently ask Area Supervisors to check when we are notified of a change. It may be possible to speak to GIS and ask for a map overlay to help them.</p> <p>LS advised she had recently sold land, but has still received rate demands.</p> <p>IDS/MH explained it is up to the landowner to advise us of any land changes. If they don't then it will be picked up when the next rate demands are sent.</p>	<p><b>ACTION – ONGOING</b></p> <p><b>ACTION AB/20250602-01</b></p>
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	<p><b>AB/20250113-01</b> MH has been contacted by Tradition UK money brokers. They currently act for other IDB's and sent information regarding investments which achieved over 4% interest. MH felt it may be useful to have some small amounts in higher interest accounts for the short term. After the annual accounts are completed she will contact Tradition, and some of the IDB's who have used them previously.</p> <p>IDS noted that this matter also links to the Investment Committee discussions around ethical investment.</p> <p>JC advised that Glastonbury Town Council have got over this hurdle and advised that Conor Ogilvie-Davidson (Town Clerk) is happy to advise/assist.</p> <p>MH/IDS thanked JC for this.</p> <p>MW asked about Triple A rated investments.</p> <p>Officers clarified that our policy states that we can only use Triple A rated providers. Most building societies are triple A rated. If the board decide to ask officers to invest outside the policy, it would be the Boards responsibility.</p> <p>Discussion around Flagstone, a platform previously considered, concluded that it is not triple A rated, so would not be considered.</p> <p><b>AB/20250113-02</b> M Wall tried to meet with MW regarding Rousell works, but he was busy. He will try again. Carry forward.</p>	<p><b>ACTION</b> - <b>ONGOING</b></p>
<p>6. Finance Report (RFO)</p>	<p>6.1 MH advised that the bank was reconciled to 30/04/25 and all is as expected with no issues.</p> <p>6.2 She then summarised her Finance Report (enclosure 2, circulated with Agenda); the Internal Audit Report (shared in meeting); and the end of year report including Annual Governance &amp; Accountability Return (AGAR) (Enclosure 3).</p> <p>6.2.1 Finance Report Income: MH talked to every income line within the accounts. MW asked how long the new higher interest accounts had been running for. MH advised 4 months.</p> <p>6.2.2 Finance Report Expenditure: MH talked to every expenditure line within the accounts and gave a breakdown of the maintenance figure. DT asked for clarification on rechargeable work, as this is not a set figure that can be budgeted for.</p> <p>MH advised that this is in the accounts under routine works. We sometimes know, but not always.</p> <p>DT asked if this is budgeted for in consultation with Highways.</p> <p>IDS advised it has been problematic to access channels. We have changed the equipment we use which will impact on time/cost. It will always be variable. The budget is set in advance, but we know it will never match.</p> <p>DT asked how the rate is set and if it is by tender or using the same contractor. IDS to check</p> <p>BF asked for clarification how routine and additional works are shown in the accounts.</p> <p>MH showed where non-routine works appear as unbudgeted items.</p>	<p><b>ACTION</b> <b>AB/20250602-02</b></p>

	<p><b>6.2.4 Internal Auditors Report:</b> MH provided an update on the report supplied at the meeting which showed reasonable assurance of compliance. The areas requiring action were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Risk Register needs to be reviewed regularly. This will be discussed at the June Board meeting, but has not been in the last financial year.</li> <li>• Policies need updating.</li> </ul> <p>Following discussion, IDS noted that the Auditors don't read the policies themselves. The finding is that they haven't been reviewed, but this does not mean that they are insufficient or out of date. It is acknowledged that many policies have unnecessarily short review dates. The goal is to have them reviewed by the end of the financial year, including setting realistic review dates. Nick Stevens is working on them currently but nothing is giving us cause for concern. The situation is the same for all 3 boards as the policies are largely identical.</p> <p>The Risk Register wasn't raised at last year's Board Meetings, we will ensure we do better this year. IDS will look at this and identify changes and risks, particularly around funding from ADA/Defra. In reality we have been managing risk, but it is not specifically labelled in meetings, other than under H&amp;S incidents which would show a pattern.</p> <p>Going forward we will review the Risk Register and update at Board Meetings. This will be picked up by the Senior Governance Officer and Nick Stevens.</p> <p><b>6.2.5 AGAR Report:</b> MH went through the AGAR Governance Statement with members, and detailed the 8 questions explaining how we meet the criteria for each.</p> <p>Q7 asks if appropriate action has been taken on matters raised in the previous audit.</p> <p>The Board and officers discussed whether the plan produced to review policies is enough to respond yes, and if there is a deadline for actions. The discussion concluded that we have responded to the recommendation, produced a plan to update policies and review dates and shared it with the Board. Action is in progress and ongoing, with an achievable deadline of 31/03/2026 (end of financial year) to complete the exercise. With these assurances the committee are happy to respond yes to Q7.</p> <p>MH then went through Section 2 of the AGAR and clarified all figures to the committee.</p> <p><b>RESOLUTIONS:</b></p> <p><i>The Axe Brue Finance &amp; Works Committee recommends approval of the accounts as presented to the Full Board.</i>  <b>Proposed: Bob Filmer</b>  <b>Seconded: David Tratt</b>  <b>All in Favour</b></p> <p><i>The Axe Brue Finance &amp; Works Committee recommends the questions in Section 1 of the AGAR are all answered as Yes to the Full Board.</i>  <b>Proposed: Jon Cousins</b>  <b>Seconded: Bob Filmer</b>  <b>All in Favour</b></p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 02</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 03</b></p>
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<p>7. Property Committee</p>	<p>7.1 The Axe Brue Board own Bradbury House which is presenting continuing maintenance challenges. There is a programme of running repairs and maintenance, but there are specific issues with the roof, drains and toilets which need longer term solutions. A recent subcommittee inspected the building in detail and have recommended setting a reserve to cover the most important issues, whilst obtaining a commercial valuation in parallel.</p> <p>7.2 Committee members discussed roof access and a scaffold/pavement licence to carry out works. There was disappointment that the roof works carried out when the building was renovated on purchase had not withstood the test of time. Despite regular cleaning of guttering and troughs, the membrane is in a poor condition and access is very difficult. There are also issues with drainage and the external window frames are in a poor condition.</p> <p>7.3 The subcommittee clarified priority areas and set a reserve to recommend to the Full Board that they feel will be sufficient to bring the building back to a good standard, preferably using a single contractor for accountability. The proposed reserve amount covers a longer list of works than the main issues brought to Finance &amp; Works. This list will be shared with the Committee</p> <p>There was discussion around the building's fitness for purpose, which had also been discussed at the subcommittee.</p> <p>Maggie Hammond will check if previous work on the roof is guaranteed.</p> <p>There was discussion around a legal requirement to replace internal electrics. This has never been a requirement of any building's insurance, but will be checked.</p>	<p><b>ACTION AB/20250602-04</b></p> <p><b>ACTION AB/20250602-05</b></p> <p><b>ACTION AB/20250602-06</b></p>
<p>8. Working from the highway</p>	<p>8.1 Following an incident involving a contractor whilst working from a highway, concerns have been raised and investigated. We work in accordance with Chapter 8 regulations on temporary mobile works. We have taken advice from the two local authorities to confirm what is acceptable.</p> <p>8.2 There will probably be a change to our safe system of work involving preparation and signage as well as some requirement for additional labour. This will not be carried out by IDB staff, it will be for the contractor to provide and may incur additional cost for the Boards.</p>	

	<p>IDB staff will be there to check contractors are complying. Matt Wall (MWA) is currently mapping where may be affected to identify to contractors.</p> <p>8.3 There was discussion around the responsibility of roadside watercourses. It is riparian as it is not benefitting the road.</p> <p>IDS clarified that as a public authority, we would be liable if someone is harmed. We mitigate this by working within all regulations and good practice</p>	
9. EA Main River Maintenance Programme	<p>9.1 IDS confirmed that we have received a list from the EA of what will be maintained this year, but this did not include all watercourses. He has gone back to the EA and requested mapping of what will/won't be done. Usually we work around and adapt, but we do need to make sure that the consequences of not maintaining main rivers are understood. The IDB is already having difficulty moving water to where it is needed. We have previously carried out works under PSCA's using money from the Flood Recovery Fund, but this is not available this year. This means if the IDB want to carry out work on any areas not being maintained by the EA, it may have to come from reserves or a rate increase. We are awaiting clarity and mapping from the EA in the meantime, and will add the matter to the Risk Register</p> <p>9.2 There was discussion around the precept. It was concluded that less maintenance would happen if it was withheld. The EA focus is on their assets and legal obligations.</p> <p>9.3 The committee talked about the SRA. Their resource is fixed and is mainly spent on main rivers and dredging. They can't pick up the shortfall.</p> <p>9.4 Members then discussed why Defra are not fully funding. IDS explained that previous flood recovery funds were not maintenance, they were restorative works. It was felt that Somerset Council should be aware of the reality. The Consortium is engaging with local MP's (who are on board but their ability to influence is limited), as well as the South Somerset Flood Forum.</p> <p>9.5 The Consortium are trying to find out from local EA staff when they will be promoting capital schemes. We have also asked via ADA/RFCC for information on asset condition for balance. There is some interesting information from the Brue modelling on conveyance and bank height, peak flow and duration which is helping with understanding.</p> <p>9.6 These issues are being raised with the committee for awareness. The Board may wish to contribute or carry out main river works within our capability/capacity.</p>	<b>ACTION AB/20250602-07</b>
10. Any Other Business	<p>10.1 JS asked if Ofwat have confirmed the construction of the second Cheddar reservoir. IDS advised we have been consulted. Katy Carleton advised that Stantec will be presenting at the Full Board meeting on 16 June. The meeting closed at 13.04</p>	
11. Date of Next Meeting	<p>Monday 16 June 2025 at 10.30 Full Board Meeting Monday 20 October 2025 at 10.30 Finance &amp; Works Subcommittee</p>	

**ANNEX A TO  
AXE BRUE F&W COMMITTEE MINUTES  
DATED 02 JUNE 2025**

**AXE BRUE F&W MEETING – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
<b>AB/20230116-01</b>	Arrange a committee to discuss investments	MH - Ongoing
<b>AB/20250602-01</b>	MW to advise location of land opposite Glastonbury Rugby Club (Lowerside Road) so that officers can check if it is agricultural or special levy.	MH/MW
<b>AB/20250113-02</b>	M Wall to try again to meet with MW regarding Rousell works.	MW
<b>AB/20250602-02</b>	IDS to check how the rate for rechargeable work is set (by tender or using the same contractor?)	IDS
<b>AB/20250602-03</b>	To agree a new permanent counter-signatory at the next board meeting	MH
<b>AB/20250602-04</b>	Share full list of works identified by Property Subcommittee with other members	MH/IDS
<b>AB/20250602-05</b>	Check if work previously done on roof is guaranteed	MH
<b>AB/20250602-06</b>	Check any legal requirement to replace building electrics	
<b>AB/20250602-07</b>	Add to risk register potential for additional costs/rate increases following reduced EA river maintenance	IDS