

**MINUTES OF PARRETT FINANCE & WORKS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
21 OCTOBER 2025 AT 14.00 AT BRADBURY HOUSE, HIGHBRIDGE**

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr T Bradford Cllr A Betty Mr J Winslade	Appointed Members: Cllr M Caswell Mr S Kingham Cllr G Wren Cllr N Cavill	Officers: Mrs M Hammond Mr I Sturdy Mrs K Carleton Mrs C Murray	Public:
Apologies:			
Mr C Passmore (C)	Cllr M Stanton		

Agenda Item:	Description:	
1. Attendance and Apologies	The meeting started at 14.09 That Tony Bradford to Chair the Committee in Colin Passmore's absence. Proposed: Norman Cavill Seconded: James Winslade All in Favour Tony Bradford (TB) took the chair James Winslade (JW) advised he will need to leave early. Attendance & apologies as above	RESOLUTION 01
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1 Maggie Hammond (MH) highlighted plans supplied by the Rating Officer and asked members to look at these after the meeting to assist with any land unidentified. 2.2 IDS gave an election update: the Certificate of the Returning Officer is on the website. 2.3 Signing of WID contract and a Grant agreement to sign for SRA on KSD banks. These need other authorisations. Will pick up under AOB.	
3. Declarations of Interest	TB has an interest in the KSD Banks.	
4. Previous Meeting Minutes	<i>That the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting on 3 June 2025</i> Proposed: Stuart Kingham Seconded: Mike Caswell All in favour Gwil Wren abstained as not present.	RESOLUTION 02
5. Matters Arising	P2 IDS confirmed we awarded the tender for KSD banks and works are now completed. We may retain the outstanding balance for defects correction, then return the balance to the SRA. Review of Actions: P/20250104-01 IDS to check details of damaged structure on Mark Moor. Parapet reported to Highways and EA as it was outside Board area. P/20250603-01 Discuss padlock costs and type with Ops Manager. MH	

	<p>has spoken to Rob King who confirmed 2 types of padlock are used. They are still cuttable, although we use the best quality possible as they are more offputting and surveillance cameras where there are recurrent issues.</p> <p>Chair noted they are accessing to alter water levels rather than steal.</p> <p>Stuart Kingham (SK) asked about using security paint to identify culprits. IDS to consider.</p>	
<p>6. Finance Report (RFO)</p>	<p>6.1 MH advised that the bank was reconciled to 30/09/25 and all is as expected with no issues Stuart Kingham (SK) will inspect and countersign these.</p> <p>6.2 MH summarised her Finance Report (enclosure 2, circulated with Agenda).</p> <p>6.2.1 External Auditors Report: (Enclosure 3) We have received the external auditor opinion on our AGAR return. They have suggested we should have answered no to 2 of the questions in Appendix A. Section 2 and we have had no opportunity to respond before the deadline. The queries related to the Risk Register which they have suggested was not considered in the financial year. We are comfortable that the Boards discussed risk before answering the Audit questions and have also discussed risk throughout the year. We are happy that risks have been managed. The other item was our response to the Audit Report recommendations. We are comfortable that we implemented action and prioritised it. Their comments make no change to the figures and MH has no concerns as RFO. Members agreed officers should respond to the findings for the record.</p> <p>6.2.2 Appendix B – SDBC Position: MH explained the SDBC position/forecast as per her Finance Report. She clarified that the variance of £81k (favourable) is mainly due to staff vacancies as the budget is set with all posts filled. There was also an underspend on premises due to warmer weather. The overspend on office admin is due to licences as we have moved to Office 365 with some of it for 3 years of licences which will show as a prepayment at the end of year. Postage is over budget due to the letters sent to ratepayers on EA maintenance. Professional fees on Calm Engineering are an overspend as they are covering vacancies. Insurance has also gone up. SK asked if the figures include NI increases. MH confirmed they do. Gwil Wren (GW) queried the difficulty in recruiting engineers and asked if we will we change our policy, and if the amount we can pay is an issue. IDS felt we need in-house engineering to identify, scrutinise and oversee. The demand is likely to increase, and a good model would be a combination of this and external resource. There are lots of engineers and lots of demand for them in large local infrastructure projects. We need particular skills and would also like some experience if possible. The Chair noted that we are lucky to have Calm and wondered if we could ask them to expand or help us recruit. IDS noted that Calm are 2 people and use a network of people that they bring in to deliver on projects. Mike Caswell (MC) asked that the meeting return to topic on finance not recruitment.</p> <p>6.2.3 Appendix C – Parrett Position (Enclosure 5) MH took the Committee through her report showing the position to the</p>	<p>ACTION P/20251021-01</p>

	<p>end of September. The adverse variance of £342k is mostly SRA work where claims are put in quarterly which is a timing difference and no cause for concern. Others are maintenance waiting for invoices. Year-end forecast shows a smaller adverse variance, but once you take the SRA work out of the equation it is a positive. The bank interest is over budget.</p> <p>The outstanding drainage rates position is just over £20k, which is more than last year. This is possibly due to EA maintenance withdrawal, but is creeping up and causing some concern. GW queried the costs of pursuing small amounts. MH advised the costs are added to the ratepayer bills. SK noted it is also a deterrent for the future. Anthony Betty (AB) asked if we have taken people to court previously and did we get all the money. MH advised we have and the bailiffs can't always find the ratepayer, but in these cases we can ask the Magistrate to issue an arrest warrant.</p> <p>The Parrett IDB approves the level for taking to court to be £50 Proposed: Stuart Kingham Seconded: Mike Caswell All in favour</p> <p>The Parrett IDB Finance & Works Committee recommends to Full Board that the Governance Officer, RFO and Clerk be given authority to instigate proceedings for the recovery of arrears of drainage rates and that the Chairman sign and seal a certificate to confirm this. Proposed: Gwil Wren Seconded: Anthony Betty All in favour</p> <p>MH then provided an update on current investments. Very little remains in the current account and most is in the 95 day and deposit accounts and earning well.</p> <p>6.3 Appendix D – Write-off Paper MH explained that a gentleman has contacted the Ratings Assistant to discuss his mother's drainage rate account, which has been paid in full. His mother has been moved to a nursing home and he has been going through her correspondence. He has asked that the drainage rates be repaid to his mother as the land in question should form part of the Special Levy. It is normal practice to take land into special levy, when it is correct to do so, in the year we are advised of the change and not to backdate the change. The gentleman has asked us to backdate the at a cost of £328.67 to the Board. The land in question is in Westonzoyland and is 0.719 acres. The Management team have reviewed historic maps of the parcel of land in question, and it appears that this is a garden attached to the property and should therefore be part of the special levy and not drainage rates. Under the Scheme of Delegation item 5.9, approval of any write-off of rates over £20, and any material rating amendment or exemption is a matter reserved for the Full Board. MH suggested that the Committee could recommend that the Parrett IDB Full Board writes off £328.67 of drainage rates, and approves a de minimis of £500 be set for the refund of paid drainage rates when land</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 3</p> <p>RESOLUTION 4</p>
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	<p>should have been in Special Levy and the Board had not been notified.</p> <p>Committee members discussed the matter and would like more clarification on the size of the garden and what we classify as a garden and if there is any historic record of planning to change from agricultural to Special Levy.</p> <p>MH will look at size of the plot and area, and will see how far back she can look to try and ascertain when the use changed.</p> <p>IDS suggested we will bring the paper back to Full Board with more information.</p> <p>GW suggested a de minimis should be administratively feasible.</p> <p>The Chair noted there is consensus that the Committee are happy with the recommendations but it needs to go to Full Board.</p> <p>The Chair and Committee members thanked MH for her report.</p>	<p>ACTION P/20251021-02</p>
<p>7. IDB Funding for Main River Maintenance</p>	<p>The current position is that no provision has been made.</p> <p>All our efforts this year have been focused on engaging with the agency and working with ADA/SWADA.</p> <p>ADA Branch Chairs are meeting on 29 October which will be followed by a meeting with Minister Hardy in Lincolnshire on 30 October. IDS and the SDBC Chair have been invited to attend both.</p> <p>The Chair expressed his dissatisfaction with ADA lack of proactivity on the matter and feels they have dropped the ball. So far the EA have not even maintained the rivers still in programme.</p> <p>GW noted the unique position of having the EA, IDB's and the SRA in Somerset. He is concerned the SRA may be expected to carry out some of this EA work.</p> <p>IDS explained the SRA was established to fix the lack of maintenance and capital maintenance funding. SRA work has moved away from main rivers since its inception. It is a model across the country is that there is not enough money and what is there is being used in the most impactful areas (towns, cities, infrastructure). We are trying to highlight the idiocy of neglecting existing assets and rivers to build new assets. He believes that the funding will be expected to come from local taxation.</p> <p>AB expressed concern about the response his office received from the minister which did not address anything and appeared to be copied from Wikipedia. They have requested a proper response.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the 2014 floods have been followed by 20 years of no maintenance. The SRA was set up to raise money for maintenance over and above what EA couldn't afford to do. The SRA can only provide funding, the Council don't have the expertise. Only the IDB's can do this work. There is talk of de-maining, but we can only take river work on if there is sufficient funding and rivers are passed over in a good condition to go forward.</p> <p>MC noted that SRA are no longer prepared to meet David Cameron's promise to never let flooding happen again. The EA are pushing their responsibility onto riparian owners. He feels funding needs to be passed to the IDB's.</p> <p>The Chair feels that Landscape Recovery and wildlife schemes need to be pushing the same message on maintenance.</p> <p>Members agreed and noted that all habitats were lost in the 2014 flooding.</p> <p>IDS concluded that we must not be left with an unachievable burden.</p>	
<p>8. Any Other Business</p>	<p>8.1 Election update: the new Board is in place for 1st November. All districts were uncontested, and there are 2 vacancies which we can elect into the board in year. Cannington and Langport need representation.</p>	

	<p>The Chair would like to update election forms as he feels they are off-putting.</p> <p>8.2 There are 2 documents requiring Chair and Vice Chair signatures: the grant agreement for KSD banks, and the Van Oord and WM Plant for the WID contract.</p>	
<p>9. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>Full Board Meeting Tues 4 November at 14.00 Finance & Works Tues 13 January 2026 at 14.00 Consortium Office Charity Day: Thurs 6 November 2025, in aid of The Royal British Legion. All welcome.</p> <p>Chair thanked members for attending The meeting closed at 16.37</p>	

PARRETT F&W MEETING – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
P/20251021-01	Officers to respond to the Auditors to note our disappointment so that it is on the record	MH
P/20251021-02	Investigate land at Westonzoyland for change of use to inform FB re write-off	MH