

**MINUTES OF THE SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE, 33-34
MARKET STREET, HIGHBRIDGE ON TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2025 14.30**

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Tim Bush Tony Bradford (C) Colin Passmore Alan Franks Anthony Dowden Roger Keen Wendy Welland	Appointed Members Cllr Mike Stanton Cllr Peter Burden Town Cllr Roger Keen	Officers: Katy Carleton Mrs M Hammond	Public:
Apologies:			
Rebecca Horsington James Winslade Andrew Gilling	Stuart Kingham Cllr Alistair Hendry Cllr Peter Clayton	Iain Sturdy (CEO)	
Non-Attendance:			

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	The meeting started at 14.31. The Chair congratulated Alan Franks for his appearance on Countryfile. Attendance & apologies as per above. The Chair passed on apologies from Iain Sturdy who is travelling to present at an APPG. He also advised that Innes Thompson attended a Flood Conference in Hull with Caroline Douglas.	
2. Declarations of Interest	None.	
3. Approval of Minutes	“the minutes of the SDBC Management Committee meeting held on 22 July 2025 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held”. PROPOSED: Peter Burden SECONDED: Roger Keen All in favour The Chair signed the minutes	RESOLUTION 01
4. Matters Arising & Updates	SDBC/20241210-03 Amalgamation has been covered in recent meetings. There is a paper in progress but not ready to present. SDBC20250722-01 Send get-well card to MH. Complete SDBC20250722-02 Circulate ADA Environment Day presentations to Board members. To check with PB. The chair felt there should be some progress on the initiatives covered. SDBC20250722-03 Update Staff Handbook to reflect Neonatal Care Leave Entitlement. This has been drafted. SDBC20250722-04 Strongly worded letters to Natural England and the EA about the lack of consultation, and the environmental impacts. Completed	

	<p>SDBC20250722-05 MW to assess and highlight across all 3 boards what would give most short-term benefit in terms of critical works, and provide a cost as a one-off exercise. Overtaken by events.</p> <p>SDBC20250722-06 Write to ADA/Innes asking them to apply pressure nationally. Completed</p> <p>SDBC20250722-07 To pursue non-party MP discussions on flood risk further. APPG meeting is taking place today.</p> <p>SDBC20250722-08 To make contact with Sarah Dyke – completed. She has also invited Emma Hardy to visit in the spring.</p> <p>SDBC20250722-09 Report to EA re unsafe activity at tilting weir in Rooksbridge. Completed</p>	
5. Governance	<p>Policies Update: It is anticipated that 12 policies will be considered at the January 2026 Full Board meetings, this will also consider review periods. This means that 9 policies may not be ready for consideration.</p> <p>Health & Safety: The H&S Officer vacancy needs to be considered and IDS is pursuing. Members have concerns that the work is not being covered and suggested external resource until the role is filled. Peter Burden (PB) feels we should be guided by IDS. MH to pursue with IDS and report back to the January board.</p> <p>Alan Franks (AF) mentioned working from the roads. He feels ratepayers are upset at some areas not being cleaned, and that it needs sorting quickly.</p> <p>The Chair noted that responsibility lies with the contractor to arrange their own H&S. It will be discussed at individual Board meetings.</p> <p>The Chair explained that Matt Wall (MW) will join at the end of the meeting to cover this matter.</p> <p>Risk Update: this will be postponed to the next meeting, however it was discussed at recent Board meetings. The newest and escalating risk is EA withdrawal.</p>	
6. EA Maintenance update	<p>The Chair noted this has already been updated on and covered current action/situation.</p> <p>Peter Burden (PB) noted that maintenance on a watercourse in Clevedon has been carried out where the impact is in the town centre.</p> <p>The Chair noted an announcement in Fridays Farmers Weekly, noting a clause that has been put in place on 20 year landscape recovery schemes allowing funding to be withdrawn with 12 months notice.</p>	
7. SDBC Finance Report	<p>MH updated that all Bank Statements are Reconciled up to and including 14 November with all as expected.</p> <p>MH then went onto her End-of-Year Forecast. The Forecast year end position shows a 203k surplus, mainly within salaries due to staff vacancies. Some of this budget is being used for the services of Calm Engineering. MH reiterated this is only a forecast and subject to change.</p> <p>Anthony Dowden (AD) asked if there is a budget for consultants. MH advised their cost is being covered using the budget for salaries.</p> <p>Members discussed employed H&S staff versus a contractor. The Chair advised either will have to comply with the same policies and standards. MH agreed and noted our H&S Policy applies to all staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Chair explained that MH has called the Board Chairs together to talk about budgets prior to F&W in January and suggested H&S could also be highlighted at the same time.</p> <p>Peter Burden (PB) highlighted the difference between the policy and the processes.</p> <p>AD asked who owns the vehicles. MH advised they are registered to the Axe Brue, and owned by SDBC. They are a depreciating asset. Maggie will show these in the next set of figures.</p>	<p>ACTION SDBC/202612 09-01</p>

Tim Bush noted overspend on consultancy fees. MH advised these costs are paid in advance and will be accounted for at the year-end and some costs need to be moved which relate to Calm Engineering, so they show on a different row for transparency. Calm Engineering are funded via the staff cost underspend.
Any underspend at the year-end will be distributed to the three boards based on the Consortium Agreement.

Call-out and Standby (Enclosure 4)

MH referred to a paper circulated in meeting explaining standby allowances for Area Supervisors and Deputies. These allowances were introduced in 2023/4 following a benchmarking exercise and are based on the White Book payment conditions from ADA They have not been reviewed or increased since. Staff have requested that they be reviewed. We follow Somerset Council payscales and annual leave entitlement but not other allowances. If we look to apply the same percentages as increases as per the Council allowances, they have increased a little. It is a flat standby rate, and is a one-off payment.

The management Committee recommend to pay the proposed new rate for allowances from April 2026, and to then consider and increase in line with the local government pay award for the future.

Proposer: Roger Keen

Second: Wendy Welland

All in favour

*****Confidential Session*****

MH re-entered the meeting at 15.32

Approval of Consortium Budget for FY 2026/2027 (Enclosure 2&3)

New figures circulated at the beginning of the meeting. There has been a significant change to the budget issued with the calling notice. Every 3 years the pension fund is required to have an actuarial valuation. The Local Government Pension employer contribution has been recalculated after the Actuary has finished his work. The small scheduled bodies pool contributions will decrease from 22.3% to 17.9%. The legal documents will not be issued until the last week of March 2026. There is a very small risk that the percentage increase could change, however recent experience is that these do not change. The change in using these revised figures is an increase to the Boards of 3.76% from 6.67%. This is the only change.

To approve the SDBC Budget for 2025/2026

Proposed: Roger Keen

Seconded: Peter Burden

All in favour

MH then presented the Plan B Budget which was produced to illustrate a scenario where the Boards pick up some main river works previously carried out by the EA work. It was suggested to budget based on using Calm Engineering to prepare the work and then using the salaries budget to employ staff to cover additional works. This would show a 10.29% increase (accounting for change in salaries). It was reiterated that this is without additional government funding. The Chair felt this should only come into place if funding were given from central government.

MH advised that the upcoming Full Board meetings will be shown Plan A and Plan B budgets.

AF asked what would be the cost. MH advised this could be up to a 40% increase in drainage rates, but funds would be raised through rates and special levy. This is just an estimate at this time. If we could retain and

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	<p>ringfence existing precept funding that we pay to the EA, this would bolster our ability to carry out the works but would require a change in legislation.</p> <p>We are lucky in having the SRA as a source of funding which no other county has.</p> <p>AD noted that the SRA is also paid for by Council Tax. Could we ask for this funding directly.</p> <p>MS noted that the SRA perspective is that the IDB has done work at less than a quarter of the EA proposed cost and find it is much more efficient to use the IDB. The EA haven't applied for funding this year as they know it will cost too much. If IDB's can be staffed and resourced it is a better situation.</p> <p>After the recent SWADA meeting the Chair and IDS met with Piers Hooper and Ross Edwards to look at how to take this forward locally. They want to meet asap to find a solution and trial.</p>	
8. Meetings Calendar	<p>The Calendar for Board, SDBC and SWADA meetings for 2026/27 including SDBC AGM was agreed.</p> <p>Members agreed that they would like to hold the SDBC AGM Junction 24. To book.</p>	ACTION SDBC/202612 09-02
9. Staff Update	<p>There is a new Receptionist/Admin Assistant Vicky Ford who is fitting in well.</p> <p>The new Deputy Area Supervisor for North Somerset Daniel Smith started yesterday.</p>	
10. Website Improvements	<p>MH showed members the new website which is nearly ready to go live, just awaiting a few updates. She would like it to go live before end of financial year.</p>	
11. Any Other Business	<p>See notes below on working from the highway.</p>	
12. Date of Next Meetings	<p>Dates of next meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDBC AGM: Tuesday 10 March 2026 Junction 24 • SDBC Management Committee: Tuesday June 2026 • The Chair thanked members for their attendance • Meeting closed at 16.35 	

CHAIRMAN.....DATE

ANNEX A TO

**SDBC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
DATED 9 DECEMBER 2025**

SDBC – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
SDBC/20261209-01	To raise members concern over lack of in-house H&S resource during Chairs meeting re budget setting	MH
SDBC/20261209-02	Book Junction 24 for SDBC AGM	KC

Additional Discussion on Working from the Highways:

The Chair noted that there are concerns regarding maintenance which needs to be done from the roadside which has been delayed in some places due to health & safety concerns. Some maintenance has not yet taken place and this is holding up water.

Roger Keen left at 16.04.
M Wall joined the meeting

Matt Wall confirmed that the Boards and the Contractors hold joint responsibility for delivering works safely. He has just met with North Somerset Council who are slightly more demanding than Somerset Council. As a minimum standard we must comply with both. North Somerset are asking for a Section 171 licence and the insurance details of the contractor, who must apply for the licence.

Colin Passmore disagreed and felt everything is driving costs up and thought we should keep it simple. If Matt gives him details of the differences, Peter Burden will take the issue to North Somerset and ask them to bring their requirements into line with Somerset.

MW confirmed it is the Contractor's responsibility to comply with the RAMS. We have been told by North Somerset Council that our contractors would require a Section 171 Licence (under the UK Highways Act 1990 is a permit required for small excavations or breaking up the public highway). We have been told we need one for work from the highway and ditching work as well. Contractors have also been told they need to comply. We have been told digging next to the highway is deemed to be the same as digging the highway itself.

The Chair and PB feel we should challenge this as it is essential work for the benefit of the community.

Colin noted he is seeing more and more temporary works being carried out with lollipops.

MW clarified this would not be a road closure. We are being asked to obtain one blanket permit for North Somerset and appoint a qualified contractor to carry out the work. It may mean we lift this work out of existing contracts and open it up to other contractors.

The Chair asked if given this case for one contractor if we could use someone like Sunbelt. MW noted we would be looking at a cost of £650 a day to cover the traffic management.

Mike Stanton noted the differences in licence costs across councils and wondered if it was a source of income for them.

Mike left at 16.13

MW confirmed he has reviewed all locations historically maintained from the highways for ease and reduced these locations by carrying out as much as possible from fields, leaving only short sections left to do from the Highway.

CP asked if Area Supervisors could act to provide traffic calming.

MW explained they are there to supervise works, and do not have the relevant training required to do this.

AF felt we have all these people, they have the flashing lights etc and should keep it simple.

MH noted that she understands this however if there was an incident and HSE came in, we would not be compliant. We need to be seen to have ticked the right boxes and done it the right way. As a public body, we need to think this way. People can be trained which would incur a cost.

AF put to the organisation to "get on and bloody do it" because this is causing problems for people and they will not want to pay their rates. He feels we have been dilly-dallying over this problem for months, we need to get organised and do what is necessary to get it done legally.

The Chair recognised AF's frustration but pointed out that we all know how frustrating it can be dealing with the Council.

MW explained that now we have met with North Somerset, we can proceed and carry out the work. We need the right and trained people on site.

Alan says there is an issue in Westhay/Godney Moor which needs urgent attention.

The Chair noted this was not an issue until there was an incident.

MW explained that had the incident been more serious, HSE would have investigated. We need to have everything in place to be fully compliant. We are tightening up our processes to protect the Board and its reputation.

The Chair asked how long it would take to train staff to hold up traffic.

MW feels it is up to the contractors otherwise we would start to share liability.

The Chair noted it was his understanding that the Contractors were responsible for their own H&S.

MW explained we have now highlighted the exact locations where highway work needs to take place. The Chair asked how much is left in each Board area, who can do the work and what it would take to get this done as quickly as possible. He suggested tendering for a contractor to complete all the work in 2 days.

MW confirmed this is how he envisaged completing the works. there are 23km remaining to do in the Axe Brue, 3.5km in North Somerset and 11km in the Parrett.

The Chair asked MW to find out how long and how much to get this work done.

MW explained this would need to be costed as they would now have to travel back to site.

AF felt that going forward this should be done at the same time, not “bugger about for months organising it.”

Tim Bush asked if we are going to do this would we go back to doing long stretches from the roads as in the past.

MW explained that short duration works were limited to 15 minutes at a time and could not hold traffic up for more than two minutes at a time. He feels the most practical solution is to make it a package of work in each Board area and let it be delivered by one or two contractors towards the end of the maintenance season.

AF felt this was no good and it needs to be done at the same time. There is no water getting out to the North Drain and is causing flooding.

TB asked if our contractors can get the permits and look at the process later.

MW noted it would be easier to get one permit for each Board area with named contractors on them.

AF reiterated the need for the work to be done at the same time.

The Chair suggested asking how Lower Severn approach this.

MW spoke to James at the SWADA meeting. Their staff oversee the work but are not trained, which he feels is an unacceptable risk. They use all their own machinery.

PB asked MW to send him a briefing note if there is any significant difference in the requirements for Somerset and North Somerset.

The Chair feels the onus for H&S is on the contractor. MW noted it is also on us to ensure they are compliant.

The Chair suggested contacting Richard Wilkins, portfolio holder for Highways and a previous appointed member of the Parrett Board to ask for an exemption for drainage boards. The Chair will also speak to colleagues in the eastern boards to see how they approach it.