Tuesday 10th February 2026

SWAVESEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Swavesey Internal Drainage Board
Held at the Memorial Hall, Swavesey on Tuesday 10th February 2026.

PRESENT

Keith Wilderspin (Chair)	Shirley Dodson
James Dodson (Vice-Chair)	Sue Ellington
John Burgess	Hannah Parish
Martin Cahn	Neil Stroude

The Lead Clerk Mrs Ruth Martin representing the Clerk was in attendance. The Chairman also welcomed Mr Matthew Philpott from Water Management Alliance and Mr Phil Lovesey from the Bedford Group of IDBs to the meeting.

The Chair also welcomed Mr Iain Smith and Ms Helen Parish to the meeting, who were both attending as observers.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Andrea Hemington.

B.1179 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

The Chair declared an interest as Superintendent to the Board and advised that he would vacate the meeting when fees were discussed.

Members agreed to declare any other interests during the course of the meeting.

B.1180 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes were confirmed as a true record, and no Matters Arising were identified.

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 25th June 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.1181 Constitution & Membership

Mrs Martin advised that there are currently no vacancies on the Board.

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Elections

The Board were advised that 2026 is an election year and that they would be advised on further details in due course.

Training

Board members were asked to complete the training matrix circulated and were reminded that Board training is now reported on the IDB1 form and asked to advise the Clerk of any training completed or required.

B.1182 Clerk's Report

Mrs Martin gave a verbal report on behalf of the Clerk.

IDB Fund

2025/26 has begun how 2024/25 ended with delivery being the primary focus. We were successful in securing approximately £4.5m of grant for a number of IDB Fund (Tranche 2b) submissions and the administration and delivery of these commitments has been a primary focus particular for staff in M&E, Operations, Environment & Ecology and Finance, meaning some 'business as usual' activity has been impacted:

- Mobile Pumps – Phase 2 - £1.2m
- St Germans Pumping Station Resilience Phase 2 - £1m
- Bevill's Pond Resilience - £0.3m (MLC and Sawtry IDB)
- Asset Resilience – Pumps and Channels - £2m (MLC and IDBs)

This fund, coming with less constraints than FCRM grant-in-aid, is enabling us to think and invest differently. In my view we need to change gear in terms of our business model and philosophy to become more commercially minded within the boundaries of a not-for-profit public authority. Whilst there remains work to do within our improvement and modernisation journey, our organisational foundations are now in a much healthier position to build from, albeit our base capacity and capability are a constraint to what needs to be, and could be, achieved. We will need to identify and nurture partnerships not only with traditional partners but with the innovators within our local agricultural and the development sectors.

Mr Smith added that he had been in discussions with David Orin of the Environment Agency who want further guidance from Defra on future funding. When a new system comes in it is likely that IDBs will be expected to fund 10% of any Grant in Aid application up to £3m.

Data Provision

We are receiving an increasing number of data requests from a variety of sources. These can be complex and time consuming to service, sometimes for projects or purposes with little to no direct benefit to the Commissioners and our administered IDBs (where we act as their data controller).
To better protect our interests, we have developed and are now using a formal data sharing agreement with third parties. We will introduce a cost recovery approach to servicing such requests.

Defra Flood Funding Policy

Following consultation earlier in the year, Defra has finalised its new funding policy and responded to the consultation. We provided and published a comprehensive response.

This policy is for capital flood grant and goes live from 1st April 2026.

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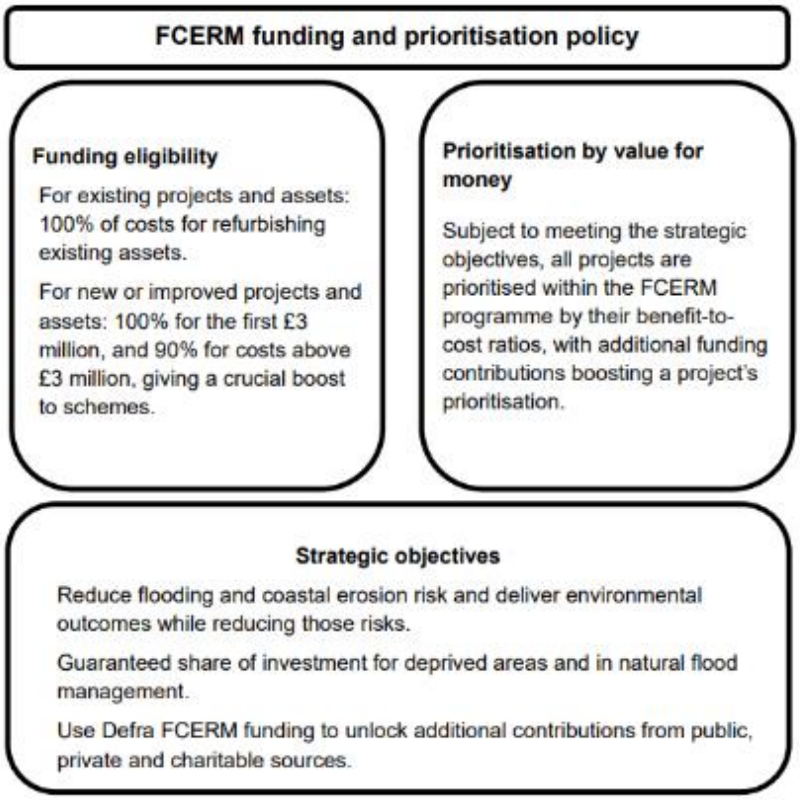

Key points for MLC and IDBs:

a) Refurbishment is a significant fix on an asset that can't be addressed by routine maintenance alone. Further guidance is expected on this aspect.
b) When applying for Defra FCERM funding for refurbishment of existing assets, asset owners will need to demonstrate that they have undertaken whole life asset management and routine maintenance.
c) As partnership contributions increase, the amount of Defra FCERM funding needed decreases, leading to higher project prioritisation. The more significant the partnership contribution, the larger the likelihood of boosting prioritisation.
d) The '2012' rule has been removed meaning new development can be included within benefit assessments. We will commission an economic and benefits refresh across the Middle Level to update our base information.
e) The need to demonstrate a reduction in flood risk band as a result of works has been removed.
f) Defra acknowledge concerns from other risk management authorities that they are at a disadvantage compared to the Environment Agency. The policy states that all risk management authorities should have equal access to FCERM funding.

Mr Smith advised that this had been discussed at the recent RFCC meeting, and how the new guidance would be interpreted, and the level of funding that would be available. This is likely to result in less schemes being undertaken.

<u>IDB Funding & Costs Research</u>

A joint Defra and MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) IDB funding and costs research project is now underway. It is being led by ICF, a consultancy with expertise in economic and financial analysis, particularly in evaluating the costs and benefits of environmental and regulatory policies in the water and land use sector. Supporting ICF is Logika, a consultancy specialising in flood risk management, drainage, and sustainable development and valuable experience from the water sector. The project is scheduled to conclude by July 2026.

The overarching goal of the project is to conduct a comprehensive review of IDBs' operations, focusing on financial efficiency and value for money, with the aim of assessing whether changes are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of IDBs. The research is structured around three core objectives:

1. Funding and Financial Review: To analyse IDB funding mechanisms, operational costs and financial pressures over the past decade and explore future funding options.
2. Benefit Evaluation: To assess the economic and social value of IDBs' work, both locally and nationally.
3. Data Modernisation: To explore how the annual IDB1 Form can be improved and modernised for better data collection and reporting.

The project will include:

- an evidence review,
- analysis of financial information and IDB1 reports,
- interviews with selected IDBs and stakeholders,
- an IDB survey to identify any gaps in the data, and
- case studies.

We have been in touch with the consultants leading the work and provided them with information to get them started. Given we collectively represent c25% of the IDB sector nationally, we will, in one way shape or form, inform their results and associated recommendations for change. Whilst this research is an opportunity to highlight and influence much needed policy change for collective benefit, there is equally the likelihood that it will draw out some uncomfortable truths.

One of the key issues the research will be assessing is the impact that special levies to IDBs is having on Local Authorities. This issue is being promoted by a Local Government Association 'IDB Levey Special Interest Group'.

Around 40 councils across England are working together to lobby the Government for reform to the funding system that supports the vital work of Internal Drainage Boards. IDBs are primarily funded through drainage rates charged directly on the occupiers of agricultural land within each drainage district and a special levy on district and unitary councils on behalf of the non-agricultural land within each district. Each council primarily funds the cost of the special levy through a combination of central government grants, their share of business rates and revenue from council tax levied on local properties. Due to rising costs in such things as electricity that power the pumping stations at times of flooding and sustained heavy rain, the special levy amount has been increasingly significantly in recent years.

On the evening of Tuesday 2nd September 2025 there was a parliamentary meeting of the LGA's IDB Levy Special Interest Group. The meeting was attended by the leaders and portfolio holders from a number of special levy paying local authorities at the House of Commons alongside several members of parliament. ADA and IDBs were also represented by Robert Caudwell, Michael Sly, Daniel Withnall (Black Sluice IDB), and Paul Burrows (Middle Level Commissioners).
Reflecting on the meeting within the ADA Gazette, Paul Burrows said:
"It's pleasing that Local Authorities and MPs appreciate the criticality of the work the Internal Drainage Board sector play in enabling prosperous local communities. After all, every other Council service relies on keeping homes, business, land and infrastructure dry. We need to be mindful of potential unintended consequences within any call for funding reform, particularly the special levies that Councils raise on our behalf. It is important that the IDB Costs & Funding Research commissioned by Defra gets under the skin of the issues and makes considered and well-evaluated recommendations."

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IDB1

There is another step-change in reporting expectations on us all both in terms of financial and non-financial information we provide annually to Defra within the 2024/25 IDB1. This will take additional time to pull together and is an indication as to the increased expectations Government have on us in terms of governance and responsibilities.

Whilst we can derive the majority of the financial and non-financial information on behalf of our administered IDBs, there are questions where we require information from the Boards directly. To assist Sam Ablett in preparing the form for return, each Chairman has been asked to respond with information covering a list of questions which will be provided, but include details around watercourse maintenance, Health and Safety, Board members training, and public and press engagement.

RESOLVED

That the Clerks Report is noted.

B.1183 Environment Officers Report

A verbal report was given to the Board by Ms Helen Parish. She has been in contact with Sofi Lloyd of the Middle Level Commissioners, and they have agreed that a draft BAP would be provided, and this would be in line with LNRS. With the upcoming handover to WMA, there is limited value in adopting a final version, and they will need to agree how to align this report with those undertaken by WMA.

Ms Parish went on to advise that the Standard Operating Procedures have been drafted for 2026, and these cover maintenance and flail cutting. In some areas that do not require cleaning out work has started but will progress further from 1st April. A full report will be provided for the next Board meeting.

B.1184 Chairmans Report

The Chair gave a verbal report. There have been some issues with the EA, and at Brownshill Sluice.

There are 4 potential sites proposed for logistics centres on the A14, and one is proposed to do some extra works on the Board's drainage system in the hope that this will reinforce their proposals.

Mr Smith advised that Brownshill Sluice was discussed at the January RFCC meeting. He reported that Chris Tate was hopeful that a contract would be let by now, but this is not in place. Some works will be undertaken this year, with gate works anticipated for 2026/27.

He added that the development near Boxworth is where Stantec have offered the EA certain materials if the works go ahead. An initial reply has been sent by the EA but a further reply will follow. The EA may not have the funds available to reuse the materials even if they are suitable for bank raising.

The Chair added that he understood that Stantec would fund some of the work and also that the District Council may be interested as there are issues with the river. Cambridgeshire County Council have had problems with the cycleway at the bottom of the Guided Busway and a meeting with all concerned parties may be a sensible thing to happen. Mr Smith offered to speak to Phillipa Hulme of the EA and this offer was accepted by the Board.

Mr Cahn asked about Cambridgeshire County Council contributions, as they have indicated they may not be able to pay the Local Levy. The Chair advised he had not spoken to the Council as yet. Mr Smith advised that the County Council Local Levy is payable to the EA and not the Board. Local Levy can also be used on the Main

River if the bank works were viewed to be significant. The Chair added that much hinges on if Stantec have planning permission to reuse the materials. Mr Lovsey asked if Stantec had carried out any cost analysis, and the Chair responded that in terms of what they are doing this would be low cost. Mr Lovsey asked if a flood risk activity permit would be required from the EA, and the Chair thought it would probably be required, and he would be looking for this.

Mr Lovesey asked if the Brownshill Sluice works would be delivered in the summer. Mr Smith reported that he had been advised that the EA want to start work on the gates in May, but that there have been delays to the contract. He is not sure what the delays are but is aware that the contract has not yet been set.

B.1185 Consulting Engineers' Reports

Mrs Martin referred to the Consulting Engineers' report, asking that it be taken as read.

The Board were asked to consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment and/or replacement. Mr Philpott advised the Board that he had been sent a lot of information by the MLC M&E Engineers, and that WMA could take on this function from the April handover. They can also look at other strategic contributions within the Boards area. The Chair agreed that it would not provide any benefit actioning anything before April. Mr Philpott added that the EA funding guidance should be in place by then, and the Chair suggested that a meeting be arranged between the Engineers and WMA to discuss.

Operational Services

The Operational Services report was considered. The current PSCA arrangement was discussed, with it being agreed that for the 2026 season, MLC should continue with the weed control and drain maintenance work in accordance with the current PSCA. This will allow the Board time to make alternative arrangements. Mr Philpott suggested that a further PSCA is entered into with the Bedford Group with a Schedule 3 agreement. The Bedford Group would not be incumbent to do the works, but the agreement would in place should it be needed. Mr Lovesey added that this would minimise the impact in the first year. It is believed that the EA still wish to carry on with the agreement.
It was unanimously agreed by the Board that the PSCA with MLC would continue for this year, and a further PSCA would be entered into with the Bedford Group.

The Chair asked the WMA representatives when they would be able to take over the Operational Services to the Board. Mr Lovesey said that he thought they would be able to take over from April should the Board require and would work with the Chair and the Boards current contractors. He added that he would need to check on contract regulations and making direct awards of contracts.

Mr Philpott added that at the next meeting of the Board there would need to be a mass adoption of WMA's standard policies, which would include their policy around awarding contracts.

Mechanical & Electrical

The Chair advised the Board that he thought they had been lucky to secure £80k of funding from the T2B Flood Recovery Fund, and the works completed have been listed in the report. The Board had previously been discussing undertaking these works so the funding has helped this. This leaves only the pump and weed screen works outstanding, although the screen looks in good condition. It has been 15 years since the last pump overhaul although they have a spare impellor ready for use. The Chair had discussed the pumps with Dave Bantoft of MLC, and in their last conversation Mr Bantoft indicated that a replacement pump would cost around £90k, and a pump refurbishment around £75k. These prices are based on quotations received from Bedford Pumps. Mr Dawson asked if there were any grants available to the Board, or any other way of securing contributions. Mr Philpott advised that WMA's Project Team would be able to assist with identifying funding sources and carrying out a Cost Benefit Analysis. The Chair advised of the Anglian Water Sewerage Pumping Station that discharges into a Board drain, and Mr Philpott added that there are Anglian Water funding streams available, which they can look into once services are transferred to WMA in April. The Chair added that this could be discussed when meeting with the engineers. Mr Philpott agreed to take an action away from the meeting to look into funding streams for the pumping station maintenance works. Mr Cahn asked if an increase in power supply to the pumping station would be needed, but the Chair has been advised by engineers that a like for like pump replacement would be preferable.

RESOLVED

A meeting be arranged by the Chair between WMA and the M&E Engineers for further handover

That the PSCA agreement in place with MLC would continue for this year, and an additional PSCA would be entered into with the Bedford Group.

That MLC undertake the weed control and drain maintenance work in accordance with the PSCA for 2026.

That Mr Philpott would investigate potential sources of funding for pumping station works.

B.1186 Health & Safety

Ms Hannah Parish gave a verbal report. The latest inspection carried out by AW Safety Ltd (formerly Cope) showed the pumping station in a good position. The only finding was that there is no fire extinguisher in the pump house, and they have asked that one be installed. She added that everything is very tidy, and all signage has now been fitted.

The Chair asked the Board if they wished to fit a fire extinguisher, and some discussion followed regarding the use and practicality of installing an extinguisher. Mr Cahn asked if the insurers required it, and the Chair added that if one was installed it would require servicing every year. It was agreed that it would be checked with the Boards insurers if an extinguisher was required, and if it were one would be fitted.

(Post meeting note: insurers do not require an extinguisher to be fitted but if one is present, it must be serviced and maintained.)

Ms Parish was thanked for her report.

B.1187 District Officer's Report

The District Officer reported that the District drains are in a reasonable condition although some desilting may be needed upstream of Uttons Drove. There has been no work carried out on that section since the Board was established other than routine flailing. The District Officer recommended to the Board that works were scheduled in this section. Mr Stroude proposed that the works be carried out as advised, and Ms Parish seconded this with the Board agreeing unanimously.

The District Officer advised that he was not aware of any slips at present but reminded the Board that only £1k had been budgeted for drain cleaning. He advised that the headwall at the top end of Cow Fen Drove keeps falling in. This is not impacting the gateway yet, but this will be the second time this has happened. Mr Dodson raised a concern that someone would get their car stuck there and this would be costly to sort out. If there were any further falls it could be a problem. The District Officer advised that as the headwall degrades and falls into the channel, he is removing the debris and trying to keep the channel free. Mr Dodson said that he thought it should be done and asked if the work could be tied in with anything else. The District Officer suggested that he walk the District with Mr Dodson and Mr Stroude to review plans.

RESOLVED

The District Officer, Mr Dodson and Mr Stroude meeting to review planning maintenance

B.1188 Governance

Mrs Martin asked the Board to consider the Governance report and that its content be noted.

Completion of the Annual Return of the Board – 2024/2025

RESOLVED

i) The Board/Commissioners considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year that ended on the 31st March 2025.

ii) The Board/Commissioners considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year that ended on the 31st March 2025

The Board noted the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor until they move to WMA.

Review of Internal Controls

Mrs Martin reported that the internal controls that the Middle Level Commissioners have in place in their services to the Board have now been summarised and are available on the Boards webpage.

RESOLVED

The Board considered and expressed satisfaction with the current system of internal controls.

Risk Management Strategy and Internal Controls

The Board did not highlight any specific risks or issues not covered within the Board's Risk Management Strategy (published in 2024 and on the website), noted the system of financial Internal Controls (as published on website) and no additional controls were highlighted as required.

Insured Values

The Insurance Valuation was reviewed, and the Board agreed that they were content with the valuation.

Exercise of Public Rights

Mrs Martin referred to the publishing of the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return.

Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

Mrs Martin reported that as part of the Annual Governance review the Board were required to consider if there were any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end that have a financial impact on the authority. She confirmed that there were no such matters that have been raised through the office of the clerk. Members gave consideration to the position.

RESOLVED

That there are no such events that would have an adverse financial impact on the Board that would need to be included within the accounting statements for the financial year ended 31st March 2025.

Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Mrs Martin reported that, as resolved at a previous meeting, the Board will continue with a limited assurance review and not take advantage of the audit exemption available for smaller public bodies with income and expenditure less than £25,000.

RESOLVED

To continue with a limited assurance review as has been carried out in previous years.

B.1189 Finance Report – Looking Back

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Finance Officer, noting that the expenditure for the Financial Year 2025/26 was currently in line with the budget set.

Payments for 2025

The Payments were reviewed and accepted.

Highland Water Contributions

The Board noted the Highland Water contributions.

Mr Smith advised the Board that in 2025 the funds allocated by the EA did not cover the Highland Water claims, and the difference was funded by the RFCC. There could be a potential issue when the 2026 claims are made if adequate funds are not available as it is unlikely the RFCC would step up again. The Chair added that if there were a big pumping event with lots of Highland Water this could have serious implications.

B.1190 Finance Report – Looking Forward

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board considered and noted the key finance messages of the Responsible Finance Officer.

Fees, Remuneration & Subscriptions:

District Superintendents Duties

The Chair in his capacity as District Superintendent left the room and the Vice Chair took over the chair.

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Mr Stroude proposed increasing the agreed sum by 2%, but Ms Hannah Parish anticipated the District Officer having to do more work this year with the handover to WMA. Mr Lovesey added that he wanted to work with the District Officer to build up an information portfolio of the district, including maps, gate codes and so on and this would be quite time consuming. Ms Parish proposed an increase of 5% in anticipation of the additional works. The Vice Chair reminded the Board that they would be setting the rate shortly, and any increase would need to be funded. Ms Ellington seconded the proposal of a 5% increase, and this was agreed unanimously.

The Chair returned to the meeting.

RESOLVED

> That the Board agree that the sum of £2,106 be allowed for District Superintendents duties for 2026/2027.

ADA subscription

Mrs Martin reported that ADA have increased subscriptions by 5.0% for 2026, and therefore the annual fee will be £711.90 (plus VAT).

The Board discussed the value that they felt they received from the ADA membership, particularly in terms of the increased cost of the subscription. Mrs Martin drew the Board's attention to the ADA Activity Report for 2025 and read out the headline activities. The Chair reminded the Board that they had previously had several years where they did not subscribe to ADA, but that ADA carry out lots of lobbying on behalf of Boards although he is unsure how effective this is. Mr Dodson thought that the membership fee was a lot of money for this Board, and Ms Hannah Parish added that the Board are not making use of the benefits of membership. Mr Cahn added that he had working in Local Authority for 12 years and had seen the benefit of lobbying, and this should not be dismissed. Mr Philpott advised that although the Board would continue to hear about the work of ADA through the WMA's membership, the Board would not have a seat at the ADA table. Ms Helen Parish suggested that the Board take a year away from ADA and then review to see what they had missed, and Ms Hannah Parish proposed the same. Mr Dodson seconded the proposal, adding that as a major rate payer he does not see things improving. The Board agreed unanimously with the proposal, with Mr Cahn abstaining from the vote.

Post meeting note: the ADA subscription for 2026 had already been paid before this meeting, the payment having been approved by the Chair.

RESOLVED

> That the requested increased ADA subscription for 2026 is not paid.

Rate Arrears

The Board were asked to consider the writing off arrears totalling £1770 which date back 6 years. A discussion was had by the Board regarding the debt, with the Chair adding that he hated to write off the debt, but the Board had to consider the cost of continuing to chase the debt. However, Board members considered that the debtor may still be able to settle the debt, and Ms Ellington offered to carry out some checks on the property the debt related to in her capacity as a councillor which was accepted. The Board agreed that they did not wish to write off this debt at this time.

RESOLVED

That the rate arrears are not written off.

Precept

Internal Drainage Boards are required to pay a Precept (IDB Precept) to the Environment Agency for their expenses managing water passing into main rivers. Predominantly, the Precept funds additional maintenance downstream of and/or benefitting IDB districts.

The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2026.

The precept for 2025 was £1,982.78.

Mr Smith advised that at the October meeting of the RFCC, some considerable discussion was had around the precept, and that Boards were not happy that they were being advised of how the money was being spent. The EA have provided this in some previous years, and the Committee have approved the format of a report that can be populated with information showing how the precept has been spent. The RFCC will be receiving a further report at their July meeting and in October they will set the charges for the following year. As the reporting in previous years has been sporadic, it is the intention to ensure that reporting continues every year. Even without the agreed template in place, the EA should provide this information to show that the precept is valid.

RESOLVED

That the Precept is paid in full unless a decision to appeal against the Precept is made.

Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2026/27.

The Board reviewed the proposed budget for 2026/2027.

RESOLVED

That the budget is agreed.

Rate Requirement for 2026/27

The Board considered that the agreed budget resulted in a proposed rate of 108.5p. Mr Stroude asked if it was known how much was held in the Deposit Account, but the exact figure was not available at the meeting. However, it was understood to be in the region of £60k. The Board discussed pumping costs and other elements of the budget. Mr Dodson reminded the Board that the rate needed to be divisible by 7 and proposed that the rate remain the same as the previous year, at 98.00p. This was seconded by Mr Stroude. Mrs Martin reminded the Board that by not increasing the rate, they would have to use their reserves to support the deficit, and this would leave them in a position where they did not have the recommended year of operating costs in hand.

The Chair advised that the budget had only included for an average year of pumping costs. He understands that a 10% increase is a lot especially given how difficult running a business in the agricultural sector is at present. Ms Hannah Parish asked the Board if they really wanted to keep the rate down by eating into the Board's reserves, and the Chair asked if the Board if they could see a compromise position. Ms Parish then proposed that a rate that splits the difference between 98.00p and 108.5p be considered, especially as to take a step backwards financially does not seem to be a sensible step. Mr Cahn agreed with Ms Parish's proposal and seconded it. Some discussion followed on the two proposals that had been tabled, with the Chair asking the Board to put them both to a vote:

That a rate of 98.00p in the £ be levied, proposed by Mr Dodson and seconded by Mr Stroude received 4 votes.

That a rate set between 98.00p in the £ and 108.5p in the £ be levied, proposed by Ms Hannah Parish and seconded by Mr Cahn also received 4 votes.

Although the Chair could cast the deciding vote in these circumstances, he explained to the Board that he preferred not to do so at present and hoped that the Board could come to an acceptable resolution without this measure. He added that the Board should consider that if the lower rate is set and pumping is higher than anticipated, the Board may need to look to secure a loan to undertake any works on the pumping station. Some discussion was held on what figure may sit between the 98.00p and 108.5p, and eventually a figure of 103.25p was settled on. This was then put forward as a proposal by Mr Cahn and seconded by Ms Parish, with Mr Dodson again proposing a figure of 98.00p which was seconded by Mr Stroude.

A further vote was held, and both proposals received 4 votes each, meaning that neither were carried.

The Chair advised the Board that to reduce the rate they would need to reduce the budget and reduce their spending. He reviewed the budget line by line, asking the Board where they wanted the budget to be cut. He added that the Board were unlikely to carry out any pump refurbishment this year, but that he would not wish to set the rate too high because of the impact on rate payers. However, the rate needed to provide the Board with an income that would make them sustainable. Ms Helen Parish observed that in not maintaining the status quo, the Board would be taking a backward step, and the Chair explained that he worked hard to keep the Board expenses down but that there is not much slack. He thought that they could not carry out any drainage works for the year which would make a saving, but he needed the Board to tell him which way they wanted to go, and which works they didn't want to do, especially as they had already discussed some potential drainage works that were needed. Mr Dodson observed that the biggest increase in the projected expenditure is in administration of the Board. The Chair said that his biggest worry would be if the Board did not rate for expenditure and that if the Board needed to urgently replace a pump, they would be ineligible for any external funding due to their decision to underrate.

Mr Dodson referred back to a conversation earlier in the meeting, where Mr Philpott implied that grants would be available from Anglian Water, and that the Board would still have reserves. The Chair responded that the Board have already been rescued by the T1 Storm Recovery Grant Funding, which helped with a £12k electricity bill against a budget of £5k for winter of 2024. The difference is significant to the Board. In the past year the pumps have not run all summer, yet in January they ran for 100 hours. There is still a possibility that costs will exceed budget again. Mrs Martin reminded the Board that they can only rate on any income they know they will receive, and not on grants they may or may not be able to access.

Following on from further discussion and with no other proposals being tabled and the Chair preferring not to cast a deciding vote, Mrs Martin suggested that the meeting be closed and reconvened at a future date, giving opportunity for further consideration of the budget, and a chance to confirm the Board's account balances. However, Ms Hannah Parish indicated that she would prefer not to do this as it would be at an additional cost to the Board. The Chair added that he understands the position that the Board members feel they are in and that as a ratepayer he will have to pay the rate that is agreed. However, he reminded the Board that they were sat around the table as Board members and must do what is right for the Board, even if this is at odds with their own position as ratepayers. With this thought in mind, he proposed a rate of 105.0p in the £, and this was seconded by Mr Burgess. A vote was held, with 5 Board members voting in favour of the rate and 3 voting against. With the majority vote the motion was carried.

Mr Philpott reflected that WMA will work within a budget that reflects the amended rate the best that they can.

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RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £29,085 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.

iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £19,638 and £9,447 respectively.

iv) That the following rates be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

   i. Area 1: 105.0p in the £
   ii. Area 2: 45.00p in the £
   iii. Area 3: 15.00p in the £

v) That a Special Levy of £9,447 be made and issued to South Cambs District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure.

vi) That the seal of the Board be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies referred to in resolution v).

vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.1191 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

A meeting to approve the accounts has provisionally been arranged for Tuesday 24th June via Teams. It is requested that the meeting start as early as possible and preferably between 9 and 9.30am

B.1192 Any Other Business

With no other business raised the Chair closed the meeting at 4.55pm.

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Chair

……………………………….
Date