RAMSEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Board held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 at 7 pm at the Old Nene Golf and Country Club, Muchwood Lane, Ramsey, Huntingdon, Cambs PE26 2XQ.

PRESENT: Mr D R Abblitt (Vice Chairman)(DA), Mr K R Abblitt (KA), Councillor S Corney (SC), Councillor R Brereton (RB), Mr L R Smith (LS), Mr D R Smith (DS), Mr A H Wagstaffe (AW), Mr Paul Burrows (Chief Executive of the Middle Level Commissioners)(PB), Mr Innes Thomson (Chief Executive of the Association of Drainage Authorities)(IT), and the Clerk.

AGM 24.1

APOLOGIES were received from Councillor E Butler, Mr P H Wagstaffe (Chairman) and the District Officer.

AGM 24.2

DECLARATIONS of INTEREST

There were none.

AGM 24.3

CONSIDERATION of the FUTURE of the CLERKSHIP

PB and IT had been invited to attend and speak to this agenda item.

IT introduced himself and spoke about the value of IDBs, keeping standards high and demonstrating to the Public value for money. We have had a Public Interest Report on Governance issues in the past although last Year's Audit was acceptable with 2 minor discrepancies. Uploading Notices, Minutes and Reports regularly onto the Board's Website is all important. He asked about our long term plan for overhauling or replacement of the 2 Pumps and the Clerk answered that this was in hand with our Consulting Engineers who are the Middle Level Commissioners; both pumps are approaching 50 years old and are facing major overhaul or replacement. The Board has reserve funds but replacement will require acquisition of grant aid.

PB introduced himself mentioning that he had recently taken over the running of the MLC who are a relatively small organisation with a massive responsibility as a risk management authority. The MLC administer 29 IDBs. Their workforce is spread far too thinly, and this is exacerbated by retirements and staff illnesses. The MLC are busy therefore in rebuilding their staff structure and dealing with asset management issues, all of which puts a strain on the MLC. Risk management authorities have a collective responsibility, and the MLC has a collective interest in working with boards like Ramsey IDB, as it has for many years. They do not want to have reputation issues and the Board has arrears of drainage rates which it needs to collect in as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the MLC are prepared to consider taking over the administration of the Clerkship of the Board but will need to know soon what the Board wishes to do. If the Board wishes the MLC to take on the Clerkship, there needs to be a long-term plan for the handover which needs to be actively driven.

PB suggested the Board selects members to work with him and the Clerk to manage the succession planning. A letter would need to be sent to the MLC confirming that this will be done.

A proposal that the Board desires to explore the transition of the management of the Clerkship by the MLC which will involve meetings by a small Sub Committee was made by AH and seconded by LS with all members present voting in favour.

There was discussion about the Constitution of the Board. The Board had already resolved that it be reconstituted with 6 Appointed Members and 5 Elected Members. The Huntingdonshire District Council had already approved the adjustment in the number of Board Members, but DEFRA will have to approve the reconstitution. The Clerk will write to the Chief Executive of the Council to progress this.

There have been requests for clarification of the landholdings where drainage rates have been charged which is delaying collection of the arrears. The Clerk will identify the requests and meet with the ratepayers to correct any anomalies.

AGM 24.4

APPROVAL of MINUTES

The approval of the Minutes of:-

(1) The AGM held on the 23rd May 2023 having been proposed by DS and seconded by RB, and
(2) The EGM held on the 13thFebruary 2024 having been proposed by LS and seconded by RB

with all members present voting in favour was given.

AGM 24.5

MATTERS ARISING from the Minutes.

None were raised.

AGM 24.6

APPOINTMENT of INDEPENDENT INTERNAL AUDITOR.

It was proposed by AW and seconded by DA that Whitings PLC of March be appointed as Independent Internal Auditor of the Board. This was resolved with all members present voting in favour.

AGM 24.7

APPROVAL of STATEMENT of ACCOUNTS and ANNUAL GOVERNANCE and ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) for the Year ending the 31st March 2024 and to CONFIRM the LIST of CHEQUES drawn for the same period.

The Clerk apologised that owing to delays caused by his wife’s illness the Accounts and the AGAR were not ready and will be circulated by email for questions from the Board.

The LIST of CHEQUES having been circulated prior to the meeting was approved.

AGM 24.8

DISTRICT OFFICER’S REPORT and DRAINAGE PROGRAMME for the current year.

The Board received the Notes of the Annual Drainage Inspection (as attached) and approved the

Action Points. The District Officer was not present and so the Clerk gave an oral report on his behalf that the drainage works this year will take place in Lodes End District. Notice will be sent to the land occupiers.

AGM 24.9

APPOINTMENTS FOR THE YEAR ending 31st March 2025.

AGM 24.9.1 Chairman – Mr Peter Wagstaffe proposed by AH and seconded by SC.

AGM 24.9.2 Vice Chairman – Mr Dale Abblitt proposed by LS and seconded by RB.

AGM 24.9.3 District Officer – Mr Leo Butler proposed by RB and seconded by RB at an annual fee of £3,200.00 together with mileage and other approved expenses.

AGM 24.9.4 Clerk of the Board – Mr John Chrisp proposed by SC and seconded by DS at an annual fee of £6,500.00 together with mileage and other approved expenses.

AGM 24.10

BIODIVERSTY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The new Environment Officer appointed by MLC will soon update us.

AGM 24.11

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

No significant applications have been made in the year which might lead to a Developement contribution being paid. The applications all concerned small areas where such things as conservatories were being erected over the footprint of patios which did not extend the footprint of the property.

MLC are still chasing Accent Homes / Hill Partnerships to remove the obstacle in the drain on Stocking Fen Road at the outfall from the new estate.

AGM 24.12

CONSENTS TO DISCHARGE

No applications have been received during the year.

AGM 24.13

REGISTEROF MEMBERS INTEREST

The update forms will be sent out for completion or will be presented at the EGM on the 25th June.

AGM 24.14

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

AGM 24.14.1 MLC GUIDANCE DOCUMENT where Private Districts seek to join IDBS discussed.

AGM 24.14.2 SERVICE AGREEMENT with MLC: Bank's due diligence is in the last stages of completion. In the meantime, the MLC will provide support working towards handing over the financial management by December 2024. MLC do not wish to activate the Agreement until the rate arrears have been collected in.

AGM 24.14.3 ALTERNATIVE VALUATION CALCULATIONS discussed but probably of no major concern to us for now.

AGM 24.14.4 NEW DRAINAGE RATING SYSTEM proposed: this is a new initiative by the Government. Our Rates Book is based on historic values. When the new system comes in we can go to the new system and there should be some money made available through DEFRA to assist us with the cost.

AGM 24.14.5 BOARD MEMBER resignation. Rupert Waters had moved this May and there is a need to get him to formally resign and ask Lord de Ramsey if he has any other person in mind for the Board to consider electing to fill the vacancy left by Rupert's departure. The Clerk will write to Lord De Ramsey.

AGM 24.14.6 Copy in Board Members with important correspondence.

The Meeting having commenced at 7 pm ended at 9 pm.