# RAMSEY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## At a Meeting of the Ramsey Internal Drainage Board
## Held at the Old Nene Golf Club on 23rd June 2026.

PRESENT

Mr Lloyd Smith (Vice Chairman)
Mr Peter Wagstaffe
Mr Keith Abblitt
Mr Derek Smith
Mr Andrew Wood
Mr John Chrisp (Clerk)

Mr Paul Burrows (Chief Executive and Clerk) and Mrs Ruth Martin (Lead Clerk) of the Middle Level Commissioners were also attendance.

### EGM 26.2.1 Apologies

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Dale Abblitt (Chairman).

### EGM 26.2.2 Declarations of Interest

The Chair 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.

### EGM 26.2.3 To Approve the Statement of Accounts

The Clerk advised that the Accounts have been checked by Whitings, and some amendments have been made. He reported that the within the Statement of Accounts there is an item for Debtors and Creditors which includes £15,379.41 of uncollected rates prior to 2024/25. Mr Abblitt asked why the rates had not been collected before and the Clerk advised that his former office had not arranged for their collection. The Clerk advised that he planned to visit one particular rate payer to discuss their outstanding rates and that he would be asking a Board member to accompany him.

The Clerk asked the Board it there were any other questions relating to the Statement and his notes. He also asked the Board to consider the Charles Stanley Investment Portfolio and reported that there had been a 2.62% return on income but also an increase in the value of shares. He advised that the Board still have a CCLA account, and that there is £63,000 in this Deposit Fund, giving a return of between 3.5% and 4%. He recommended to the Board that they leave both funds as they are.

The Ratepayers Account includes the surplus of £18,269 which is the accumulation of monies from old rates plus funding from the Environment Agency for electricity costs. The Clerk asked the Board to consider if they need to invest this sum.

The Income/Expenditure account shows receipts and payments. The Board have received a refund from NFU Mutual insurance as they have now moved to Anglian Farmers through MLC. Whilst a precise figure has yet to be ascertained, this should result in a reduction in expenditure on insurance for the year.

With no further questions from the Board on the Statement of Accounts, the Board were asked for their approval of the accounts. This was proposed by Mr Abblitt and seconded by Mr Wagstaff, and unanimously approved. Mr Wood abstained from the vote.

The Board considered the submission of the Annual Governance Audit Return. The Clerk advised that the Board would need to respond with a 'no' to the audit question 'We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit'. He proposed to send the following statement with the submission:

*The Board has certified "no" because it has not yet been possible to recover certain rate arrears. This is partly because there are discrepancies on the Rate Register which have yet to be finally resolved. If there is no hope of recovering certain of these arrears, the Board will have to decide whether or not to write them off. In the meantime, the Board has not pursued the outstanding rates for the Years ending 2025, 2026 and 2027 for which rate demands will need to be sent during the current year.*

The Clerk explained that the Board instructed last year that the rates should be collected, but that this has not progressed, and therefore they cannot report that they have taken appropriate action.

Mr Wood asked what actions have been taken to recover arrears. The Clerk advised that the Board have never had this situation before. Mr Wood raised a concern that word gets around that ratepayers do not need to pay, they will not prioritise the payment of rates. The Clerk advised that he hopes the rate register will now be accepted but this may result in some rates being irrecoverable.

The Vice Chair asked how far the Board could go back, and Mr Burrows advised that the priority ought to be on correcting the rate book. Mr Abblitt agreed that the rates from the last 3 years would be the critical ones to issue and collect. Mr Burrows asked the Board for a clear resolution to resolve this issue. Mr Abblitt asked if any rate demands had been issued for the previous year, and the Clerk advised that they had not, and that around £17,000 of rates were uncollected. This is in addition to the £15,000 of uncollected rates from previous years, which the Clerk aims to collect. If he cannot collect these outstanding rates he will return to the Board to ask the Board for a recommendation to collect or write them off.

The Clerk advised that the figures shown in Section 2 of the AGAR comply with those shown in the Accounts, and that Whitings have reviewed. The Board were asked if they would approve for the AGAR to be signed by the Chairman, and this was agreed having been proposed by Mr Abblitt and seconded by Mr Wagstaffe.

RESOLVED

> That the Statement of Accounts is approved by the Board
>
> The Board approved that the Clerk and Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Board for the financial year ended 31st March 2025.

EGM 26.2.4 To Direct the Issue of Rate Demands

The Clerk is aware that some payments will be made before 30th September and that the Clerk will need to conclude an audit of the rates. A further decision will then need to be made by the Board on the collection of any remaining outstanding rates. However, the Clerk asked the Board for their approval to collect the rates for the years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Mr Burrows asked the clerk for a full rate sheet for the years 2026/27 and advised that the rate demands will be issued later in the year.

The Vice Chairman proposed that the outstanding rate demands be issued, and this was seconded by Mr Derek Smith and agreed by the Board.

RESOLVED

That Rate Demands for the years 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 are issued and collected.

That the outstanding rates are recovered.

EGM 26.2.5 Notification of the appointment of New Members

The Clerk reported that following recent local elections, Huntingdonshire District Council have appointed Mr Andrew Wood and Mr Karan Maheshwari to the Board. Mr Wood was formally welcomed to his first meeting.

The two appointments are until May 2028 and will be reviewed following the local government reorganisation.

EGM 26.2.6 To Update the Reconstitution of the Membership of the Board

The Clerk reported that following a letter to Defra from Paul Burrows, the Scheme has now been published by Defra. The Draft Scheme was reported in the London Gazette on 6th June with a 30-day period for objections to be made.

Mrs Martin advised the Board that this is not the conclusion of the process, but that there are two further notice and objection periods to be held, following which the Confirmed Order and Instrument of Appointment will come into effect.

Due to the time that this is likely to take, it will be necessary for the Board to hold elections this year. The Clerk advised that existing members of the Board will be considered for re-election, being aware that the reconstitution of the Board will reduce the number of elected members.

The Clerk asked if they agreed with the proposal to hold elections this year, and this was agreed being proposed by Mr Smith and seconded by Mr Wagstaffe. The Clerk agreed to progress the election process.

RESOLVED

To go ahead with elections in 2026

EGM 26.2.7 Change of Electricity Supplier

The Clerk reported that the Board have changed their supplier to Anglian Farmers effective from 24th June 2026. He is awaiting a final electricity bill from Eon Next, and each pumping station has its own account. The Boards electricity contact will fall into the MLC annual cycle next year. Mr Wood asked if there is any focus on renewable energy and Mr Burrows suggested that this is a conversation for the future.

EGM 26.2.8 Change of Website Address

The Board were asked to note the change of the website address.

Mr Burrows asked the Clerk if he had advised the Board’s current website provider notice of their intention to cancel but the Clerk advised that the domain name renewal is due soon, and it was his intention not to renew it but to leave it to expire. Mr Burrows asked if any notice needed to be given but the Clerk did not indicate so. Mr Wood asked if a link could be put in place to direct visitors to the old website to the new one, but the Clerk did not think this would be necessary as the content would be moved to the Board’s new pages within the Middle Level website.

EGM 26.2.9 Consideration of Financial and Other Risk

EGM 26.2.9.1 System of Financial Control

The Clerk advised that the Board have already made amendments to the Bank Mandate to enable Middle Level's Head of Finance (Mr Wool) and Financial Assistant (Miss Ablett) to be signatories on the Boards Bank Accounts. The Chairman and Vice Chairman are also signatories. The current clerk will be removed on the 30th September. The current Financial Regulations and Statement of internal control have already been amended to allow the MLC Financial System to be operated on the Boards accounts.

EGM 26.2.9.2 Lodes End Pumping Station Refurbishment

The Clerk advised that both pumps are approaching 50 years old, and that reports from the Middle Level's Mechanical and Electrical engineer advise that the pumps are lifted out soon and inspected. It has been agreed that this is looked at. Some discussion was had on when the pumps were last refurbished, but it could not be established when this was. The Clerk suggested that it could have been in the 1990's.

EGM 26.2.9.3 Stocks and Shares Portfolio with Charles Stanley Limited

The Board agreed to continue with the Charles Stanley Portfolio. The Clerk reported that this is a medium to low-risk investment portfolio, and reports show many different investments across a large portfolio. The Chair is presently going through the process of verification with Charles Stanley alongside the Clerk. This will need concluding before transferring control to Andrew Wool at the Middle Level.

The Vice Chair proposed that the Board continue to invest with Charles Stanley and this was seconded by Mr Derek Smith. The Board agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the Boards portfolio with Charles Stanley remains.

EGM 26.2.10 Review of Policies, Procedures and Statements

The Clerk advised that the Board would usually review Policies at this point in the agenda, but that with the transfer of administration to the Middle Level Commissioners, this item is not required to be discussed at this time.

EGM 26.2.11 Transfer of Service Provision to Middle Level Commissioners

The Clerk asked Mr Burrows to talk the Board through his paper which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Mr Burrows hoped that the Board had found the paper self-explanatory, and explained to the Board the importance of ensuring all of the corrected delegations are in place when the Boards administration is passed to MLC. He advised that all of the IDBs that are administered by MLC have the same policy portfolio, and that a review of all policies is currently in progress.

He added that all of the resolutions listed in section 3 of the report will be needed to allow MLC to take on critical roles. This includes financial resolutions, data protection, clerking, and so on. Mr Burrows also asked for confirmation of the transfer dates as there seems to be some confusion on this.

There are a number of policies that will need to be in place from day one, and MLC will need the Board's authority to chip away at these in preparation for the next meeting of the Board. We would also like to set a date for the Board meeting next year, and proposed that the Board only meet once per year, in line with our other Boards, with extra meetings called only when necessary.

The Board agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 27th April 2027 at 7pm at the Old Nene Golf and Country Club.

The Clerk advised that the Board had adopted the Model Byelaws in 2021 but these had not been published. They had been approved by the Board, but when asked by Mr Burrows if the Byelaws had received Ministerial Approval, the Clerk advised that they had not. The Board agreed that Mr Burrows would take this action forward. The Clerk advised that the Model Byelaws had last been approved at the Board meeting held on 25th March 2025.

Mr Burrows invited questions from the Board, and added that he hoped to have a smooth transition on the 1st October. The outgoing Clerk advised he is happy to work with the Board for as long as necessary.

EGM 26.2.12.1 To Accept the Recommendations made in the Paper

The Board agreed to adopt Sections 3 and 4 including managing control of the investment portfolio. This was proposed by Mr Smith and seconded by Mr Wagstaffe and agreed by the Board.

RESOLVED

The Board confirmed that MLC are to be their service provider.

That the following are approved:

| Ref | Theme | Resolution |
|---|---|---|
| A | Clerkship | That the position of clerk to the IDB transfer from Middle Level Commissioners to the approved future service provider and the provision of clerkship services begin from that date. The MLC within inform Defra, ADA, EA and relevant Local Authorities of the change from 24th June 2026. |
| B | Finance | That the Head of Finance of the Middle Level Commissioners become the Board's Responsible Finance Officer. The Board current have no published Financial Regulations and Internal Controls. At this point the Board will need to adopt new Financial Regulations (example) and Internal Controls. the Board therefore approve that the Clerk publish these on behalf of the Board using the standard policies for MLC administered IDBs. |
| C | Finance | That the existing clerk be removed from any bank mandate, signatory, internet banking or similar and the Responsible Finance Officer be able to make arrangements to integrate the Board into the group banking arrangements with Barclays Bank PLC. |
| D | Finance | That MLC issue and collect drainage rates for 2026/27 along with the issuing and collection of any past rates and debt where feasible. |
| E | Finance | That the Board's internal audit services move to the Middle Level Commissioners' group arrangements with Whitings LLP as of April 2026. |
| F | Clerkship | That the Lead Clerk of the Middle Level Commissioners becomes the Board's Data Protection Officer and is considered a 'Data Handler' on behalf of the Board who is 'Data Controller' and becomes a shadow 'Data Handler' from 23rd June 2026. |
| G | Clerkship | The existing clerk, as current 'Data Handler' to handover all digital and physical data at least one month before the transition date. That the Board authorise their 'Data Handlers' to transfer all relevant data and information, including personal data and any operational information held. |

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| H | Clerkship | That Board Members agree that their contact information can be shared with ML Board, other MLC administered IDB Chairs/officials and MLC employees. |
| I | Clerkship | The existing clerk to decommission the Board's website and the page https://middlelevel.gov.uk/ramsey/ becomes the Board's website. The Board approve to adopt MLC's Privacy Policy and Complaints Procedure with MLC being the new public and partner point of contact for the Board at this point for all incoming/outgoing correspondence. |
| J | Clerkship | Other than the Board's Financial Regulations, Internal Controls, Privacy Policy, Complaints Procedure and any other policies specified in Section 4, the Board's other existing policies will remain in place until new or adapted policies are proposed by MLC. The Board approve that these can be approved and published by the Chairman in conjunction with the clerk outside of a meeting of the Board. |
| K | Clerkship | The Board's current policy statement is overdue an update. The Board is asked to review and approve the Policy Statement included as Appendix 2. |
| L | Clerkship | That the Board's current electricity contract will be managed by Middle Level Commissioners, and that MLC will manage transition when the current agreement comes to an end. |
| M | Governance | The Board currently has no schedule of reserved matters/scheme of delegation published. If one exists but is not published, then they need to resolve that it is superseded by a new schedule. The Board are asked to review and adopt the proposed new schedule of reserved matters and scheme of delegation included in Appendix 1. |
| N | Authorisations | The Board are asked to authorise that all employees and contractors of the Middle Level Commissioners are considered as duly authorised officers and are therefore able to use the Boards powers and IDB byelaws for their operational and regulatory roles on behalf of the Board.<br><br>The Board are asked to confirm that the Chairman, Vice-Chair and District Officer are considered as duly authorised officers and therefore able to use the Boards powers and IDB byelaws for their operational and regulatory roles on behalf of the Board. |
| O | Byelaws | The Board's current Byelaws are dated 8th October 2009. Defra have since instructed that all IDBs adopt new model Byelaws on two occasions (2012 and 2021). The Board are asked to adopt the 2021 model Byelaws and therefore be consistent with all Middle Level IDBs and instruct the Clerk to enact the process for advertising and Ministerial confirmation. |
| P | Other Services | That the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board are authorised to agree with the MLC Chief Executive and/or Chief Engineer the transition arrangements associated with the transition of M&E, Environmental, Planning & Consenting, Capital Works, Operational and other Technical Services. |

The new service provision will commence on 1st October 2026

The following policies are adopted:

- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Risk Management Strategy (example)
- Compliance & Enforcement Policy

The Board will meet at 7pm on Tuesday 27th April 2027 at the Old Nene Golf and Country Club.

EGM 26.2.12 Any Other Business

Mr Burrows observed that the Board does not currently have a rate seal and asked for the Boards approval to order a new rate seal, which was duly given.

The Clerk reported that he would like to present the Board with a timeline of Mr Wagstaffe's service and he will continue to compile this.

Mr Burrows asked if the Board's IDB1 report had been submitted, and the Clerk advised that it had. The Clerk reminded the Board that he had been Responsible Finance Officer until 1st April 2026.

Mr Burrows advised that he would contact ADA, Defra and so on, with an update of the Board address and so on the following week. The Clerk agreed to advise the Boards suppliers.

With no other items raised, the meeting closed at 7.55pm.