

1. Governance

1.1 Apologies

1.2 Declaration of Interest

1.3 Complaints and FOI

1.4 Minutes of Meeting 9 February 2022

Present	Ray Sutherland – Chair	RS
	Andrew Harp – Vice Chair	AH
	Len Bates	LB
	Phil Bates	PB
	Frances Beatty	FB
	Ralph Cooke	RC
	Paul Edwards	PE
	Angela Loughran	AL
	Jeff Sim	JS
	Tim Williams	TW
Mark Winnington	MW	

In attendance on behalf of JBA Consulting, Clerk, Engineer and Environmental Adviser:

Craig Benson	Clerk
Paul Jones	Engineer
Janette Parker	Rating Officer

In attendance on behalf of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust:

David Cadman	DC
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Apologies for Absence

2022.1 Apologies were received from Tony Parrott and Neil Brown. Clerk advised new member Paul Edwards in attendance, Members and Officers introduced themselves.

Declaration of Interest

2022.2 None.

Complaints and Freedom of Information Requests

2022.3 None.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

2022.4 Minutes of the last meeting held were considered, **proposed as a true record by FB and seconded AH.**

Matters Arising

2022.5 LB referred to Item 2021.49 and asked if there was an update on the EA model. Eng advised that the model was still being calibrated and the EA also needed to calibrate the flow gauges on the rivers to ensure outputs from the model were correct.

CLERK'S REPORT

2022.6 Information noted with Clerk confirming that in respect of Red Diesel it was likely IDBs may be given an exemption but, further clarification was being sought by ADA. He advised members would be kept informed.

FINANCIAL REPORT

2022.7 Rating Report – Clerk advised current balance now at £1,309.40 with 89% of rates collected to date. He advised that 8 accounts at a value of £1,217.43 were with Solicitors pending further action.

2022.8 Rate Removal – Approval proposed by AH and seconded by AL.

2022.9 Schedule of Payments – **Approval proposed by AH and seconded PB.** FB asked how the Flood Defence Levy was assessed and what it was assessed on. Clerk advised it was based on annual values, the area of the Board and the length of Main River within the Board district with the amount payable being based on an average amount of payments over the last ten years. He added that the levy had not increased since 2009/10 but that the budget factored for an increase which, to date, the EA had not considered. MW joined the meeting.

2022.10 Audit – Information noted.

2022.11 Risk Register – Clerk took members through advising main change in relation to potential maintenance cost increases with regards red diesel. MW advised in relation to Objective 1 – Contractors and Continuity that problems were being faced due to HS2 and the increased demand on resources with wages per hour increasing and asked if that could be covered in the Register. Clerk confirmed it could be included in the Register. He added that the Board were in a fortunate position as the current maintenance contractor was in a long-term contract but acknowledged that rates could still increase. **MW proposed it be added to the register and FB seconded with all members in favour.** PE pointed out that was a sensible suggestion as once contractors started switching to biofuels then costs would be passed on with their rates. **Approval of register proposed by AL and seconded by AH.**

2022.12 Estimates and Rates for Year Ending 31 March 2023 – Clerk took members through report advising £800 difference on out-turn against budgeted figure due to receipt of additional income from Stafford Borough Council for works on Radford Bank and from a developer who contacted the Board to request use of the Hydraulic Model. Clerk then referred to budget for next year advising that an increase had been built into the Flood Defence Levy and also the Maintenance Costs for red diesel issues. He added that funds had been allocated for the County Show should members wish the Board to attend this year. FB said it would be great to attend with it being the Jubilee Year. MW commented with the environment high on the agenda it would be good to engage with the Public and show how and why the Board works as it does and agreed with FB suggestion. All Members in favour. FB left meeting. Clerk then advised that new year budget would result in a carry forward balance of £80,746 so not proposing an increase to the drainage rate. **All Members in agreement to keep rate the same as last year.**

2022.13 Five Year Budget Estimate – Clerk took members through the report.

2022.14 Bank Charges Review – Clerk took members through short presentation. PE commented that if switched to account with lower fees then admin costs would increase to advise all necessary parties of new details so was a false economy. Clerk concurred but stated it was a Board decision. JS stated it should be monitored and reviewed regularly. AH advised he didn't believe a change was necessary at this time. AL stated she was looking for some kind of comment and asked if there was any way fees could be reduced or was the only alternative to move to another provider. Clerk apologised for the information provided and stated the biggest charge related to the online platform and that, if the Board chose to, they could return to cheque payments which would result in a reduction in online fees but this would be offset by increased bank fees due to the processing of cheques which the banks were keen to phase out. RS concluded that the consensus of the Board was to leave as is and monitor the situation.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

- 2022.15** Information noted.
- 2022.16** Hydraulic Modelling – Eng. advised when this was completed it would provide the opportunity to consider with the EA the possibility of maintenance on Main River and that this would also include a review of the precept and levy.
- 2022.17** Ordinary Watercourses – Eng. confirmed that maintenance had gone well with no issues reported and that a 70-metre section of Silkmore Crescent was still to be completed. He added that contact had been made with both the County Council in respect of the jetting programme and the EA on Flood Pollution and that responses were currently awaited from both.
- 2022.18** AL queried if Engineer was aware of a planning application for housing development on Herbert Road stating she had received a letter from the developer about the proposals and asked if the Engineer would make comments. Eng confirmed that all applications were commented on and thanked her for the information.

HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

- 2022.19** Information noted.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

- 2022.20** Stafford Brooks Project – David Cadman from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust joined the meeting and gave an update on the project which would involve 25 sites between the M6 at Doxey to Baswick then to South Radford Meadows aiming to increase biodiversity, flood mitigation and water quality. He confirmed that the initial funding request from the European Development Fund had been unsuccessful, but Highways England had invited them to apply and this was currently awaiting approval from Highways and the Secretary of State. He advised that this would be the first time a project of this nature was undertaken and that Highways England were keen to use this a national exemplar. RS requested a summary of the project be put in writing for all members and asked the Eng to liaise with DC to arrange.
- 2022.21** Biodiversity Action Plan – JS advised the proposal to search for the Black Poplar Tree. DC confirmed this dioecious tree was incredibly rare advising that previously within Stafford there were 70 male trees but only 1 female tree. However, in October last year a further female tree had been found and they were now trying to propagate and re-introduce the species along the Sow.
- 2022.22** Nitrate and Phosphate Testing – TW advised he was willing to assist with testing and asked if tests could be sent to him. JS and PE also agreed to assist. Clerk confirmed the purchase and issue of tests would be arranged and that would liaise with all regarding the results and an update given at the next meeting of any issues identified within the district.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 2022.23** LB referred to the Environment Act 2021 and water quality, drainage and sewage quoting the statement “local choice where new IDB created or an existing one extended but doesn't determine how much they need to raise” and queried if would affect this Board. Clerk confirmed this would enable IDBs to extend their boundaries to incorporate the full catchments which would give greater control over water management and provide the opportunity to raise more income but would also come with the responsibility to maintain watercourses and structures as within the existing boundary. Clerk added the Act would also allow IDBs to re-value all the land and buildings within its boundary and update values from the current 1988 rental values and 1990 domestic rate lists which were now 40years old. He advised this may well increase annual values but that payments may remain the same with a reduction in the rate. LB asked for this to be added as an agenda item for the next meeting. RS agreed.

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- 2022.24** Brought forward to 31 May 2022 due to attendance at County Show on 1 & 2 June 2022.
- 2022.25** Chair thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 12.20pm.