

MINUTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE WAVENEY LOWER YARE & LOTHINGLAND INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD HELD ON 27TH AUGUST 2008 AT 9.30 AM AT GILLINGHAM VILLAGE HALL

Present: Mr B G Collen (Chairman)
Mr P Cargill (Vice Chairman)
Mr J F Brown
Mr H Thomson Carrie
Mr R G Basey Fisher
Mr D Scarle
Mr C Gould (South Norfolk District Council)
Mr H Smith (South Norfolk District Council)
Mrs L Neal (South Norfolk District Council)
Miss P Allen (South Norfolk District Council)
Mr J Goldsmith (Waveney District Council)
Mr G Debbage (Broadland District Council)

In attendance: Mr B J S Blower (Clerk)
Mr D Jermy

Apologies: Mr I Vincent
Mr S Smith
Mr C Mutton
Mr H Budgen
Mr N Dodd
Mr D Burroughs
Mr M Caston
Mr D Watson
Mr J Bond
Mr S Ames (Gt Yarmouth Borough Council)
Mr A Blyth (Gt Yarmouth Borough Council)
Mr M Grey (South Norfolk District Council)
Mr J Savage (South Norfolk District Council)

4.1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 7th February 2008 having been circulated were approved as a true record. Mr Collen was authorised to sign them and there were no matters arising.

4.2 Accounts and Audit

Copies of the following documents had been circulated with the Agenda:-

- Accounts for the Year ending 31st March 2008
- Summary of Estimated and Actual Expenditure on a level by level basis with a statement of the revenue balance for each level as at 31st March 2008
- Internal Auditor's Report dated August 2008
- Audit Commission Annual Return for the Year ended 31st March 2008
- Risk Register

In addition the Clerk handed out at the meeting copies of the Asset and Investment Register

4.2.1 Accounts

The Clerk reported on the Accounts highlighting the overall revenue balance as at 31st March 2008 and drawing attention to the reports on balances for individual levels. He reported that the overall position was satisfactory with the revenue balance increasing slightly over the year. He expressed concern though at the negative balance for the Askews level of £1,417.12 and suggested that the balance for the Waveney Valley level (£65,570.02) was perhaps unnecessarily high. For this level a balance of approximately £45,000.00 had traditionally been maintained to protect ratepayers against significant fluctuations in the event of unforeseen emergency works being required and it was agreed that the aim should be to reduce the balance on that level to that amount. Board members expressed some concern at the deficit on the Askews level and asked for an explanation as to how this had arisen and the Clerk explained that there had for some time been difficulties in obtaining accurate estimates of expenditure and then keeping within the expenditure which had been budgeted. Councillors enquired whether there was a rolling programme of maintenance work and it was confirmed that this was the case for most levels. It was agreed that this problem underlined the importance of ensuring that there was consistency for all levels in the manner in which maintenance was organised and this point would be addressed later. Board members were content with the accounts and it was unanimously resolved that these be approved and that the statement of account in section 1 of the Audit Commission Annual Return be approved.

4.2.2 Audit Report

The Clerk drew Board members' attention to the Internal Auditor's Report and in particular to the tests referred to in paragraph 5, the conclusion in paragraph 6 and the recommendation in paragraph 7. Having considered the Report the Clerk enquired whether Board members wished to make any response to the Internal Auditor but none was considered appropriate and it was unanimously resolved to accept the Report as tabled.

4.2.3 Annual Governance Statement

The Clerk drew the Board's attention to the requirement to complete the Annual Governance Statement contained at section 2 of the Audit Commission Annual Return and the Board considered the Statement. The Clerk explained that by approving the Governance Statement Board members were agreeing to the replies suggested by the Clerk to numbered points 1-8 at section 2 of the Annual Return. He drew attention to the negative reply to point 6 and he explained that he had given a negative reply here because although he believed the Board had maintained an adequate and effective system of internal audit no review of its effectiveness had been conducted. At this stage he was not clear as to how such review might be undertaken. Board members were content with this and it was unanimously agreed that the Annual Governance Statement be approved.

4.2.4 Risk Register

The Clerk invited the Board to consider and approve the Risk Register that he had prepared and which had been circulated a copy of which is attached to these Minutes. The Clerk invited Board members to comment on the document and suggest any improvements or changes. There was some concern that there were no arrangements in place as to what would happen in the event of the long term absence of the Clerk. The Clerk indicated that in the short term matters would be covered by his office but longer term if he was unable to provide his services the Board would then need to look to an alternative supplier such as the Water Management Alliance at King's Lynn.

4.3 Any Other Business

- 4.3.1 Picking up on the point made earlier in connection with the concerns relating to the balance on the Askews level it was agreed that a sub-committee should be formed of about six members who could look at the role of surveyors. Some members considered that the only viable way of operating was to have a single surveyor responsible for all levels although it was acknowledged that this may take time to achieve and could undermine the fact that a lot of work was being done by surveyors on some levels for no remuneration. This matter should be addressed before the next meeting.
- 4.3.2 IDB Reform. The Chairman, Mr Cargill and the Clerk reported on meetings with other IDBs and with the Environment Agency concerning DEFRA's latest proposals for further amalgamation of IDBs. The background was that following the floods of Summer 2007 DEFRA had reviewed flood defence arrangements and were concerned that there were too many organisations responsible for delivering flood defence services and they wanted a more unified response. Their initial proposal had been to suggest that a single IDB should be formed for the whole of Norfolk and Suffolk. All Boards in the region had been strongly opposed to this suggestion but it was also agreed that some acknowledgement of DEFRA's requirements had to be made and consequent upon that proposals had been put forward to create a new association between the existing IDBs in Norfolk and Suffolk which would be the principal point of contact for DEFRA. Although this would create another layer of bureaucracy it was hoped that this would be preferable to disbanding the existing Boards and work is therefore progressing on creating an appropriate organisation. From the point of view of delivering a better service to the public it was also agreed that the Board should seek closer co-operation with local authorities in order to ensure that respective responsibilities were clearly defined and clearly understood. Each local authority would feed back information to the Clerk in order that arrangements could be made to start this process.

There being no further business the meeting closed.