

Minutes of a meeting of the Woodwalton Drainage Commissioners held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 at the Admiral Wells Station Road Holme.

The members except for S D Papworth inspected the Old pump house and New pump house and then held the meeting at 11.00am at the Admiral Wells.

#### **Apologies for Absence** L Parker

**Present** J R Papworth (Chairman), J S Papworth, S Papworth, A W Larson, J Rule, C Evans, R Wright (Clerk). Cllr S Bywater.

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Larson the Ag Reserves representative who was attending his first meeting.

#### **174/19 District Council Representation**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Simon Bywater who had replaced Cllr R B Howe as from 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018 as the Huntingdonshire District Council representative.

#### **175/19 Declaration of members Pecuniary Interests**

S Papworth and C Evans declared an interest in item 4(a) The Old Pump House.

J R Papworth declared an interest in matters relating to flail mowing and drain works.

#### **176/19 Appointment of Chairman**

Resolved that J R Papworth be appointed as Chairman after being duly proposed and seconded. Mr Papworth then completed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office

#### **177/19 Appointment of Vice Chairman**

Resolved that S D Papworth be appointed as Vice Chairman after being duly proposed and seconded. Mr Papworth then completed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

#### **178/19 Audit arrangements**

The Clerk confirmed that I Cooper had agreed to undertake the internal audit arrangements for 2018/2019 and hoped to be able to undertake the 2019/2020 also.

The Clerk reported that Littlejohn LLP have been appointed as External auditors.

#### **179/19 Confirmation of Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 were correctly recorded and that they be signed as being a true record.

#### **180/19 Matters Arising**

- a) Old Pump House – Further to minute 149/17(a) – The Chairman reported upon the future of the Old pump house building. Contact has been made with Maxey Grounds acting for Stephen Papworth but to date no correspondence has been received.

The members resolved that the pump house was an asset but required work to bring it up to a presentable standard. Members were concerned that a future owner could seek conversion to a dwelling that would greatly increase its value. The Clerk reported that the DV had investigated with Huntingdonshire District Council who referred to Planning Policy guidance part 7a, and part 8. It was viewed that HDC might support the reuse for amenity uses. It felt that a covenant should be sought regarding any future potential development.

RESOLVED - the Commissioners would sell the Old pump house and any offer should be made to the Clerk by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019. The terms and conditions of the sale to be agreed upon when an offer is received.

The Chairman to put warning signs up, such as Danger Deep Water – Danger Keep Out. The Chairman would purchase the signs and fix them to the building as soon as possible.

### **181/19 Great Fen Project**

The Great Fen had a good winter season where we trialled adding water onto Corneys/New decoy and Old Decoy using the syphon pump and slacker. This was very promising and we look forward to more water manipulation in the Autumn. We currently have an application in to vary our licence so that we can let water on to more than one farm at a time.

In the WW board area the Wildlife Trust have reverted the lease for eight fields adjacent to Woodwalton Fen back to their own occupation and will be reducing grazing intensity in the coming months. Subject to funding and feasibility we would like to install internal control structures to enable the water levels to be managed independently of Darlows farm if required, and enlarge some of the shallow water bodies on site so that they hold water.

In the coming summer work is focussing on controlling weeds, organising the hay cut and launching the grazing season.

### **182/19 Maintenance of Channels**

- a) The Chairman reported that 64 hours of flail mowing and 38 hours of slubbing drains and 9hours clearing weed was undertaken in 2018/2019 at a cost of £2,432, £1,444 and £333respectively.
- b) The Commissioners considered works for 2019/2020. Resolved – that flail mowing would be undertaken on all the strict Drains. It was suggested that the Great Fen/ Natural England may favour only doing one side of the drains within their ownership. It was agreed that they would liaise with the Chairman prior to

work commencing.

It was agreed that slubbing or weed clearance would only be undertaken in areas where a build up of weed or a wind blow was causing a problem.

### **183/19 Pumping Station**

- a) The Chairman reported that the pump was operating well since its refurbishment. The pump hours went from 21509 to 21626 during the year.
- b) Vulcan Inspection Services – inspected centrifugal pump and motor, control panel and Gearbox – No Defects were reported. The Chairman reported that the Vulcan engineer had to be reprimanded in regards to his attitude but in the end was co-operative.

### **184/19 General Matters**

- a) Planning - The Clerk reported that the Consulting Engineer had dealt with CPIER report and HDC Local Plan.
- b) Risk Management  
The Clerk reported upon the risk management assessment and a review of the systems of internal control and Commissioner's insurance cover has been made: - In accordance with Defra/ADA the Commissioners are reviewing Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Systems of Internal Control and all other existing policies and procedures.

The Board considered the Biosecurity Policy & Biosecurity Procedures Statement that ADA suggested in June 2018.

General Data Protection Regulations were implemented on 25 May 2018. A Data Protection Policy and Privacy Policy were drawn up. The Commissioners to formally approve them.

ADA and Defra are looking at a revision to the model Byelaws so until they have resolved the issues the adoption of new byelaws will be suspended.

The Clerk attended a workshop in Peterborough - Good Governance Guide – It provided members with a comprehensive guide to their role as water managers servicing the local communities. The workshop was well attended, and future events will cover Finance, Environment, Health & Safety and welfare and Communications engagement.

The Health & Safety arrangements continue to be updated, -Whittlesey & District IDB have implemented a review of policies and procedures by the NFU and this

will be available for the Board to adopt.

The Chairman reported that a Consultant he uses on the Farm for Health & Safety costs in the region of £160

- c) Environment Agency – Water Resources abstraction licences for previously exempt activities – abstracting water into Internal drainage districts would require a licence – Middle Level Commissioners were dealing with one to cover all Boards within the MLC system

Water management 2019/2020. The Clerk reported that a Lower Nene Water Planning Group had been established – Users of water from the Nene has set up a workgroup to look at the management of water and the quantity that can be used.

- d) Electricity – A new contract with SSE from 01/08/2019 to 31/03/2023 has been agreed.

**185/19 Payments** – The Commissioners considered and approved all payments made during 2018/2019

Vouchers 1 – 19 £16,848.08 inclusive of vat

#### **186/19 Annual Accounts 2018/2019**

- a) The Commissioners approved the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statement for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.
- b) The Chairman signed the Certificate of Exemption as the annual turnover was below £25,000.
- c) The audit of the 2018/2019 accounts will be advertised on or before the 16<sup>th</sup> June and the accounts are available for inspection from 17 June to 26 July 2019.
- d) No matters were raised by the External Auditor on the 2017/2018.
- e) The Internal Auditor report on 2018/2019 accounts was circulated and noted that no issues were raised.

#### **187/19 Estimates of Income and Expenditure**

The Commissioners considered and approved estimates of Income of £50 & Expenditure of £16,330 for 2019/2020. Giving a net expenditure of £16,280. The payment of the Clerk's fee for 2018/2019 was £3,000 and will be retained t £3,000 for 2019/2020. The payment for looking after the pumping station for 2018/2019 was £950 and no increase was sought.

The Clerk reported that the position of CEO for Whittlesey & District IDB had been advertised and five suitable applications have been received. The Clerk has also had talks with North level District IDB and Middle Level Commissioners. MLC have quoted

£1,400 for Finance rating only and Admin/finance/rating £2,500 and office expenses of £300. The Commissioners felt that they would seek employment of an individual Clerk as opposed to being under a larger drainage authority. J Rule knew of a person that may fit the and would give details to the Clerk. Meanwhile the Clerk would continue to seek a replacement that suited the Commissioners.

### **188/19 Rates and Levy Requirement**

Under Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the appropriate proportions in which the net expenditure of the Commissioners must be borne for 2018/2019: -

- a) Proportion to be borne by Agricultural Sector 96.22%
- b) Proportion to be borne by Special Levy issued  
To Huntingdonshire District Council 3.78%

In 2019/20 a rate of 1p together with corresponding special levy would raise £612.98  
The estimated net expenditure of £16,280 in 2019/20 is equivalent to: -

- a) rate of 26.56 p in the £ on agricultural land and buildings to raise £15,665.35
- b) A special levy on Huntingdonshire District Council of £614.65

In 2014/2015 & 2015/2016 agricultural land paid £14,155.44 (24p) and the District Council £556.08

In 2016/2017 - 2017/2018 – 2018/2019 agricultural land paid £11,796.20 (20p) and the District Council £463.40

**RESOLVED** – that a rate of 12p in the £ be levied: -

- a) A rate in the £ on agricultural land & buildings of 12p to raise £5,829.36
- b) A special levy on Fenland District Council of £8,450.28
- c) That the Clerk be authorised to collect any outstanding drainage rate through the appropriate court
- d) That the seal be affixed to the Record of drainage rate and special levies.

**189/19 Date of next meeting May 2020**