

SRA BOARD MEETING – 25TH March 2015

Minutes of a Meeting of the SRA Board held in the IDB Offices, Bradbury House, Highbridge on Wednesday 25th March 2015 at 10.00am.

Members Present:

Cllr John Osman (Chair)
Tony Bradford (Vice Chair)
Cllr Anne Fraser
Cllr Harvey Siggs
Cllr Tim Taylor
David Jenkins
Ray Adlam

Peter Maltby
Jeff Fear
Cllr Ric Pallister
Nick Gupta
James Diamond
Cllr John Williams

Officers in Attendance:

Martin Buckle
Sarah Diacono
Rachel Burden
Emma Beardsley

Paula Hewitt
Iain Sturdy
Steve Webster

Apologies for Absence

Cllr Duncan McGinty

1. Declarations of interest – agenda item 1

No declarations of interest were stated.

2. Minutes of previous meeting – agenda item 2

The SRA Board agreed the Minutes of the last meeting on 27th February 2015. Cllr Anne Fraser, referring back to item 8 on the minutes about substitution, wanted it recorded that she was the substitute member for Sedgemoor if it hadn't been stated.

3. Public Question Time – agenda item 3

Cllr John Osman introduced Mrs Lesley Webb who opened with her Question for the SRA Board about byelaws for watercourses. Martin Buckle, Project Manager of the Somerset Rivers Authority Project indicated that a written response to the question had been provided. He stated that a solution was being sought, but time scales could not be confirmed at this time.. Cllr John Osman proposed that a report should come back to the next meeting of the Board.

Cllr Harvey Siggs suggested that that each of the Districts should take this back and help speed this process up.

David Jenkins drew attention to the need to ensure that responses to questions were given from the perspective of the SRA as a whole as opposed to the perspective of just the organisation drafting the response. Following a discussion, it was agreed that clarification on the use of the legal powers should be pursued with urgency.

4. **Local Memorandum of Understanding & Constitution – Processes for Amendment, Co-option and Public Speaking – Agenda item 4**

Paper 4a: Processes for Amendment. Martin Buckle opened this section stating that the Constitution already indicated that there will be a need for a full review of the Local Memorandum of Understanding and Constitution before the end of the financial year 2015/16, but that it is recognised that there might be a need for amendment before that date. The SRA Board now needs to agree the process for doing this.

Cllr John Osman stated that the key issue is in paragraph 7, the 30 days notice period, which he felt would be appropriate. The SRA Board agreed to the proposals set out in the report.

Paper 4b: Co-option. Martin Buckle indicated in this section that the Constitution does recognise the possibility of co-option, and that it would allow the SRA Board to co-opt additional members once the Board agrees a framework for so doing. The paper set out a number of issues to be considered. A discussion took place about the proposed framework, and the case for initiating its use this year, John Osman proposed that expressions of interest should be sought for a maximum of 2 co-opted members this year, however this proposal was not supported.

The SRA Board agreed to the processes for appointing co-opted members set out in the report, but declined to set a maximum number of Board members. A further proposal was put forward by Peter Maltby that the process of co-option should not be initiated this year. This proposal was supported by all members of the Board, except Cllrs John Osman, John Williams and Harvey Siggs.

Paper 4c: Public Speaking. Martin Buckle, indicated that questions from the public have been invited, but there was now a need to set out guidance for the public on how to submit their questions to the SRA Board. The SRA Constitution indicated that a framework for doing so would need to be agreed. The SRA Board agreed the proposals set out in this report.

5. **Financial Arrangements: agenda item 5**

Emma Beardsley, Advisory Finance Manager, Somerset County Council outlined the financial arrangements the County Council were proposing would be put in place for the SRA to ensure the SRA funds were ring fenced and that appropriate financial controls were adopted, including monitoring and reporting. Peter Maltby asked whether the proposed financial reporting would include the monies raised through the Bath & West for Land Management. Sarah Diacono explained that the proposed financial arrangements only covered the monies for which Somerset County Council was the accountable body and as the Bath & West were the accountable body for the funds they raised the proposed financial reporting would not include these

The SRA Board agreed the proposals set out in the papers

6. Common Works Programme – agenda item 6

Rachel Burden, Somerset Levels and Moors 20 Year Plan Manager, Environment Agency opened the presentation with an outline of the Common Works Programme, which involves all the flood risk management partners in Somerset putting all their works programmes in one document, so that members of the public and partners can see all the works that are taking place in the programme for the current year. This includes all Environment Agency inland flood risk management works, maintenance programmes, the Enhanced Maintenance Programme, and all works by SCC as Lead Local Flood Authority and Local Highways Authority, Drainage Boards, District Councils, and Water Companies.

Iain Sturdy, Chief Engineer, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium talked the SRA Board through the Drainage Boards' element of the Common Works Programme. Steve Webster, Flood Risk Manager, Somerset County Council outlined the local authority and water company flood risk improvement schemes, which are mainly minor schemes and include highways drainage schemes.

All these schemes are presented as documents in agenda item 6 on the SRA Website.

The SRA Board endorsed the programme and requested that they should receive regular progress reports on the progress of the Common Works Programme, particularly when schemes are delivered. Cllr Anne Fraser requested that all scheme completions should be communicated effectively to communities, which would mean ensuring relevant parish councils were notified as well as issuing press releases and putting information on the Somerset Rivers Authority website. The Board also requested regular progress updates from the Bath & West funded Land Management programme as well as from Natural England.

7. Flood Action Plan – Leaders Status Report. - agenda item 7

Sarah Diacono, Senior Manager for the Somerset Rivers Authority and Programme Manager for the Flood Action Plan opened by asking Rachel Burden of the Environment Agency to update the SRA Board on progress with regard to the next section of dredging, downstream from Northmoor pumping station. Rachel Burden informed the Board that the tendering process will start week commencing 30th March and the work itself is planned to start this summer. The latest technical advice is that the most effective way to achieve the maximum benefit from the dredge will be to dredge from one bank only, however this was not consistent with either the original design, previously communicated, or public expectation. It was discussed that it was important to ensure the public understood this change and that it was beneficial, and therefore it was agreed that the SRA, with help from the EA, would issue a briefing note, in order to get the message across.

Sarah Diacono then outlined the progress that had been achieved in other Flood Action Plan work streams. Key points were:

- The Enhanced Maintenance programme, having been approved at the last Board meeting, is now in implementation mode. As part of this, the Drainage Boards have started work on establishing what work needs to be done to maintain the previously dredged sections of the rivers.
- Land Management: with funding now in place, work has started on targeting and scoping and setting up the Capital Grant Scheme. In addition the first phase of the Community Land Trust Action has commenced, namely to identify the level of interest within the community for such a scheme.
- Urban Water Management: now the government has published guidelines, work is underway to determine how best to implement the new arrangements for approving and enforcing maintenance of SuDs on new developments. The team are also looking to take part in a joint EU project to gain funding for a demonstration project to retrofit semi permeable materials on existing large areas of hard surface.
- Resilient Infrastructure: installation of the road closure gates started in March. Work will start on April 7th on the A372 at Beer Wall to make permanent the temporary structures put in last winter. This joint project with the EA, as work to reconnect the Sowey and Lanagre rhyme through the new culverts needs to take place at the same time.
- Work supporting the development of Community Flood Plans continues facilitated by Community Resilience Officers.
- The SRA will be publishing the Economic Impact Assessment after the general election.

The SRA Board was pleased to note the progress that had been made.

Cllrs Anne Fraser and Harvey Siggs left the meeting.

8. DCLG/Defra/SRA Sustainable funding officer Review – agenda item 8

Sarah Diacono provided the Board with progress update of the national Review and the local work stream, both of which are supporting the development of an appropriate mechanism to deliver long-term funding for the SRA. The second day of stakeholder panel interviews had recently been held which is part of the evidence gathering process informing the national Review of all options. The next steps for the Review are to develop the options further, exploring all the advantages, disadvantages and implications. A draft of the Review report will be discussed at the SRA Workshop in June. Work on the local work stream has started to develop the detail necessary for implementation of a solution, once a decision is made. One of the key aspects of this work is the identification of the scale of funding required for next year and beyond.

9. AOB – agenda item 9

Cllr John Osman drew attention that this was the last SRA meeting for Cllr Tim Taylor, and thanked him for his contribution to the progress that had been achieved.

The meeting ended at 11.38am

Chair Signature:

Date: