

UMIDB  
**UPPER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING of the BOARD**  
held via **Zoom Conference Call**  
on **Tuesday 24 August 2021** at **1pm**.

**Members of the Board Present**

H Rogers - Chairman

O Baldock  
Cllr M Davis  
Cllr P Dixon  
Cllr M Gillman  
D Goff  
Cllr Ald P Harper  
Cllr B Hills  
S Highwood  
Cllr S McGregor  
Cllr J Perry  
W Thompson  
C Wheeler

**In attendance**

O Pantrey – Clerk  
L Carey – Finance Officer  
W Smith – Technical Assistant

Cllr McGregor informed that Board of the passing of Cllr J Scholey, a former member of the Board.

The Chairman thanked Cllr MacGregor for the information and requested an official letter of condolence was sent to his family.

All present agreed to mark the minute in memory.

**Action:** Clerk to send letter of condolence to Mrs G Scholey.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies received from Cllr D King.

**2. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION**

## UMIDB

None of the Members present declared a pecuniary and/or non-pecuniary interest in any of the items to be discussed on the Agenda.

### **3. RESPONSE TO LETTER FROM LMIDB CHAIRMAN, S MAIR**

The Chairman opened the discussion relating to the letter from S Mair, Chairman of the LMIDB, by outlining again the contents of the letter. He said that he felt it was only right that full Board responded to the letter as some were strategic in nature. He then allowed members to respond with their thoughts.

There was a discussion held where members gave their views. Generally, the response to the letter received was negative. The letter was deemed inappropriate by all members, and it was felt S Mair was being particularly unreasonable considering it came shortly after a meeting with the LMIDB.

It was suggested that amalgamation was now off the table and that the ongoing relationship needed to be amended, with a joint service agreement potentially set up but on a more distant basis. There was a general agreement that the drainage needs of the two Boards was a major stumbling block for more than that. It was also mentioned that the work of the Clerk to outline the long-term future of the Boards should not be overlooked and that this might be the best way to work towards a merger in the future.

The new office purchase by the LMIDB was noted as being unsuitable for some staff geographically and that it would be unreasonable to expect them to travel so far, and that the home working situation had worked fine since March 2020.

The ongoing situation with the staff was discussed as being a valid question in the event of separation. The office staff were all still employed by the UMIDB, and it was important that the Board gave clarity regarding their future.

A general question was put to the members asking that as the employer would all staff come with the UMIDB in the event of separation and was there enough work to have all staff retained?

The Clerk was asked what the current situation was regarding LMIDB decisions and resolutions towards the UMIDB and amalgamation?

He said there appeared to be no appetite for merger from the LMIDB, but he believed a set of long-term strategies would be a way to smooth the relationship and align the two Boards. He added that he was disappointed that there seemed little to no desire to align from either Board and it made the decision far more simple.

The suggestion was then made that the UMIDB should retain all staff and go its own way. It was however important to note that there were budgetary constraints and that had to be considered. The paper presented by the Clerk was again highlighted as showing a very eventful future for surface water drainage and that the Board could make a huge difference to its stakeholders and that might be best achieved on its own.

The funds released to the LMIDB towards the purchase of the new office/depot were then discussed, and it was brought forward that the Board should demand this was returned immediately.

On proposal from the Chair and seconded by C Wheeler, it was unanimously **AGREED** to demand the return of the money released to the LMIDB as part of the office/depot funding, less the money spent on legal advice and design.

**Action:** Letter to be sent by the Chairman demanding the return of the money put into the office/depot account by the UMIDB.

## UMIDB

**Action:** Clerk to provide information on the breakdown of the money spent from the office/depot fund and evidence of advice provided for that money.

There were further voices of support for the suggestion to separate from the existing agreement and move forward without the LMIDB.

The discussion moved back to the staffing levels required of one Board and how that might look into the future. It was decided that the long-term strategies of the Board should be discussed later in the year, but the Board supported the staff entirely.

Further comment again suggested that the long-term threat of climate change, and how this might financially impact the Boards, should be considered as it would ease the burden on the stakeholders when it came to finance larger conservation and water retention projects.

There was then a discussion about the need to provide efficiency.

The Clerk asked what efficiencies the Board were referring to, as it was currently a case that we are not really providing a full service in any regard and that the efficiencies of focusing on itself might actually be of benefit to the stakeholders.

The discussion then moved to the sale of Albion Place. It was suggested that the sale of Albion Place should continue as planned but members were encouraged to put final thoughts forward in light of the change in direction relating to amalgamation.

The movement of data and any potential issues was raised. The Clerk suggested that we would not be in breach of GDPR, but the data would need to be split and this would take time.

The arguments for and against were then requested from the Clerk.

He said that in favour of staying was that it was an owned asset and offered a secure place for the Board to operate from. He continued by saying that it was an aged building which presented a potential liability, it had very poor layout for collaboration and generally speaking the multiple floor, haphazard layout was not conducive to efficient working. He finished by saying that the internet was appalling and was not feasibly able to be improved at this time.

It was noted that commercial property and commercial rental was a buyer's market at this time, and that the Board could arrange a very attractive rental package at a different location. It could even look to revert the building to a residential property and look to make a reasonable return on it.

There was a discussion about the legal position of the Board should it decide it does not want to leave Albion Place in the short term. Generally, it was not felt that Albion Place was a worthwhile purchase although it was noted that the LMIDB could force the sale of the property and make the Board decide one way or the other.

There was then a suggestion that the least disruptive option might be to go to Conqueror Court and then decide on the future from there. This was generally seen as being untenable without a joint service agreement in place as it might cause the Board to have to move twice. It was also highlighted that the Board had made this decision to leave Albion Place and it might be seen as flip flopping, to which it was argued that a new relationship between the Boards changed that position.

The meeting then moved to discuss and make resolutions for the future arrangements and accommodation.

## UMIDB

On proposal by P Harper, and seconded by C Wheeler, following full consideration of the letter received from the LMIDB it was **AGREED** that the existing Joint Services Agreement is NOT in the interest of the Board and will be terminated (final date of separation to be confirmed).

In favour - 12  
Against - 0  
Abstain - 1  
Absent - 1

### **4. METHOD OF SALE - ALBION PLACE**

It was considered that due to the decision of the Board to sever the existing agreement between the Boards, the previous decision to sell was now superseded and no longer relevant.

It was then determined that a resolution should be made to recognise the change in circumstance. A discussion was held to determine the desired arrangement relating to accommodation.

It was noted by the D Goff and the Clerk that the most important thing to determine now was the security of the staff. All agreed that it was vital this was made clear for the staff.

On proposal by M Davis, seconded by D Goff, it was **AGREED** to retain and honour the existing staff, including the Technical Assistant, on their present contracts and terms of employment.

In favour - 12  
Against - 0  
Abstain - 0  
Absent - 2

**Action:** D Goff to speak with staff in due course relating to their future desires for employment.

With that resolved, the resolution on Albion Place was finalised.

On proposal from the Chair, it was **AGREED** that the office staff and the UMIDB will remain in situ at Albion Place and the sale deferred until alternative arrangements have been made for the long-term accommodation of the Board.

In favour - 12  
Against - 0  
Abstain - 0  
Absent - 2

**Action:** Letter to be sent from the Chairman informing the LMIDB of all the decisions made.

### **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Resignation of Giles Swift

The Clerk wanted to minute thanks for the service from G Swift and suggested he sent a letter of thanks on behalf of the Board.

All **agreed** that G Swift should be thanked for his service.

**Action:** Clerk to send letter to G Swift and S McCloud thanking them.

Board Member Intranet Site

The Clerk said there were teething issues with the access to the site, and he would continue to look into this. He did say that should this become more trouble than it was worth he would look into using a different system to create an area that members could utilise for further information.

**6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Board meeting was confirmed for Tuesday 16 November 2021 at 2pm.

**7. PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS**

There was a private and confidential discussion.

**8. CLOSURE**

The Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and said this meeting showed a definitive and unified route forward for the Board.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed.