

LMIDB
LOWER MEDWAY INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



**MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Finance Committee held at
Office of GW Finn, Sittingbourne
on Monday 23 August 2021 at 2pm**

Members of the Committee Present

J Mair (Chairman of Finance)
S Mair (Chairman of the Board)
Ald D Dewar-Whalley
J Lewis

In attendance

O Pantrey – Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apology received from G Fulton.

2. ITEMS OF INTEREST DECLARATION

S Mair declared an interest in the Axminster site as he was the Site's Managing Agent. He informed the members he would be acting on behalf of the owners and not as a Board member on that subject.

3. RESPONSE FROM H ROGERS REGARDING LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chair of Finance handed over to the Board Chairman to clarify what had been sent to H Rogers (Chairman of the UMIDB). The Chairman of the Board said that his letter had been sent with a response deadline, but the UMIDB had requested time to hold a full meeting. He said this was helpful as they would likely be able to give final decisions on the questions asked.

He went on to say that he still felt auction was the best way to dispose of Albion Place as it was the most open form of sale and avoided criticism over how a sale might be conducted. He said this was somewhat against the advice of Cllr M Davis of the UMIDB, who suggested a private sale might offer the best form of sale in terms of a return. He did say that auction was not removed by the UMIDB though and would remain the fallback position.

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There was then a discussion on current markets relating to residential and business property.

The Chairman said he did not think it was worth being bogged down in at this stage as the UMIDB hadn't made it clear what they wanted to do with the building.

All agreed this should be put on hold until the UMIDB had made their intentions clearer regarding the sale.

Ald D Dewar-Whalley said this was a sound decision and gave time to assess the decision of the UMIDB.

4. DISCUSSION OVER FUTURE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UMIDB

The Chairman wanted to address the next point in relation to the future with the UMIDB.

There was a discussion about the risk the LMIDB faced if it did not have the flexibility to employ vital staff, and that in the event of separation the LMIDB were very vulnerable.

J Lewis said that he felt the LMIDB was held back by the UMIDB due to their decision-making process and that they should not have anything to do with them.

All agreed that the current relationship was not beneficial to the LMIDB.

The Chairman of the Board said he wanted a clear direction to recommend to the Board and would speak with Innes Thomson of ADA to discuss what might happen if the Board went its own way.

The Clerk said the only documents pertaining to the Joint Service Agreement that he was aware of were the ones he had added to last year.

It was then agreed that looking at separation more closely might offer better scope for progress and opportunity.

At this point the Clerk was asked to leave as a discussion over the recent talks with staff was held.

The Clerk returned to the meeting 10 minutes later.

The Chairman of the Board said he was concerned about staffing levels for the LMIDB as they did not directly employ the office staff.

The Clerk said he and his staff were under a lot of pressure at the moment, to the point where he was concerned we might start seeing illness occur.

There was a discussion as to whether the different attitudes towards staffing were grounds for not amalgamating.

The Clerk said the Boards should assess the long term aims and then decide whether the Boards futures were aligned.

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The Chairman of the Board said he struggled to imagine the UMIDB ever agreeing with the LMIDB, and that the feeling from the Board in general did not support the amalgamation.

J Lewis asked if the Board could employ its own office staff now?

The Clerk said yes, but it was important to know the industry was niche and recruitment without proper handover or introduction would be very expensive. He said the time involved in bringing in people with no experience would put more pressure on the staff at this time.

Ald D Dewar-Whalley asked the Clerk would he prefer experience or youth.

The Clerk said his preference would be to fund the education of younger people and bring them through from the ground up as IDB experts. He said this would be cheaper and likely have better long-term results for the Boards.

A conversation about staffing levels took place.

All members agreed that the LMIDB should start looking into recruiting its own staff.

The Chairman of the Board said he would request a written response from the UMIDB by Friday 27th August, and that a meeting with ADA to discuss separation was the best way forward.

It was agreed that the severing of the Joint Service arrangement was the favoured position of the committee and should a satisfactory response from the UMIDB not be forthcoming, they would recommend to the Board formally that a separation should occur.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Axminster depot tenancy

The Clerk informed members he had spoken with Bracher's and had instructed them to proceed with the tenancy agreement as per the agreed heads of terms. He said that in the interim he had requested a tenancy at will so that a move could occur before the preparation of the final agreement documents.

The Chairman of the Board said he would be drawing up the tenancy at will and was working on this to get it in place shortly.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 25th October 2021.

7. CLOSE

There being no further business the Chairman thanked Members of the committee for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.