

# WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## MINUTES

of the proceedings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee at 47 Norfolk Street, Boston on  
**Wednesday 17 January 2024**

**Present:-** P. Richardson (Chairman)

**Members:** T. Aitken                      C. Hardy  
B. Beattie                        N. Jones  
C. Coultham                    W. Leggett  
(Vice-Chairman)                H. Staples  
J. Woods

### 1. **Apologies for Absence**

The Chief Executive confirmed apologies had been received from K. Smith and J. Wood. The Chairman extended his thanks to Helen Staples for joining the Committee.

### 2. **Declaration of Interest**

None

### 3. **BUSINESS ESTIMATES**

The Chief Executive presented his memorandum to the Committee, which covered the out turn for the current year, a rate history, and the estimate for 2024/25 showing a suggested rate increase of 20%. The Chief Executive confirmed that despite this hike in rates, the average rate rise over the past 10 years remained at 4.2%, which was not factored into the local Councils' rate increases.

The Chief Executive referred Members to page 1 of his report which showed the out turn for the current year which was a record of the Board's position after 9 months and the envisaged out turn at the year-end was shown on page 3. The figure showed a deficit of £1.1M. While disappointing this was attributed to excess pumping costs incurred during the recent weather events. A highland water storm in the run of £1.1M had been made and would be considered at the (DFIC) meeting on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Nothing was definite but the Chief Executive was cautiously optimistic that the claim would be paid, but no more than that.

The worst-case scenario was the impact the £1.1M deficit would have on the General Reserve which was at 70% larger at the start of the year and would be lower by the end of it. The Board had indicated in December a wish to see the General Reserve at the correct level and therefore a £1.0M increase to the General Reserve would mean it was at 80% of the anticipated level. If the payment of £1.1M was received from the Government Agency (GAP) the Reserve would be at 80%.

The Chairman added that at present electricity was being purchased at a lower rate than it will be from April 2024 when it would increase by 170%. The recent weather event had incurred costs to the Board of £150k, and that was at the lower rate. Once the 170% electricity increase was added, not so many weather events could be covered by the reserve.

A discussion followed regarding the various electricity options.

N. Jones - asked whether the use of solar panels had been considered? The Chairman said that unfortunately the sun was not normally shining when needing to pump water in a weather event.

The Chief Executive confirmed that solar had been investigated but the major issue was storage. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the storage had would need to be massive and the storage issue was very complex. The gains that would be made came with the new pumping stations which would be much more efficient. The new Whingle Pumping Station would use 50% of the electric needed by the existing