



REPORT TO:	Council
DATE:	18 th September 2023
SUBJECT:	Appointment to (potential) Local Government Association Special Interest Group on Internal Drainage Board Levies.
PURPOSE:	To seek approval for the appointment of a Council representative to the Special Interest Group.
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Leader of the Council, Councillor Anne Dorrian
REPORT OF:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director – Corporate
REPORT AUTHOR:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director – Corporate
EXEMPT REPORT:	No

SUMMARY

The Partnership Councils, working with other Councils facing the same issue, have collectively applied to the Local Government Association (LGA) to form a Special Interest Group to work with Government to seek a new funding mechanism for Internal Drainage Boards.

Whilst the Government has supported the Council financially in 23/24 to meet the rising costs of Internal Drainage Boards, it is yet to confirm a longer-term funding solution.

Applying to the Local Government Association to form a Special Interest Group provides a means to bring the Councils with this common interest together to collectively raise the matter with Government through an established mechanism and with LGA support.

This report seeks to appoint the Council's representative to the Special Interest Group (should the LGA confirm it is supported).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To appoint Cllr Sandeep Ghosh, Portfolio Holder for Finance, as Boston Borough Council's representative on the Local Government Association Internal Drainage Board Special Interest Group (if formed).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable the Council to be fully engaged in the work of the Special Interest Group.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- Approve an alternative representative for the Special Interest Group – not recommended as it would usually be the relevant Portfolio Holder that undertakes the role.
- Not to appoint to the Special Interest Group – not recommended as the matter is an important matter for the Council.

1. REPORT

- 1.1. The Partnership Councils fully recognise and appreciate the important work of the Internal Drainage Boards and their role in protecting our communities. The Councils believe it is important the Boards are well funded to undertake their work.
- 1.2. There are a handful of Councils across the country that are required to pay a levy to support the work of Internal Drainage Boards – Boston, East Lindsey and South Holland being three of those Councils.
- 1.3. When the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership formed the approved work programme identified a need to work with partners, including Government, to seek a new funding mechanism for Internal Drainage Boards, recognising the existing arrangement places significant pressure on the Partnership Councils' finances and the ability to fund front line services.
- 1.4. The levy requirement on the Partnership Councils has increased substantially due to increased pressures the Drainage Boards have faced in their own running costs, primarily driven by the increases in utility prices.
- 1.5. Following conversations with Government, Government confirmed a one-off payment to 15 Councils to help alleviate the financial pressure this created in 23/24. The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Councils received the following sums:
 - Boston - £318,890
 - East Lindsey – £927,373
 - South Holland - £298,739
- 1.6. Since receiving the payments, the Partnership Councils have collectively continued to have dialogue with Government about a new funding approach for Drainage Boards to remove the pressure from the District/Borough Council budgets.
- 1.7. As part of the Partnership's ongoing effort to secure a new funding arrangement, the Partnership's Council Leaders have jointly written to the other 12 Councils that received a one-off payment from Government, to seek their support for an application to the Local Government Association for the formation of a Special Interest Group into the matter. 10 Councils affected by the issue are required to support such an application. That threshold has been reached. As such, the application to the Local Government Association has been made and we await the Association's response.
- 1.8. This report requests the Council appoint its representative to the Special Interest Group (should it be formed).

EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

This report furthers the Partnership's ambition to seek a new and sustainable funding arrangement for Internal Drainage Boards.

IMPLICATIONS

SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

An aligned approach to an important financial issue, as identified in the Partnership's Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24.

STAFFING

None

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

DATA PROTECTION

None

FINANCIAL

The ambition is to work with Government to support a change in funding mechanism which, if successful, could result in financial savings for the Partnership and other affected Councils.

RISK MANAGEMENT

None

STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

Consultation has taken place with the other Councils that are party to the application for a Special Interest Group.

REPUTATION

None

CONTRACTS

None

CRIME AND DISORDER

None

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

None

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

None

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ACRONYMS

- LGA – Local Government Association
- IDBs – Internal Drainage Boards

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

None

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	James Gilbert, Assistant Director – Corporate James.gilbert@e-lindsey.gov.uk
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Approved for publication:	Councillor Anne Dorrian, Leader of the Council