

22 July 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Information



Cabinet Member                      Cllr Martin Coffin, Cabinet Member for Finance,  
Waste and Technical Services

Responsible Officer                  Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance and  
Transformation

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**Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board proposed merger**

**1        Summary and Purpose of Report**

- 1.1      The report advises Members that notice was formally given on 10 June 2025 of a formal merger between the Lower Medway Board and the North Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board. The consultation period closed on 10 July 2025.

**2        Corporate Strategy Priority Area**

- 2.1      Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment.
- 2.2      Internal Drainage Boards levy special payment requests (similar to a precept) on relevant Local Authorities to manage water levels and ditch maintenance within areas of special drainage need.

**3        Introduction and Background**

- 3.1      At the meeting of this Committee on 25 February 2025, Members received an update from Cllr Dennis King who spoke on behalf on Borough Council representatives on both the Upper and Lower Medway Drainage Boards. Members were also provided with a report from the clerks of the Board.
- 3.2      Within the report, Members were advised of a potential merger between the Lower Medway Board and the North Kent Marshes Water Internal Drainage Board. The report said:

*“As part of ongoing improvements and efficiency measures, the Lower Medway IDB and North Kent Marshes IDB will be amalgamating in 2024 to form the North*

*Kent Marshes Water Level Management Board. This change will bring several benefits, including:*

- *Greater efficiency: Streamlining governance and operations to reduce administrative burdens and duplication of effort.*
- *Enhanced resilience: Strengthening our ability to respond to climate change, extreme weather events, and evolving flood risk challenges.*
- *Improved service delivery: Providing more cohesive and strategic management of water levels across a broader geographic area.*
- *Increased transparency and accountability: Ensuring a clearer and more accessible structure for stakeholders, including funding authorities and landowners “*

3.3 As Members know, TMBC receives an annual levy (similar to a precept) from the Lower Medway IDB. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the proposed merger.

#### **4 Consultation – Proposed Merger**

4.1 A formal consultation on the proposed merger was launched on 10 June 2025 and closed on 10 July. If no objections are received, DEFRA will then make an Order in the form of a Statutory Instrument. The notice is attached at **[Annex 1]**.

4.2 The Council’s representative on the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board is Cllr Dave Davis. He is supportive of the merger and has confirmed with the Clerk to the Board that the amalgamation may help deliver financial efficiencies. This would be through reduced duplication of governance processes and back-office; more agile use of staff and equipment, enabling smarter deployment and project planning; and the potential to attract external funding by aligning efforts under a single delivery body.

4.3 Following discussion with the Cabinet Member and Cllr Dave Davis, an email was sent to all Members of this Committee on 30 June to advise of the position as the consultation will have closed by the time the Committee meets.

#### **5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this consultation.

5.2 Members are however advised that the levy from the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board is £245,564 in 2025/26.

5.3 In theory, the merger of the two bodies should have the effect of achieving efficiencies as set out above.

## 6 Risk Assessment

6.1 No specific risks identified.

## 7 Legal Implications

7.1 Section 36 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 determines that expenses of an IDB shall be met by:

- Drainage rates collected from agricultural land and buildings within the Internal Drainage District;
- Special Levies issued on District and Unitary Authorities within the Internal Drainage District;
- Contributions from the Environment Agency (see Higher Land Water Contributions (HLWC) from EA to IDB).

Background Papers	None
Annex	Notice – Land Drainage Act 1991 s. 3(4)(a)