

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee held in the Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 21 November 2011.

PRESENT: Mr R E King (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr M J Harrison, Mr C Hibberd and Mr M J Vye

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs J Blanford (Ashford BC), Mr J Muckle (Dartford BC), Mr H Rogers (Tonbridge and Malling BC) and Mr J Scholey (Sevenoaks DC).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Tant (Flood Risk Manager), Mr T Harwood (Senior Emergency Planning Officer) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

16. Minutes of the meeting on 23 May 2011

(Item 3)

(1) In respect of Minute 11 (1), Mr Tant explained that Defra's definition of a Flood Risk Area was one which was continuous with 30,000 people at risk. Although Kent was the County which had the highest overall number of people at risk, there was no such concentrated pocket. Mr Tant offered to provide a list of all Flood Risk Areas to Members.

(2) RESOLVED that subject to an amendment to the heading of Minute 9 to read "28 January 2011", the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2011 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

17. Flood Defence Financing

(Item 4)

(1) Mr Tant explained that Defra had announced changes to the way in which the Flood Defence Grant would operate from April 2012. This would involve a new funding mechanism "Payment for Outcomes."

(2) The "Payment for Outcomes" mechanism would provide each scheme with funding according to the benefits that would accrue from it. These included the number of homes protected, measures against coastal erosion and habitat creation. If this mechanism did not result in complete funding for the scheme, there were a number of options for raising funds locally.

(3) Mr Tant said that the first option was the local levy, which was administered by the Southern Region Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. All upper tier authorities in the region contributed to it. Kent's contribution was currently £330k out of a total of £1.177m.

(4) The second option was the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which had to directly benefit the local Council Tax payers and could not include projects in new developments, as the Government's intention was to discourage development in flood plains. Money raised in this way could, however, be used to fund the refurbishment of existing defences. This was important as there were currently 86k properties in the County which benefited from them.

(5) Mr Harrison commented on this option by saying that this could lead to a situation where local residents could pay for a project which would be carried out at the expense of more essential works. He considered that money raised through the CIL should not be allowed to influence a project's priority ranking.

(6) The third option available to local authorities was to raise the Council Tax.

(7) Mr Tant agreed that there were issues around IDB precept payments to the Environment Agency. The new "Payment for Outcomes" funding mechanism encouraged cost savings as the government contribution was fixed according to the benefits of the scheme. Therefore, schemes where savings still achieved the outcomes would receive the same amount. This was leading, for example to a saving of £15k on one project where Dover DC had carried out work instead of a contractor.

(8) The fourth option was for upper tier authorities to raise a supplementary business rate subject to a ballot of all businesses in the affected area. Mr Scholey asked whether businesses could vote individually on this proposal. Mr Tant agreed to investigate the workings of this option in detail.

(9) The fifth option was Tax Increment Financing (TIF). The Government was considering whether to introduce this scheme in 2013/14. This would enable a local authority to pay for infrastructure on the basis that the increased business revenues generated by the scheme could be used to repay that initial investment. This scheme was currently operational in Scotland and the USA, where a number of authorities that had used this option had got into financial difficulties. It would therefore be essential for the project in question to directly lead to growth.

(10) The final option was for one-off charitable contributions from individuals or businesses. These could take the form of money or land.

(11) In discussion of this report, the Committee asked whether it could be provided by the Regional Flood Defence Committee with a list setting out all the projects in the region, together with an explanation of the process by which they were prioritised.

(12) RESOLVED that:-

(a) the report be noted; and

(b) the Flood Risk Manager be requested to circulate a list of all the flood defence schemes and projects in Kent (and the South East Region), together with an explanation of the process by which they are prioritised.

18. Kent Resilience Forum Reservoir Inundation Plan

(Item 5)

(1) The Kent Resilience Forum's Off-site Reservoir Inundation Emergency Plan had previously been circulated electronically to all Members of the Committee and Invitees, together with its accompanying maps.

(2) Mr Harwood said that the Pitt Review of 2007 had identified dams and reservoirs as areas of risk, whilst the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 had reduced the level at which a body of water was defined as a reservoir from 25k m³ to 10k m³. These two events had led to an increase in the work needed in respect of reservoir emergency planning.

(3) The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) had set up a Reservoir Task and Finish Group to consider reservoir safety. This Group had identified 34 reservoirs in Kent and a further 7 reservoirs outside the County's boundaries where flooding would affect its inhabitants.

(4) Mr Harwood then set out the four risk categories. These were:

Category A: where a breach could endanger lives in a community of 10 persons or more;

Category B: where a breach could endanger fewer lives but nevertheless cause extensive property damage;

Category C: where there was negligible risk to life and limited property damage; and

Category D: where there was no loss of life and very little property damage.

(5) Mr Harwood explained that potential water flow velocity figures could not be released into the public domain for security reasons. However, Members of the Committee had a legal right to receive other sensitive information, which he would place in the KCC Information Point.

(6) Mr Harwood concluded his presentation by saying that the Plan would inform ongoing work on updating the Kent Medway Multi Agency Flood Plan and the local multi-agency flood plans. The information within the Reservoir Inundation Plan would be held by all the KRF partners, including Kent Fire and Rescue, Kent Police, KCC, the Districts and the Coastguard.

(7) RESOLVED that the sign-off of the Kent Resilience off-site Reservoir Inundation Emergency Plan and its future use by KRF partners be noted.

19. Flood Risk Management in Kent - Oral Update on progress

(Item 6)

(1) Mr Tant reported that the recent seminar (held on 24 October 2011) had been well attended and that each District Authority and IDB had now received a standing invitation to attend the Committee's meetings. This would be particularly important once the work on sustainable drainage got underway.

(2) Mr Tant also reported the recruitment of Brondwyn Buntine as a Sustainable Drainage Engineer. Brondwyn had worked in this capacity for authorities in the USA

and Australia. In addition, a new Flood Risk Management Officer would begin working for the authority in January 2012. The sum of £490k had been allocated to cover the lead Authority's responsibilities.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20. Dates of future meetings and future arrangements

(Item 7)

(1) The Committee agreed the following meeting dates:-

Friday, 16 March 2012;
Monday, 23 July 2012;
Monday, 19 November 2012.

These meetings would commence at 2.00 pm.

(2) It was agreed that the Environment Agency would be invited to report to the March 2012 meeting on coastal and fluvial flooding. Mr Tant would also prepare a draft itinerary for a site tour to vulnerable areas to take place on the morning of the 23 July meeting. The Committee would also consider whether to visit the completed projects at Camber Sands and Dymchurch on a separate date.

(3) The Committee asked Mr Tait to write to the District and IDB representatives to let them know how to access the past Committee reports and Minutes.