

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee held in the Yalding Village Hall, 78 Lyngs Close, Yalding ME18 6JT on Monday, 18 July 2016.

PRESENT: Mr M J Harrison (Chairman), Mr R H Bird (Substitute for Mr M J Vye), Mr A H T Bowles, Dr M R Eddy, Mr C R Pearman (Substitute for Mrs P A V Stockell), Mr A Terry, Cllr Ms R Doyle, Mr D Mortimer, Mr J Scholey (Sevenoaks DC), Mr A Hills (Shepway DC), Mr G Lewin (Swale BC), Mr H Rogers (Tonbridge and Malling BC), Ms C Stewart (Tunbridge Wells BC), Ms G Brown (KALC) and Mr M Skeet (Substitute for Mr P Flaherty (Kent Fire and Rescue))

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Tant (Flood Risk Manager), Mr T Harwood (Resilience and Emergencies Manager), Ms F Gaffney (Kent Resilience Team Supervisor) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

5. Chairman's Opening remarks

(Item 1)

(1) The Chairman thanked Yalding Parish Council for making available their Village Hall for the meeting and for providing lunch for Members of the Committee and Flood Wardens from the parishes of Yalding, Collier Street and other parts of Kent. He wished to thank the Parish Chairman, Geraldine Brown in particular for also showing taking Committee Members to Little Venice and to other parts of Yalding where they had seen buildings affected by the floods of 2013/14 as well as some of the measures taken by local people to provide their own flood defences. He also thanked Mr Howard Rodgers for facilitating a visit to the Upper and Lower Medway IDB Depot.

(2) The Chairman said that he was delighted to see that over 20 Flood Wardens had come to meet the Committee Members. The Committee was very aware of the enormous contribution that they would be making when the next flooding event took place.

6. Minutes of the meeting on 8 March 2016

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that subject to the amendment of the date in Minute 1 (3) to read "2015", the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2016 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

7. Yalding Local Flood Plan - Oral introduction by Geraldine Brown, Chairman of Yalding Parish Council

(Item 4)

(1) Mrs Brown said that Yalding PC had produced its Flood Emergency Plan after the floods of 2000. As part of that process, they had collated email addresses for a data base and had defined three categories of flooding. These were: “Normal – across the flood plain; “High” – affecting roads and properties; and “Help” – possible risk to life.

(2) Mrs Brown then said that the storms and flooding on Christmas Eve 2013 had seen the loss of power which had meant that mobile phones and torches could not be re-charged. The only means of warning people under these circumstances had been to knock on doors. Since this event, Yalding had recruited Flood Wardens and five Co-ordinators.

(3) Mrs Brown said that the Flood Emergency Plan was a common sense document which recognised the vital role of communication between the residents, the Parish Council and organisations outside Yalding such as Maidstone BC. She gave as an example, MBC’s delivery of sandbags to the village during the 2013/14 Floods. At the same time, the Plan had to be treated as a living document which was not written in stone. For example, it was now possible to utilise the fully-trained Scout Leaders whilst splitting the Wardens up into groups focussed on different parts of the village.

(4) Mr David Goff (Vice-Chairman - Collier Street PC) explained that Collier Street was at risk of flooding from the rivers Medway, Beult and Teise. This had happened on 3 occasions in the last 56 years.

(5) Mr Goff then said that the Environment Agency’s flood map showed that very few Collier Street properties were not prone to flooding. Although the Parish Council had worked with many agencies, they were nowhere near a solution. This was particularly frustrating as the former National Rivers Authority had written to the Parish Council in 1995 on its detailed investigation of the flood risk to the Teise and Lesser Teise. Meanwhile, there were no defences against flooding from the River Beult. The Committee on Climate Change report of 2015 had indicated that a further 800 properties in the area were likely to be affected.

(6) Mr Goff called for clear direction, based on the Parish Council’s knowledge and expertise from all the strategic agencies, including KCC.

(7) Mr Pearman said that he sympathised with the views of Mr Goff. Many problems had not been dealt with for years. The support that Parishes and Towns needed could not be funded by the Local Authorities. The work that needed to be done was to fully utilise local knowledge to limit and manage the flood risk.

(8) RESOLVED that the report and the points raised during discussion be noted.

8. Presentation on Southern Water by Martin Banks

(Item 5)

(1) Mr Martin Banks, Sewerage Policy Manager Southern Water, explained that his role was to co-ordinate Southern Water's responses to the Lead Local Flood Authorities.

(2) Mr Banks said that Southern Water recycled an average of 718 m litres of wastewater per day. Its assets for this purpose consisted of 365 wastewater treatment works, 2,375 pumping stations, and 39,600 km of sewers. 99% of the beaches for which Southern Water had responsibility met the European water quality standards.

(3) Mr Banks then set out the legal roles and responsibilities for flooding and drainage. The lead Local Flood Authorities were responsible for groundwater and surface water flooding. Responsibility for river and coastal flooding was divided between the Environment Agency, the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Internal Drainage Boards and riparian owners. Highway Drainage was in the remit of the local highway authority or Highways England on trunk roads or motorways. Private home owners had responsibility for private drainage up to the point where their pipes connected with the public sewer. Southern Water as a water and sewerage company managed the risk of flooding from foul or combined sewers as well as public surface water sewers.

(4) Mr Banks said Southern Water's Business Plan promised to reduce internal flooding by 25% with no serious pollution incidents by 2020. He then described ongoing activities across the region which included almost £80m being spent on the replacement or refurbishment of sewers; £75m spent on the refurbishment of pumping stations; between £12m and £15m on sewer jetting and £9m to £10m on CCTV surveys to allow early interventions.

(5) Mr Banks said that the sum of £12m was to be spent on reducing the risk of groundwater infiltration into the sewer network in the region. Flood alleviation schemes were to be delivered in Ramsgate, Walmer and other currently unspecified areas. Rising main replacements were planned for Ramsgate, Yalding, Aylesford, Ashford, Isle of Sheppey and Seasalter to prevent flooding and pollution. Work was continuing on the flood prevention scheme in the Nailbourne Valley at Bishopsbourne. Meanwhile, Southern Water was continuing to work closely with the Lead local Flood Authorities on surface water management plans.

(6) Mr Banks continued by describing the development of Southern Water's Drainage Area Plans (DAPs). These informed the current and future performance of the sewerage network by considering existing issues and the potential impact of future development, identifying options to guide current and future investment plans. They also gave consideration to the reduction of the impact of surface water on the drainage network. The DAPs stressed the need to work in collaboration with other organisations with drainage responsibilities, such as the Environment Agency, the Local Authorities and the IDBs.

(7) Mr Banks said that the DAPs for Horsemonden, Staplehurst and Headcorn were now complete. *Some members of the public commented that they were unaware of any consultation having taken place on these.* DAPs were currently underway in Dover and Folkestone, Eastchurch, Tonbridge, Thanet, New Romney, Hythe, Queenborough, Medway, Gravesend and Sittingbourne.

(8) Mr Banks turned to the “Keep it Clear” campaign which involved the investment of £1.4m to keep the sewer network running clear in the South East. One element of this campaign would be a wide-reaching educational programme where teams would be visiting 75,000 homes and 28,000 catering businesses to offer advice on what should not be flushed down the toilet or poured down the sink. An example that people were often not aware of was wet wipes, which should never be allowed to enter the drainage system.

(9) The second element of the “Keep it Clear” campaign would involve checking manholes and putting cameras in sewers in order to check whether they were working properly, using high powered water jets to clear any blockages that were discovered.

(10) Mrs Brown noted that the UK power networks aimed to raise their stations above the flood levels. She asked whether Southern Water intended to do the same for the pumping stations. Mr Banks replied that Southern Water had reviewed the cost benefit of doing so. The key sites in Kent such as Burham and Aylesford were already protected. Southern Water was reviewing the use and development of the removal barriers at Gravesend Waste Water Treatment Works.

(11) Mr Rodgers noted that during the flooding of 2013/14, the flood water had been joined by sewage. He asked what could be done to separate the two in areas of high risk. Mr Banks replied that whenever an area was overwhelmed by surface water, drainage into the sewage system would arise via the drainage systems from older developments. Southern Water always preferred the installation of surface water separation schemes but these proved to be unsuccessful in areas of bad drainage. Southern Water was unable to provide a back-up drainage system in these circumstances.

(12) Mr Bird asked for information on the resilience of pumping stations. Mr Banks replied that back-up generators would always be provided. In the event of a more widespread problem, Southern Water would look to the UK power network to provide the necessary service.

(13) Mr Tant informed the Committee that Kent County Council and Southern Water were working together to tackle groundwater flooding and the resultant infiltration of surface water into the sewage system.

(14) RESOLVED that Mr Banks be thanked for his presentation and that its content be noted.

9. Exercise Surge - Oral report by Fiona Gaffney, Kent Resilience Team *(Item 6)*

(1) Fiona Gaffney (Kent Resilience Team Supervisor) said that each Police Authority area had a multi-agency Resilience Forum whose duties were set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. In compliance with the Act, upper-tier Local Authorities such as KCC had to give advice and assistance to the public to enable business continuity to be maintained if an emergency occurred.

(2) Fiona Gaffney then said that the Kent Resilience Team carried out an annual multi-agency exercise. In 2016, this would involve a major East Kent tidal flooding

event centred upon the Romney Marsh area and widespread fluvial impacts across Kent. This exercise ("Exercise Surge") would take place between 27 and 29 September 2016. A briefing for KCC Members on the exercise would form an important part of the Tidal Flooding Seminar to be held on 27 July 2016.

(3) The agencies taking part in the exercise (which would also include an air crash in Lydd) were the Police, Coastguard, Highways England, the National Health Service, Kent Fire and Rescue, Local Authorities, the Voluntary Sector and the Meteorological Office. Each of them would be testing their own organisational readiness to respond as well as their ability to work effectively in partnership.

(4) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10. Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC Flood Response activity since the last meeting
(Item 7)

(1) Mr Harwood asked the Committee to note that the total number of flood alerts issued by the Environment Agency since 8 March 2016 had now risen to 32 (para 2.4 of the report). This figure contrasted with the 5 flood alerts for the same period in 2015.

(2) Mr Harwood then said that the month of June had seen very heavy rainfall, particularly on the 25th. A total of 149 residential and commercial properties across the county had been affected. Out Of Hours Duty Officers from KCC, Sevenoaks DC and Tonbridge and Malling BC had responded to the heavy storm in West Kent overnight on the 25th and 26th, alongside Kent Fire and Rescue colleagues, in excellent fashion - as had the Environment Agency. Their local knowledge and dedication had been instrumental on reducing impacts upon life and property.

(3) Mr Harwood concluded his remarks by saying that the joint working between the Kent and London Severe Weather Advisory Groups had assisted the effective cross border and mutual aid planning which had been vital in dealing with significant surface water flooding impacts on 23rd June.

(4) Members of the Committee commented that the flood response communications had not been as effective as they could have been when major flooding events had occurred out of hours. Further barriers and signs had been ineffective and consideration needed to be given to whether the Parish Councils had sufficient powers to respond to local flooding events. Mr Harwood replied that the Kent Resilience Forum Pan Kent Flood Group would be tackling the issues of enforcing road closures during flooding events at its next meeting.

(5) RESOLVED that the report be noted.