

KENT FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, 14th November, 2016

2.00 pm

Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone



4. Environment Agency Winter Update - Readiness, current campaigns and Exercise Certus (Pages 11 - 14)
5. Kent Resilience Forum - Structure and Annual Seminar (Pages 15 - 16)
6. Flood-Re - Affordable flood insurance (Pages 17 - 18)
7. Riparian rights and responsibilities (Pages 19 - 22)
8. EFRA Future Flood Prevention Report (Pages 23 - 24)
9. Exercise Surge - Oral report by Tony Harwood
10. Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC Flood Response activity since the last meeting. (Pages 25 - 28)
11. Dates of meetings in 2017
Tuesday, 7 March 2017
Monday, 17 July 2017
Monday, 13 November 2017
12. Other Items which the Chairman decides are Urgent

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

John Lynch
Head of Democratic Services
03000 410466

Friday, 4 November 2016

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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 over that 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 been 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 39,6000 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.

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To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee – 14 November 2016

From: John Lynch, Head of Democratic Services

Subject: Environment Agency winter update, readiness, current campaigns and Exercise Certus

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

The accompanying Appendix produced by the Environment Agency updates the Committee on winter readiness, readiness, current campaigns and Exercise Certus

1. Introduction

The accompanying Appendix produced by the Environment Agency updates the Committee on winter readiness, readiness, current campaigns and Exercise Certus.

Rachel Kairis (Environment Agency - Major Incident Ready Implementation Manager) will attend the meeting in order to provide greater detail and answer questions.

2 Recommendation

The Committee is invited to note the report for assurance.

Contact:
Andrew Tait
Democratic Services Officer
andrew.tait@kent.gov.uk
03000 416749

Background documents (None)

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Last winter's floods across the north of England saw the wettest month ever recorded in the UK, with exceptional amounts of rainfall and record river flows flooding around 17,000 homes and businesses. Our flood defences protected 12,500 properties during Storm Desmond and 10,900 during Storms Eva and Frank.

Since then we have carried out our own internal review and delivered a 'winter readiness' Major Incident Ready action plan to ensure we are better placed to fight future floods.

Our plan for winter readiness has involved increasing the number of trained staff we have available to help in flood emergencies. As of 1 October we have 6512 trained and ready staff with a further 734 in training. We have extended our arrangements with contractors and the military to respond and recover from flood emergencies more quickly. We have established better ways of gathering live information from satellites and drones to get this information into the hands of the decision makers quicker, this will enable better decision making.

This means we now have better resilience and capability both nationally and locally, which was tested during our incident exercise, Exercise Certus, in October. Over 1000 players in 20 locations played their part in this major coastal exercise. We tested a number of new procedures within our Winter Ready plan including our live deployment plans which involved live deployment to site.

As part of Major Incident Ready we have simplified and improved our command and control for responding to major incidents. Our new Concept of Operations sets out the line of accountability and command from the Chief Executive Officer through to the National Duty Manager to the Area Duty Manager. This allows for a more consistent and effective response structure and approach, locally and nationally.

We have produced 5 flood based Major Incident Plans (MIP's) and 1 Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) plan. These are internal strategic documents to help our Duty Managers make more informed decisions around flood risk or environmental risk, looking at severity. They will help us to scale up our response using a decision based matrix and use our 'Think big, act early, be visible' approach.

We are helping communities to be better prepared for flooding. We are supporting communities by providing additional flood resilience equipment where needed, and helping them make community flood plans. We have identified what additional temporary assets are needed to increase resilience, and purchased or hired these assets for winter 2016/17. These include 40km of temporary flood barrier, 250 pumps, 500,000 sandbags and 4 Incident Command vehicles. All of this equipment is stored securely in 7 strategically located depots across the country, the closest for Kent being Rye. We have written around 100 temporary defence deployment plans and have also set up Incident Management Contracts and developed Incident Management Plans with our Water & Environment Management (WEM) Framework Contractors to ensure they can better support us in incident response and recovery.

We have also been making changes to our flood modelling and forecasting capability. We have developed a number of new flood forecasting products for our own operational planning and preparedness. They ensure the organisation is ready for the next major incident by enabling duty officers to look further ahead and plan proactively using our 30 day flood outlook.

We are also working with phone providers to access and automatically add mobile phone customers to our flood warning service - since January 2016, we have added over 200,000 customers. This will let us expand our reach of the Flood Warning service and allow more people to receive these messages and allow them to take action.

To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee – 14 November 2016

From: John Lynch, Head of Democratic Services

Subject: Kent Resilience Forum – Structure and Annual Seminar

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

Paul Flaherty from Kent Fire and Rescue Service will give a presentation on the structure of the Kent Resilience Forum, including its annual seminar.

1. Introduction

Paul Flaherty from Kent Fire and Rescue Service will give a presentation on the structure of the Kent Resilience Forum including its annual seminar.

2 Recommendation

The Committee is invited to note the report for assurance.

Contact:
Andrew Tait
Democratic Services Officer
andrew.tait@kent.gov.uk
03000 416749

Background documents (None)

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To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

From: Michael Harrison, Chairman of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

Subject: Flood-Re: affordable flood insurance

Classification: Unrestricted

A new insurance scheme to provide affordable home insurance for properties at risk of flooding has been launched. Known as Flood-Re, property owners can pay a premium for flood insurance that based on their council tax band, their insurers then re-insure the flood risk with Flood-Re.

More details can be found here:

<http://www.floodre.co.uk/homeowner/about-us/>

A presentation on Flood-Re will be given at the meeting.

Michael Harrison, Chairman of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

Contact Officer: Max Tant, Flood and Water Manager, 03000 413466
max.tant@kent.gov.uk

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To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

From: Michael Harrison, Chairman of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

Subject: Riparian rights and responsibilities

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

Riparian owners have rights and responsibilities over watercourses on or adjacent to their land. This paper explains the basic riparian rights and responsibilities and the authorities who have regulatory powers over watercourses.

Recommendation:

That Members:

- Note the paper.

1 Introduction

1.1 Land that adjoins a watercourse is known as riparian. Owners of riparian land are known as a riparian owner and they have rights and responsibilities over the watercourse their land adjoins. This paper explains the basic riparian rights and responsibilities.

1.2 The rights and responsibilities explained in this paper only apply to watercourses, they do not apply to overland runoff or groundwater, nor do they apply to public sewers. Additionally, planning policy does not necessarily follow common law riparian rights.

1.3 A watercourse is any channel through which water flows, whether it is natural or man-made. A watercourse can range from a river with a regular flow to a shallow depression which carries water infrequently, and includes streams, drains, ditches and sewers (other than public sewers). A watercourse may flow through a pipe, known as a culvert, as long as it is not designated a public sewer. A culvert that carries a watercourse is regarded as a watercourse and riparian rights apply.

1.4 Watercourses are divided into two categories, which affect how they are regulated. These categories are:

- Main River - these are watercourses that are designated as a main river by the Environment Agency. They are usually designated for their flood risk significance. This term does not necessarily reflect the size of the watercourse, as main rivers can be quite small and ephemeral (that is water only flows in them some of the time). They are shown on maps held at local Environment Agency offices and online.
- Ordinary watercourse – these are any watercourse that is not a main river.

2 Riparian ownership

- 2.1 Under common law, a riparian owner is someone who owns land that adjoins a watercourse. Land title deeds often do not show the entire land a property owner is responsible for.
- 2.2 Where a natural watercourse is located between two property boundaries the owner on each side is assumed to own up to the middle of the watercourse, under the principle of “ad medium filum” (to the middle of the line).
- 2.3 If the watercourse is man-made, for instance a field drain, it is assumed that the drain was constructed wholly on one property (as the property owner would not have had the right to dig his neighbours land), therefore it is solely that riparian owners responsibility.
- 2.4 These are only guidelines, they are not rules and there may be variations and other overriding factors that mean they do not apply to a particular piece of land.
- 2.5 If land is rented, who exercises the riparian rights should be agreed between the tenant and landlord.
- 2.6 Drains adjoining a highway are usually owned by the neighbouring land owner, the highway authority rarely has riparian rights over them as they do not normally own the highway (they are only responsible for maintaining it). Highway authorities have the right to discharge to watercourses, but this does not necessarily confer on them a duty to maintain the watercourse. Where a road was built by the highway authority on land that they purchased, they may be responsible for any highway drains. Most drains adjacent to the highway in Kent are not highway drains and are not the responsibility of KCC to maintain.

3 Riparian rights and responsibilities

- 3.1 Riparian rights and responsibilities have developed through common law and are not set out in statute. Below is a summary of the common law rights and responsibilities of riparian owners.
- 3.2 A riparian owner has the following rights:
 - to receive flow of water in its natural state, without undue interference in quality or quantity.
 - to protect their property from flooding, and their land from erosion.
 - to fish in their watercourse, although this must be by legal methods and with an Environment Agency rod licence.
 - to abstract a maximum of 20 cubic metres per day of water for the domestic purposes of their own household or for agricultural use (excluding spray irrigation) from a watercourse at a point that directly adjoins their land without a licence from the Environment Agency. Most other types of abstraction will require a licence from the Environment Agency.
- 3.3 A riparian owner has the following responsibilities:
 - to pass on the flow of water without obstruction, pollution or diversion which could affect the rights of others.

- to accept flood flows through their land, even if caused by inadequate capacity downstream, as there is no common law duty to improve a watercourse.
- to maintain the bed and the banks of the watercourse (including trees and shrubs growing on the banks) and for clearing any debris, natural or otherwise, including litter, even if it did not originate from their land.
- to not cause any obstructions to the free passage of fish.
- to not dispose of waste in the watercourse.
- to keep the bed and banks clear of any matter that could cause an obstruction either on their land or by being washed away by high flow to obstruct a structure downstream.
- to keep clear any structures that they own such as culverts, trash screens or weirs.
- to protect their property from seepage through natural/manmade banks. Where such seepage threatens the structural integrity of a flood defence, it may become the concern of the Environment Agency.
- to maintain any culvert that connects a ditch on their property to another ditch where the culvert passes under the highway. The exceptions to this are where Kent County Council (KCC) has adopted the culvert.

3.4 These riparian rights and responsibilities are not absolute and riparian owners may have to obtain consent for works from the Environment Agency, Kent County Council or Internal Drainage Board.

4 Watercourse regulation

4.1 Aside from riparian owners' rights and responsibilities a number of bodies have powers to regulate activities in and the function of watercourses. Generally these powers are permissive, that is it is not a duty of the holder of the power to exercise them.

4.2 A number of different bodies have powers over watercourses, these often overlap and it is not always clear which bodies have powers. These powers are set out in the Water Act 1991 (as amended) and the Land Drainage Act 1991 (as amended).

4.3 The Environment Agency (EA) has powers over for main rivers. Many activities on main rivers require the consent of the Environment Agency. Powers over ordinary watercourses are held either by an Internal Drainage Board (IDBs), Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA, KCC in Kent) or district council in two-tier areas.

4.4 The EA and IDBs also have powers over activities near watercourses, any activity within 8 m of a watercourse they maintain requires their consent.

4.5 Construction activities in watercourses, or near them for main rivers and IDB watercourses, require consent. This consent is obtained from the EA for main rivers and, for ordinary watercourses, from the LLFA or from an IDB in an IDB area.

4.6 The EA, IDBs and LLFAs have powers to enforce the maintenance of watercourses or the restoration of unconsented works. These powers only give

the authority the power to undertake the works on behalf of the riparian owner, if they are unwilling to do the necessary works themselves. Enforcement does not give the enforcement authority the power to compel riparian owners to undertake works. The enforcement authority can recharge the riparian owner for the costs incurred, they must also reimburse them for any damages. Enforcement like this is generally not a successful route to maintaining ordinary watercourses and is only considered for very serious risks.

4.7 Where there are concerns about the maintenance of watercourses, the most successful approach is for local communities to work in partnership with landowners to resolve problems.

5 Further reading

5.1 More information about riparian rights and responsibilities can be found in the EA's guide *Living on the Edge*, which can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/454562/LIT_7114.pdf

7 Recommendations

That Members:

- Note the paper.

Michael Harrison, Chairman of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

Contact Officer: Max Tant, Flood and Water Manager, 03000 413466

max.tant@kent.gov.uk

To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

From: Michael Harrison, Chairman of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

Subject: EFRA Future flood prevention report

Classification: Unrestricted

The Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) select committee published a report on 2 November on its Future flood prevention inquiry. The report can be found here:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/inquiry/>

The report makes a number of recommendations, including setting up a new separate body responsible for flood protection (recommendation 20) and on improving the link between planning and flood management (recommendations 8, 9 and 10).

The government has to respond to this report. We will update the committee on any response they publish.

Michael Harrison, Chairman of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

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To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee – 14th November 2016

From: Michael Harrison, Chairman of Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

Subject: Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC flood response activity since last meeting.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To update Kent Flood Risk Management Committee on Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings, and flood response activity since the last meeting of the Committee on 18th July 2016. Members are requested to note this report.

1. Background

1.1 KCC Resilience and Emergencies Unit and Contact Point receive Environment Agency Flood Alerts and Warnings and Met Office Severe Weather Alerts and Warnings by e-mail on a 24 hour basis. Potential impacts upon communities, infrastructure and the wider environment are then assessed and a response mobilised as required.

1.2 Some 70,000 properties in Kent are located within areas identified as potentially at risk from fluvial (river) or tidal flooding. Where practically possible, these properties are offered a Flood Warning Service by the Environment Agency. However, other parts of the county are also vulnerable to surface and ground water flooding. Early warning of flood risk to communities (including areas outside of floodplains) is delivered through Flood Guidance Statements, Severe Weather Warnings and mobilisation of Kent Resilience Forum Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG).

2. Latest situation

2.1 Kent received just 50% of the long term average rainfall for October. This marked the fourth consecutive drier than average month. Indeed, the period since July has seen the driest four months since records began for north Kent, including the Isle of Sheppey. Despite this paucity of rain, most river flows remain within their normal ranges, with the exception being those rivers and streams draining clay catchments, such as the River Beult and its tributaries, which are flowing at below their normal expected levels. The warm and dry weather experienced since July has resulted in above average soil moisture deficits, and groundwater levels continue to recede in most aquifers. Kent's primary aquifers do not present an immediate cause for concern. However, the effects of recent below average rainfall are more notable in some of our local aquifer resources, such as the Denge Gravels on the Romney Marsh. Reservoir levels continue to fall across the county, but remain largely within expected ranges.

2.2 Since the last meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee on the 18th July 2016, a total of 4 flood alerts (3 fluvial and 1 coastal) have been issued by

the Environment Agency¹. This contrasts with 20 flood alerts (9 fluvial and 11 coastal) for the corresponding period in 2015.

2.3 A total of 11 yellow Met Office Severe Weather Alerts and Warnings have also been issued since the last meeting (5 for rain, 4 for fog and 2 for high winds)². This exceeds the 7 yellow alerts and warnings issued during the same period last year.

2.4 The Thames Barrier has been closed on 3 occasions for test purposes since the last meeting of the Committee in July.

3. Next Steps

3.1 Despite the prevailing dry conditions, the autumn and winter period brings an increased risk of storms and resultant surface water, fluvial and tidal flooding for Kent, underlining the need for continued vigilance by Kent County Council, district councils, the wider resilience community and local residents.

3.2 Members will continue to be regularly updated on flood alerts, severe weather warnings, operational response and significant flood events across Kent.

4. Recommendations

4.1 That Members:

- Note the level of alerts and warnings received since the last meeting of the Committee; and
- Contribute any additional matters arising from debate by the Committee.

Tony Harwood, Resilience and Emergencies Manager, Growth Environment and Transport tel. 03000 413 386 e-mail tony.harwood@kent.gov.uk

Background documents: None

Appendix 1: Environment Agency Flood Alerts issued since 18th July 2016

Flood Zone	Date issued	Status
River Darent Catchment	15/09/2016	Alert
Shuttle and Cray Catchments	15/09/2016	Alert
Rivers on the Isle of Sheppey	15/09/2016	Alert
Coast from Pegwell Bay to Deal including Tidal Stour	19/10/2016	Alert

Appendix 2: Met Office Severe Weather Warnings issued since 18th July 2016

Met Office Alerts and Warnings	Date issued	Status
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	20/07/2016	Warning
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	22/07/2016	Warning
Yellow Alert for Wind for London & South East England	17/08/2016	Alert
Yellow Alert for Wind for London & South East England	18/08/2016	Alert
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	03/09/2016	Warning
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	15/09/2016	Warning
Yellow Warning of Rain for London & South East England	30/09/2016	Warning
Yellow Warning of Fog for London & South East England	25/10/2016	Warning
Yellow Warning of Fog for London & South East England	26/10/2016	Warning
Amber Warning of Fog for London & South East England	29/10/2016	Warning
Yellow Warning of Fog for London & South East England	31/10/2016	Warning

¹ please see appendix 1

² please see appendix 2

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