KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT FLOOD RISK AND WATER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 29 October 2025.

PRESENT: Mr W Chapman (Chair), Ms. S Emberson, Mr J Finch, Mr S Heaver, Mr M Paul and Mr M J Sole

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M A J Hood, Mr D Wimble (Cabinet Member for Environment), Cllr C Gale (Dartford Borough Council), Cllr Summersgill (Maidstone Borough Council), Charles Mackonochie (KALC), Cllr D Kent (Tonbridge Wells Borough Council) and Cllr T Hills (Folkestone & Hythe Borough Council)

IN ATTENDANCE: James Kirby (Stakeholder Manager SE Water), Andrew Halliday (Water Resources Options Project Manager SEW), Douglas Whitfield (Director of Operations SEW), Richard Penn (Environment Planning and Engagement Manager EA), Laura Jones (Team Leader, Integrated Environment Planning, Environment Agency EA), Henry Bethall (Flood Resilience Team Leader EA), Mike Russell (Stakeholder Manager SW), Angus Cramp (Delivery Lead for Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce), Andy Jeffery (Head of Resilience and Emergency Planning). Louise Smith (Flood and Water Manager) and James Willis (Democratic Service Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

6. Apologies
(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr Baker, Mr Cornell (Canterbury City Council). Mr Boughton (Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council) joined virtually.

7. Declarations of Interest
(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

8. Minutes of the meeting on 02/07/2025
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2025 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chair

9. KCC Local Flood Risk Management Strategy - Verbal Update
(Item 4)

Louise Smith, Head of Resilience and Emergency Planning, was in attendance for this item.

1. Louise Smith outlined the report. Some notable aspects included:

   a) Kent County Council (KCC) was designated as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Kent. It was explained that LLFAs were established in 2010 following the Pitt review.

   b) KCC held an overview role for local flooding, defined as flooding arising from surface runoff, ordinary watercourses and groundwater. Officers highlighted that one of the statutory duties of the LLFA was to develop, maintain, apply and monitor the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The strategy would set out how flood risks would be managed across the county and provided` the framework for coordinated action with partners and stakeholders.

   c) Officers explained that flooding event were generally more localised than general flooding from rivers and seas. It was discussed that managing local flood risk had often depended on several systems working together effectively, including drainage networks, sewers and ordinary watercourses. As these systems had been frequently managed by different authorities, cooperation and integrated planning would be essential to ensure risks were managed effectively. Officers highlighted that the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy was designed to support this coordination.

   d) The adoption of the 2024–2034 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy represented the third strategy prepared by Kent County Council (KCC). It was discussed that the strategy would build upon lessons learned from previous iterations and would extend over a ten-year period, which was to be longer than past strategies. A formal review would also take place after the first five years.

   e) The aim of the strategy was to improve the safety and wellbeing of Kent's residents and to support the county's economy through appropriate local flood risk management.

   f) Under the objective of understanding flood risk, officers explained that progress was being achieved through the sharing of information with other risk management authorities, including the Environment Agency, various water utility companies and internal drainage boards (IDB).

   g) Following the occurrence of a flood event when five or more properties had been internally flooded, the Council would be required to trigger a Section 19 (Flood and Water Management Act 2010) flood investigation. These investigations provided a formal record of the flood event and included a description of the flooding and an explanation of the mechanisms by which they had occurred. Officers emphasised that such reports were not intended to attribute blame but would capture evidence to inform and aid in the future management of flood risks.

h) Discussed past investigations that occurred in impacted areas such as Ulcombe (2021) and the options that had been pursued to encompass natural flood management and property resilience. Reviews of priority areas that could be impacted by flood events had been identified. Notable urban areas discussed included: Swanley, Gravesend, Folkestone and Snodland.

i) Highlighted the completion of the flood risk management scheme at Snips Hill in Sittingbourne. The scheme had overseen the construction of a large attenuation basin that was designed to capture overland flow and discharge it to ground. As a result, 11 properties that were previously at risk of flooding in a ratio of a one-in-two-year event would now be protected to a one-in-50-year standard and the scheme would provide the community with greater certainty and security around properties.

j) Officers emphasised the importance of partnership working with other risk management authorities, this had included Southern Water and its Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force. Through joint works the surface water on highways could be reduced and would aid in lowering the risk of flooding to communities whilst also reducing surface water flows into the combined sewer network.

k) The delivery of the Council's land drainage role had highlighted the continuous improvement that was sought across ordinary watercourses and ditch networks throughout the county. Work undertaken in partnership with the Internal Drainage Board had provided additional support to the expansion within the River Stour catchment and to the pilot scheme of the Upper Medway.

l) Officers highlighted recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that had been introduced in December (2024) and had targeted the strengthening of the requirements for sustainable drainage. Sustainable drainage would now be mandatory for all new developments. Officers had welcomed this as an important step in ensuring that surface water was better managed across new developments and would provide communities the assurance that growth would not worsen local flood risks.

m) To support the policy, the national standards for sustainable drainage had been implemented in a broad manner. The standards looked to establish a hierarchy for discharges with preference given to options that managed water sustainably. It was explained that any connections to the sewer network would be the last option within the hierarchy and reinforced the principle that surface water would be managed at source wherever possible.

n) The NFF had supported communities impacted by flooding and aided in establishing flood action groups. These groups had provided a valuable opportunity for the Council to listen to community concerns, understand residents' experiences of flood events, and work collaboratively to address issues.

o) The NFF further played a key role in facilitating communication between local communities and risk management authorities. Officers emphasised that a managed and structured approach had ensured dialogue would be productive and focused, and confirmed that such engagement would be a central element to future flood risk management activity.

p) It was reported that a pilot scheme was undertaken in Folkestone in partnership with the Environment Agency, known as *Hello Lamp Post (QR Code App)*. The initiative had introduced a virtual flood warden, and it was recognised that larger towns and urban areas would be a sizable challenge in establishing physical flood wardens.

q) The virtual flood warden would provide information directly to residents via their phones, using a QR code and application interface. Users would be able to access details about areas of flood risk and receive guidance on actions to better protect themselves and properties.

r) Close collaboration with the Environment Agency and the Kent Resilience Forum was essential. Officers emphasised that the aim was to enable communities to help themselves and placed greater power and responsibility in the hands of residents to prepare for and respond to flood risk.

2. In response to comments and questions from guests and Members the discussion captured the following:

a) Members queried if the pipe draining initiative would be a requirement for new build planning applications. Officers clarified that while it was not a formal planning requirement but would form part of the wider programme of land drainage improvements. It was noted that KCC had limited enforcement powers in this area although Internal Drainage Boards, which could adopt responsibility for those sites would hold greater enforcement powers.

b) In response to funding questions, officers explained that the team had been supported by a strong revenue budget and capital funding. Capital funding was frequently supplemented by external contributions which had included the Flood Defence Grant. The grant had provided government support for flood risk projects.

c) Officers addressed concerns raised by Members on a number of housing initiatives in the Paddock Wood area. Ongoing engagement with the Borough Council regarding new development proposals were underway. It was discussed that plans had included the incorporation of sustainable drainage measures which had seen developers being required to implement flood risk management as part of the scheme.

d) It was acknowledged that a significant number of existing properties in the area of Paddock Wood remained at risk of flooding. It was emphasised that this represented a clear example of a cooperative project that would require joint working between the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board, the Environment Agency, water utility companies and the Council.

e) Members discussed the recent awarding to the Dartford area of a flood risk warning system and asked on the significance of this area in KCC's wider flood strategies. Responses discussed the flood risk issues around Swanley and Gravesend had been primarily related to surface water rather than coastal flooding. It was explained that areas where coastal defence schemes were required would likely fall under the remit of the Environment Agency. In such cases, the Environment Agency would act as the lead organisation with Kent County Council providing additional support.

f) Representatives of the Environment Agency present in addition discussed that work was ongoing to identify alternative sites for a potential second Thames Barrier. Three preferred locations had been identified, although further work would be required to ensure that any future barrier allowed continued active navigation on the Thames. Engagement with Dartford Borough Council on these discussions were welcomed. A final decision on the location of a second barrier was not expected until 2040

g) Discussed the Yalding scheme that had been undertaken by the Environment Agency. It was confirmed that follow-up discussions would be held with colleagues in the agency to assess how successful the scheme had been over the past ten years and if any issues were experienced.

h) Property Flood Resilience (PFR), officers emphasised the importance of adopting passive measures that would not require residents to deploy them manually. Examples included replacing front and back doors with sealed units and ensured properties remained protected at all times.

i) Members sought clarification on the data models currently employed by the Met Office and the Environment Agency. It was explained that there is significant reliance on long-term Met Office modelling to project future weather events. The data provided would underpin planning and resilience strategies. It was disclosed that the Environment Agency had recently updated its data sets which would aid in KCCs decision making.

j) Officers were praised for the completed works undertaken in Headcorn and the ongoing planned aspects of local engagement. It was reported that work was underway to contact affected properties and to compile a list of residents wishing to participate in the scheme. The response deadline would be the 16 November.

k) Once responses had been received, an engagement session would be organised for those residents who wished to participate. The session was to provide information on how the scheme would progress forward and outline the surveys to be undertaken. Explanations on the activities that were to be delivered as part of the project would also be given.

l) Members highlighted how the repeated flooding in Tonbridge could be alleviated by using nearby school that were located on higher ground, for attenuation measures. Options included ponds, smart water butts, and planters to manage runoff from the properties extensive roof areas. Officers confirmed such sustainable drainage interventions are the type of measures

Members could request details on specific location installs to aid in the reduction of local flood risks.

m) Schools were pinpointed as key sites for flood risk management due to large available space and runoff from hard surfaces. A wider programme was being developed to engage schools on flood risk, water resource management, and climate audits and offered a single package of opportunities. Councillors were invited to suggest schools for engagement, as local insight would be valuable in identifying priority sites.

RESOLVED to note the verbal update on KCC Local Flood Management Strategy.

10. South East Water- Overview of Services-Presentation
(Item 5)

James Kirby (Stakeholder Manager), Andrew Halliday (Water Resources Options Project Manager) and Douglas Whitfield (Director of Operations) were in attendance for this item.

1.Officers from South East water presented to the Members, the following was discussed:

a) Clarified South East Waters service delivery of drinking water and reported that the service supplies water to approximately 2.3 million customers. Average daily supply is 543 million litres, rising to nearly 700 million litres in the Summer. Customers had used on average 144 litres per day, with the cost of drinking water estimated to be around 81p per day.

b) South East Water operated 88 treatment works and maintained around 9,000 miles (15,000 km) of pipes across three regions. The company managed 33 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) and undertook a continuous testing process of drinking water.

c) It was stated that South East Water had never been a publicly owned water board.SE Water had evolved through a number of mergers of smaller privately owned water companies over time to form its current iteration.

d) Kent's reliance on chalk aquifers and bulk treated water supplies from Southern Water were discussed. The region (Kent) had experienced the lowest rainfall across South East Water's areas, with limited headroom in raw water sources and less storage capacity due to historic development impacts.

e) Over the next five years the focus would be on increasing treated water storage, improving connectivity, and developing new sources to strengthen resilience. It was noted that Kent's supply and demand balance was particularly tight, with recent issues having occurred in Whitstable and other areas during periods of high demand being of note. The aim would be to bring Kent's resilience up to the same level of the western regions of the South East.

f) Kents Water utilities served a population of around 730,000, with a forecast demand of 175 million litres per day. 20% was classed as business use and was higher than other regions due to Kents long established agriculture infrastructure. Normal supply capacity was just over 200 million litres per day, with 87% from groundwater aquifers, 10% from shared surface water via Bewl Reservoir, and around 3% from bulk supply.

g) The importance of collaboration between companies to develop new infrastructure and the enablement of shared resources to be moved across the region were discussed. Catchment management would provide significant benefits, as catchments would not always align with the boundaries of individual water resource companies and would often span multiple organisations.

h) Work at a regional level allowed for a more effective consideration of catchment-based solutions to address future challenges. Presenters explained that the preparation of the Water Resources Management Plan had supported an adaptive planning approach.

i) Discussed the 50-year planning period that encompassed a range of population estimates and the considered impacts. It was explained that abstraction licences would need to be adjusted in the future as part of the plan focused on protecting the wider environment. This would require reductions in some existing water resource supplies.

j) Climate change projections had also been assessed to ensure the plan remained adaptive to a variety of scenarios. Resilience to drought was highlighted as a key priority. current planning was based on a 1-in-100-year drought and future resilience would extend to events of up to 1-in-500 years. Uncertainties were factored into the plan, and a wide range of outcomes had emerged. In the most optimistic case, the region could face a shortfall of just under 1 billion litres with the the most pessimistic case estimates had suggested a shortfall that could approach 3 billion litres by 2075.

k) Available supplies were expected to diminish over the next 50 years. At company level surplus would be impacted in 2030 and onwards, after which deficits would emerge. In Kent the supplies were likely to decline sooner due to required abstraction reductions, potentially cutting up to 45% of current sources.

l) Environmental investigations would determine the scale of reductions, while population growth (approx. 14%), climate change, and drought resilience pressures added further strains on demand. New interventions and customer demand-management were to be essential aspects to address future shortfalls.

m) Over £1 billion had been allocated over the next 50 years to cut leakage, in line with government policy requiring a 50% reduction by 2050. Customer consumption would need to fall from the current 140 litres per person per day to 110 litres by 2050, alongside a 15% reduction in business use by 2040.

n) Smart meter programme was to support demand reductions. A further £1 billion was planned for major infrastructure investments and included two reservoirs, inter-zone transfers, cross-company transfers, and a long-term desalination scheme to deliver more water into Kent. Without the discussed interventions Kent would face supply shortfalls from around 2030 onwards.

o) Discussed the in-place hosepipe ban and how demand over a dry Summer had impacted the region, with additional concerns raised of a potential dry Winter. If the Winter did not deliver 100% of the long-term average rainfall, resources will not fully recharge ahead of next Summer (2026).

p) A subsequent dry Spring and Summer would leave Kent in a worse position than current year. These factors would be weighed carefully with presenters urging caution that sufficient rainfall would need to occur over Winter to achieve the required recharge.

2) In response to the presentation Members raised the following:

a) Officers confirmed that nitrate issues had arisen primarily from groundwater supplies and had accounted for over 85% of sources It was highlighted that no nitrate concerns were associated with treatment from the River Medway.

b) The Chair raised the topic of the ongoing leak in Tenterden and asked for clarification on how after heavy investment in identifying leaks there was still a delay in the response to fixing leaks in the area. It was noted in response that leaks that were not directly impacting supplies would require planned interventions which included road access arrangements which in turn could delay repairs.

c) It was acknowledged that some leaks had run for extended periods and that immediate repairs would only be prioritised when water supply issues arose. The accountability framework on governing suppliers had imposed penalties on water suppliers when performance targets were not achieved. It was further disclosed that suppliers had failed to meet these targets for the past two consecutive years.

d) Targets and KPIs were set for both the agency and contractors. Penalties for underperformance and incentives for meeting objectives were discussed. Continuous improvement remained a priority with average leak runtimes having reduced in 2025.

e) Three nitrate schemes were being developed and would target groundwater sources in the western region of Sussex, and Kent. All would be designed to address impacts from historic land use in groundwater catchments.

f) Presenters emphasised that water companies were not statutory consultees in the building planning process and were instead required to provide infrastructure for new housing once developments were confirmed. Water companies currently had no formal influence over such planning decisions.

g) In regard to the water outages that had impacted areas such as Tonbridge and West Kent, Members discussed the issues faced with tanker replenishment of

reservoirs and the continued draw from the River Medway which would only grow as housing targets begin to rise.

h) Desalination options supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI) were raised by Members as an alternative option to relieve some pressure faced by reservoirs.

i) Members highlighted the water outages that impacted Whitstable, and that bottled water solutions provided had not been sufficient for multi days outages of supply. Members also queried on the rationale of the current hosepipe ban and why other water utility companies in similar regions had not imposed bans.

j) Concerns were raised on the time frame for the Broad Oak reservoir project, the current progress and the impact of increased housing planning on sewage figures. Concerns were acknowledged, and these aspects would be considered for further discussion specifically targeting the subject matter at a later Committee.

RESOLVED to note the South East Water Presentation

11. Environment Agency-Presentation

(Item 6)

Richard Penn (Environment Planning and Engagement Manager), Laura Jones (Team Leader, Integrated Environment Planning, Environment Agency) and Henry Bethall (Flood Resilience Team Leader) were in attendance for this item.

1) A number of points were raised on the presentation*:*

a) The Environment Agency's roles encompassed flood defence construction and maintenance and acted as the navigation authority in Kent, regulated water companies, waste management and industry, providing advice and guidance, enforcing and prosecuting environmental legislation, and monitoring the aquatic environment.

b) The 2030 strategy key aims included: healthy air, land and water, nature recovery, sustainable growth, and climate resilience in conjunction with the shared responsibilities that encompassed the lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), highways teams (KCC), water companies and Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs).

c) Current Environment Agency reach covered over 1,800 km of main rivers, 800 km of coastal waters and had played a major role in the delivery of Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCC) and aid in developing and delivering flood defence programmes. The RFCC would continue to play a vital role in the pipeline of contracts delivered via central government funding.

d) Discussed the key partnerships in place for the property level protection and the role of joint funding that would be required to enable delivery.

e) Water quality and basement plans aimed to enhance nature and protect the water assets that underpinned health, wellbeing, and economic stability. The plan had set out the legally binding environmental objectives that were to guide water regulation planning and formed part of the Government's 25-Year environment plan.

f) These objectives provided a foundation for economic development and aligned with investment programmes such as the Water Industry National Investment Programme (WINP) and Strategic Water Resources (SWR). Objectives were updated every six years using the latest evidence and local targets, the next review and public consultation would begin after 2027.

g) The discussion highlighted the wide range of partners that contributed to the framework across the South East and emphasised the collaborative role of catchment partners in managing water resources. It was explained how regulatory measures were applied to the water industry and covered key areas such as discharges, abstractions, industrial processes, waste management, and agriculture.

h) Continued work with the Kent Resilience Forum on initiatives such as flood wardens and wider community resilience had recognised the opportunities to build stronger relationships in this area. There was a clear need for a broader conversation on growth and water resources. In addition, forthcoming local natural recovery strategies represented a significant step forward and offered a real opportunity to link water management with the wider landscape of environmental priorities.

i) Improved bathing water quality remained a key objective, although results in 2025 had been mixed and final results were still awaited. Overall, the discussed subjects highlighted the developments, challenges and opportunities in strengthening the resilience of the water industry currently faced.

2) Members made a number of questions in regard to the presentation:

a) Sea water quality at Deal and Walmer had declined from a "Good" rating in 2021–2022 to a "Poor" in 2024 and had remained poor, with official advice against bathing and it was asked on what the current situation was. Officers highlighted bathing water quality was a priority for the Environment Agency, particularly in areas where standards were not being met and had impacted in a significant economic way and affected public confidence in the organisation.

b) Whilst specific details were not available during the meeting, the agency confirmed that failures could result from multiple factors, including storm overflows, misconnections, private drainage issues, agricultural runoff, and other non-descript pollution sources. Further detailed information would be provided in future updates.

c) Members discussed the subject of wastewater asset inspections and asked how many had taken place in Kent and what the current results looked like. Additional questions were raised on a timetable framework of the

Environment Agencies testing and awarding of bathing waters and if any similar actions could be supported or taken out by other authorities.

d) Presenters responded that compliance assessments reported on inspected assets and encompassed any breaches of permit and in turn captured any remediate actions required. This data was available to review via the Environment Agency website.

e) On the subject of bathing water changes, future regulations were currently under consultation for change and recent discussions with external partners around community testing would be explored.

f) The concerning cancellation of water testing in early 2025 was flagged by Members who queried if staffing shortages had been addressed and if the overall resourcing of the Environment Agency was robust enough to deal with future demands. Further concerns on bathing water quality on the Medway and coastal regions were raised.

g) Presenters raised that no current concerns on resourcing had been raised but did acknowledge that testing had been impacted by lack of available laboratory testing staff during the specific test period, it was noted that this had now been resolved.

h) Monitoring bathing waters was subjected to a funding envelope and prioritised on national and local requirements. Citizen science testing was encouraged, although the testing for new areas of bathing water would be subject to incoming new regulations.

i) Members queried on the local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth (SEG) and highlighted ongoing concerns around the impact of climate change on 'Carbon Catchments' such as Swanscombe marshes and the additional impact of London's growing infrastructure impacting on Kent. The Environment Agency acknowledged the concern and would look to expand further at a returning committee.

j) The discussion closed out and commended the Environment Agency on the work completed to date throughout the County.

RESOLVED to note the Environment Agency presentation.

12. Southern Water - Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force-Presentation
(Item 7)

Mike Russell (Stakeholder Manager) and Angus Cramp (Delivery Lead for Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce) were in attendance for this item.

1. The Clean rivers and Sea's task force team presented the following:

a) The Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force was launched in 2021 with a total of two staff who had focused on reducing storm overflow releases, lowering flood risk, and improving the environment. In 2022, £7 million in advance

funding had supported the creation of ‘Pathfinder’ projects. The Pathfinder projects would act as a testbed across different catchments to trial innovative approaches and inform future investment.

b) The 2025 business plan period had begun as part of the 5-year cycle. Over the next decade, the Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force would look to invest £1.5 billion in environmental improvements as part of the storm overflow reduction plan. The team had grown from two members in 2021 to 60 and had continued to expand rapidly. Collaboration was key in delivering improvements and required working closely with local District authorities, Kent County Council, and other partners to maximize impact.

c) Highlighted the two different separated sewer systems that were employed throughout the County. The discussed systems encompassed the foul system (home waste) and the surface water line (roads and runoff). Surface water lines would not require any further external treatment works.

d) To tackle storm overflow releases, the focus would be on building resilient infrastructure that could cope with increased extreme weather events and heavy rainfall. Urban development had reduced permeable land and led to more rainwater entering sewer networks instead of natural storage areas and had increased overflow risks. Addressing the issue required innovative solutions, stakeholder scrutiny, and collaboration under the Government’s Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan (SORD). Each catchment area would be assessed individually to identify opportunities for improvement.

e) This encompassed assessing assets for investment, fixing illegal or incorrect connections and installing sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) on homes, businesses, schools, and public highways. These measures, alongside the Storm Overflow Reduction Plan, would form the basis of the five-year strategy to improve resilience and protect water quality.

f) Storm overflow reduction in Kent involved significant investment and regulatory targets. Of 68 overflows that were scheduled for improvement by 2035, 57 would be addressed within the next five years, with 27 requiring SuDS. These projects aimed to meet government targets of reducing storm overflow releases to no more than 10 per year by 2027 to 2030. It was pinpointed that these targets represented a major collaborative effort and opportunity for environmental improvement.

g) Current work focused on areas meeting regulatory triggers. Notable areas discussed were Faversham, Herne Bay, Queensborough, Sittingbourne, and Whitstable due to their designation as shellfish waters, environmentally sensitive sites, or bathing water areas. Prioritization was based on government targets and not local preference. The Environment Agency emphasized the importance of the partnership with Kent County Council to deliver improvements effectively.

h) Highway SuDS would be a key opportunity for storm overflow reduction. By converting unused ‘grey’ highway areas into features like swales, tree pits, and other sustainable drainage systems, surface water would be absorbed before entering sewer networks. This approach reduced flood risk, improved

water quality, and supported the wider Storm Overflow Reduction Plan for Kent.

i) An example of a successful collaboration discussed was the Margate SuDS scheme delivered with Kent County Council. The Environment Agency had funded the project and KCC carried out the work. The scheme had required extensive communication with local authorities and residents and had demonstrated how grey highway areas could be transformed into sustainable drainage features to aid in the reduction of surface water entering the sewer networks.

j) The success of the Pathfinders project works that had taken place with KCC assistance. Improvements to Whitstable library sustainable drainage were also presented in depth.

k) The use and implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions were also noted and the subsequent implementation into Tankerton Circus. Whitstable had seen spill reduction prediction of 20%. Improvements to Thanet Way drainage and rerouted surface lines were also addressed.

l) Presenters closed out the presentation listing the numerous current and future projects throughout the county and staff would be happy to return to the Committee or show in person Members the catchment areas so they could observe the work currently underway.

2. In response the presentation Members asked the following:

a) The Cabinet Member for the Environment discussed the Margate SuDS project and highlighted its success as a cost-effective and collaborative endeavour that had been delivered through a solid partnership between the Environment Agency and Kent County Council. It was suggested as a key demonstration on how sustainable drainage could address major flood and runoff challenges while staying on budget and on track.

b) While significant progress had been made with schemes such as the Whitstable Library SuDS, The Committee was informed that the ultimate goal remained compliance with regulatory targets. The reduction of storm overflow releases to an average of no more than 10 spills per outfall per year by 2027 was a key target and required continued collaboration with partners. Investment opportunities exploration would be essential to meet this commitment.

c) Members raised concerns about the scale of recent storm overflow incidents, such as a 25-hour overflow spill at Swalecliffe, Whitstable that had occurred in October and questioned the Environment Agency's level of engagement with local planning authorities. In addition, with significant housing development having increased and climate change impacts, the Committee stressed the need for closer integration of expertise in planning processes to ensure infrastructure resilience and compliance with regulatory targets.

d) The Environment Agency acknowledged the challenge and confirmed that storm overflow reductions had been driven by regulatory requirements and

not voluntary action. Engagement with local planning authorities was managed by the Future Growth Team (FGT), which would work closely on local plans and had provided data to inform development decisions.

e) Whilst conversations had occurred regularly, the agency acknowledged the need for greater transparency and suggested that, at a future session of the Committee they return to demonstrate how planning and infrastructure considerations were integrated.

f) Members recalled that a previous Committee meeting had set a target of reducing overflow discharges by 80% by 2030. The Environment Agency confirmed that progress would be reported regularly, with updates on average storm overflow being captured.

g) Failure to meet targets would result in penalties and fines for water companies and would reinforce the importance of compliance and transparency. On the subject of the 80% reduction reported three years previously, the EA would look to bring backs for further clarification.

h) Members referenced the Dane Court School SuDS scheme in Margate and questioned if a similar approach could be applied to schools in the Tonbridge area. Concerns were raised regarding funding to future-proof buildings and mitigate local flooding impacts, with emphasis on the need for investment and collaboration to extend successful models to other areas.

i) Presenters confirmed that the Environment Agency worked with the Department for Education (DfE) to secure funding for school-based SuDS schemes. They noted that recent changes to funding criteria have excluded some schools but expressed hope that Tonbridge will be included in future plans if installations achieve measurable reductions in storm overflow releases.

RESOLVED to note the Southern Water presentation.

13. KCC Severe Weather Response Activity Report
(Item 8)

Andy Jeffery, Head of Resilience and Emergency Planning, was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Jeffery discussed the following*:*

a) The reporting period was relatively calm in terms of flood response. There had been no significant incidents requiring intervention from the KCC Duty Emergency Planning Officer (EPO) or the wider Resilience and Emergency Planning Service. (EPS)

b) The appendix provided a list of alerts and warnings received by the Emergency Planning Officer from various agencies, primarily the Environment Agency and the Met Office. This was included to give

Members visibility of the type and volume of information shared with KCC during the reporting period.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the KCC Severe Weather Response Activity Report.