

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Flood Risk Management Committee held in the Waterton Lee, Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 14 January 2010.

PRESENT: Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr M J Harrison, Mr R E King, Mr W Richardson and Mrs P A V Stockell

ALSO PRESENT: Mr A Pearce (Environment Agency)

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss E Holliday (Team Leader Natural Environment & Coast), Mr A Turner (Principal Regeneration & Projects Officer), Mr T Harwood (Senior Emergency Planning Officer) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### 1. Election of Chairman

*(Item 3)*

(1) Mr D L Brazier moved, seconded by Mr M J Harrison that Mr R E King be elected Chairman of the Committee.

*Carried Unanimously*

(2) Mr King thereupon took the Chair.

##### 2. Terms of Reference

*(Item 5)*

The Committee noted its Terms of Reference as appended to these Minutes.

##### 3. The Flood and Water Management Bill and Kent Resilience Forum

*(Item 6)*

(1) Miss Holliday explained that the Flood and Water Management Bill had been published in November 2009 and was expected to receive Royal Assent before the General Election in 2010. Its implications for the County Council were that it would become the Lead Flood Authority for the county.

(2) The Bill enabled the development of local partnerships involving *inter alia* the District Councils, the Internal Drainage Board, the Highways Authority, Water Companies and the Environment Agency. Other potential partners could include the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Police. There was, however, currently no guidance on how the partnerships should work or when they should be set up.

(3) Miss Holliday then referred to the "Roles and Responsibility" document set out in the Appendix to the report. She commented that it was not yet clear where the Coastal Groups fitted within the structure. What was clear was that the Southern Regional Flood Defence Committee would have the overarching role of setting

priorities, which the Lead Local Flood Authority would be responsible for overseeing at a local level.

(4) Mr Pearce from the Environment Agency said that each major flood highlighted different areas of concern and triggered an action plan. The overall lesson that had been learned was that the Environment Agency's most effective role was strategic management, whilst the Local Authorities were best placed to react to local flooding.

(5) Mr Pearce then explained that it should be the role of the Flood Risk Management Committee to strategically manage local flooding by working to bring the District Authorities and Coastal Groups together. Most of these already had Flood Action Plans, and a possible role for this Committee might be to scrutinise how the Environment Agency was fulfilling its strategic role within the County.

(6) Mr Harwood explained that the Kent Resilience Forum had its basis in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 which had set up Local Resilience Forums to enhance planning for major incidents such as Foot and Mouth, fuel shortage or Flooding. Meetings of the Kent Resilience Forum were chaired by the Chief Constable. The County Council was represented at KRF policy level by the Chief Executive and the Head of Emergency Planning. Other organisations represented included the emergency services, district authorities, utilities and the Environment Agency.

(7) The Kent Resilience Forum included a Severe Weather Sub-Group (chaired by the Environment Agency) which co-ordinated and set policy and did the bulk of work on flood response planning. Mr Harwood attended its meetings on behalf of Kent County Council. This Sub-Group, in turn, set up a number of "Task and Finish" groups, such as the one that had considered the Pitt Review.

(8) Flooding had been identified in the Community Risk Register as a top category Risk. Within Kent, there were approximately 66,000 properties at risk of flooding. Of these, some 20,000 were at risk from fluvial flooding. The County's roads were also potentially at risk. A pilot investigating the potential extent of highway flooding in the Romney Marsh area was currently under way as a component of work on a developing Local multi-agency Flood Plan with support from the Head of KHS Technical Services, Norman Bateman.

(9) The Committee thanked the three Officers for their introductory presentations and discussed how best to prepare for the role ascribed to it. It was considered that it should aim to meet every six to eight weeks over the next few months in order to receive presentations from various agencies and above all to gain an overview of the relevant organisations in Kent on a district by district basis.

(10) The Committee stressed the need for a Flood Risk Management Officer to be appointed at the earliest opportunity.

(11) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the reports on the Flood and Water Management Bill and the Kent Resilience Forum be received;

- (b) a report be prepared for the next meeting of the Committee giving an overview of the relevant organisations in Kent on a district by district basis; and
- (c) presentations on the work of various authorities be given to future meetings of the Committee over the next six months.

#### **4. Water resource management issues in Kent**

*(Item 8)*

(1) Mr Turner identified the key issues as: Surface and Groundwater Pollution; Water Scarcity and Drought; Water Supply and Demand. These issues, together with the future risks and uncertainties identified in the report needed to be managed through better spatial planning. There were also a number of issues of more than local importance such as Loss of Resources and Climate Change. Methods for Waste Water disposal also needed to be improved.

(2) Mr Turner referred to the public inquiry into South East Water's Water Resource Management Plan. As the expected paper from South East Water was not yet available, it would not be possible for the Committee to form a view. Kent County Council would need to produce either a statement of case for the Inquiry or a statement of common ground with the company.

(3) Mr Pearce explained that there were areas of disagreement between the Environment Agency and South East Water around whether the stress should be on demand management or resource identification. He offered to arrange for presentations to be given to the Committee by experts in the field.

(4) Mr Pearce said that planning needed to be undertaken for both surface and groundwater. There was also the issue of protecting utility infrastructure from flood risk. At worst, there was a risk of 80,000 people in Kent having no drinking water if the necessary measures were not put in place.

(5) RESOLVED to: -

- (a) note the Water Resource Management issues set out in the report; and
- (b) review the capacity of the Committee to consider Water Resource Management once the extent of work needed on Flooding has become clear.

#### **5. Dates of future meetings**

*(Item 9)*

The Committee agreed that it should meet on a six to eight weekly basis until June 2010 in order to receive presentations from various agencies on Flood Risk Management.