

APPENDIX 2

NOTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2021

PRESENT:

Tony Harwood: KCC Emergency Planning
Max Tant: KCC Flood and Water
Guy Gardner: KCC Emergency Planning and Link Officer to Maidstone BC

James Bailey: Maidstone BC Development
Uche Olufemi: Maidstone BC Emergency Planning

Geraldine Brown: Chairman Yalding PC
Angela Gent: Clerk to Yalding PC

David Goff: Chairman Collier Street PC

Mr Albert Lee: Owner of the Little Venice Site
Mrs Iris Lara: Manager of the Little Venice Site

Jonathan Alawo: Environment Agency (Flood Division)
Kirsty Aucott: Environment Agency (Kent Flood Partnership)

Ian Crouch: Kent Resilience Forum

Grant Brooker: Kent Fire and Rescue

IN ATTENDANCE

Laura Newman: KCC Emergency Planning
Andrew Tait: KCC Democratic Services

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

(1) The Purpose of the meeting was to consider the readiness of Little Venice Caravan Park to meet the emergencies of evacuation and shelter in the event of flooding occurring during prolonged periods of winter rainfall.

RESPONSE AND EMERGENCY PLAN

(1) Jonathan Alawo: Environment Agency (Flood Division) said:

- There were 5 Flood Wardens for the Little Venice site, reporting to Mrs Iris Lara (Manager of the Little Venice Site). They were all trained and prepared for an emergency.
- The Environment Agency had experienced a problem in contacting the Owner or the Site Manager.
- The Environment Agency intended to provide sandbags for use at the site.

- (2) Albert Lee (Site Owner);
- Iris Lara was the contact for operations in the event of an alert arriving from Maidstone BC.
 - Home Owners had been written to in October, reminding them of the winter flood season and the evacuation plan in place (including the emergency park area to which they would initially be evacuated.
 - He was confident that the site could take all the actions that were necessary.
- (3) Guy Gardner (KCC Emergency Planning and Link Officer to Maidstone BC):
- He was very pleased with the progress that had been made and that it was now essential to maintain it.
 - The Agencies involved in flood response activity needed to provide a continuous stream of information in the event of a flood in order to counter potentially misleading information on social media.
- (4) Uche Olufemi (Maidstone BC Emergency Planning):
- Communication was key. At present, it was very difficult for MBC to get up-to-date information on which roads had been closed.
 - The Flotation Systems were designed to raise and lower in a controlled manner to 13ft.
- (5) Iris Lara (Manager of the Little Venice Site):
- The site had recently purchased a second rescue boat. These boats were motorised power boats.
 - The reason that major problems had occurred in 2013 was that the flooding event had happened so quickly that the site had been unable to cope without significant assistance.
- (6) Tony Harwood (KCC Emergency Planning):
- Warning Systems had been refined with the addition of a localised system, enabling all residents to be ready to evacuate.
 - It might be necessary to hold a “dry evacuation” to test whether all residents were all able to be accommodated in an emergency.
- (7) Geraldine Brown (Chairman Yalding PC):
- Very concerned about the arrangements for vulnerable people. In 2019, elderly and disabled people had needed to be evacuated to Yalding Church by Maidstone BC. Once at the Church they had been taken to Maidstone until the danger had passed. Once it had, Maidstone BC had no longer had responsibility for them.

(8) Albert Lee:

- During the previous winter, he had personally knocked on doors and sent text messages to all the residents (who had all complied). The early warning system had meant that no such problems had occurred on this occasion. He had compensated all the residents for their hotel expenses.

(9) Uche Olefemi:

- Agreed with Albert Lee that everything had gone very well in 2020/21. MBC and Iris Lee had taken part in the door-knocking exercise. Everyone had left the site and been taken to hotels.

GENERAL AND WIDER ISSUES IN THE PARISHES OF YALDING AND COLLIER STREET

(1) Geraldine Brown (Chairman Yalding PC):

- The Parish Council's problem was sorting out arrangements at the Sub Station.
- It would be helpful if a Police presence could be established in the event of road closures in order to ensure that the gates remained closed.
- Residents were always keen to help during an emergency.

(2) David Goff (Chairman Collier Street PC):

- Sandbag distribution was a great problem due to residents helping themselves.
- Teleconferencing was an invaluable tool in keeping everyone concerned up-to-date.
- Agreed that a Police presence would be helpful
- Diversion signs needed to be put up whenever roads were closed.
- It would be helpful if signs could be put up at the bridges naming the rivers and streams.

(3) Jonathan Alawo:

- The need to ensure that each portion of the site was part of the communication network.
- During the last incident, there had been abuse to the Flood Wardens from drivers. Kent Police had been advised accordingly.

(4) Tony Harwood (KCC Emergency Planning)

- The same problem also applied to KCC services and 4X4 rescue workers. This occurred in many parts of the County.

(5) Grant Brooker: Kent Fire and Rescue

- Arrangements were being considered to enable gates to be closed without being needing to be manned.
- Kent Fire and Rescue had a database enabling rapid communication of Environment Agency advice.
- Although consideration was being given to a reduction in sandbags, he did not believe that this should be done. This was because in both 2019 and 2020 the sub station had very nearly stopped working. If this were to occur, the electric pumps would cease to work.

SUMMARY

(1) Tony Harwood:

- There were four issues that had arisen out of the discussion that needed further consideration. These were
 - (a) Early Notification
 - (b) Communication
 - (c) The resilience of the utility networks
 - (d) Enforcement of road closures.