

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee held in the Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 19 November 2012.

PRESENT: Mr R E King (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr M J Harrison, Mr C Hibberd and Mr M J Vye

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Tant (Flood Risk Manager), Mr T Harwood (Senior Emergency Planning Officer) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Blanford (Ashford BC), Mr P Vickery-Jones (Canterbury CC), Mr J Muckle (Dartford BC), Mr J Scholey (Sevenoaks DC), Mr G Lewin, Mr A Hills (Shepway DC), Mr H Rogers (Tonbridge and Malling BC), Mr D Elliott Tunbridge Wells BC), Mr M Tapp (River Stour IDB), Mr L Cooke (Romney Marshes Area IDB) and Mr T Dauben (Environment Agency)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

12. Minutes of the meeting on 23 July 2012

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2012 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

13. Local Flood Risk Management Strategy - pre-consultation draft

(Item 4)

(1) The Chairman explained that the original intention had been to enable the Committee Members to comment individually on the pre-consultation draft before publication in September. As the timetable had slipped, this was an excellent opportunity for the Committee as a whole to discuss it at a strategic level.

(2) Mr Tant agreed that in future colour maps would be provided in hard copy to Members of the Committee rather than the black and white version of them which Democratic Services was able to provide from its budget.

(3) Mr Tant introduced the report by saying that the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy aimed to provide a framework to manage local flood risks from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. Rivers and coastal flooding remained the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

(4) Mr Tant then set out the objectives for the Local Strategy. These were:-

- (i) Improving the understanding of the risks of flooding from surface runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses in Kent;
- (ii) Reducing the impact of flooding on people and businesses in Kent;

- (iii) Ensuring that development in Kent takes account of flood risk issues and plans to effectively manage any impacts.;
- (iv) Providing clear information and guidance on the role of the public sector and individuals in flood risk management in Kent and how those roles will be delivered and how authorities will work together to manage flood risk; and
- (v) Ensuring that emergency plans and responses to flood incidents in Kent are effective and that communities understand the risks and their role in an emergency.

(5) Mr Tant said that the objectives, which were set out in Section 4 of the Draft Strategy informed the rest of the document, leading to the actions set out in Section 9 (Next Steps). Once published, the Strategy would be the subject of its first review three years later. Thereafter, it would be regularly reviewed on a less frequent basis.

(6) Mr Tant then informed the Committee that it was intended to publish the first draft during the week commencing 26 November 2012. The consultation period would be 10 weeks, ending in February 2013.

(7) The Chairman invited Members to comment on the pre-consultation draft at a strategic level. These comments are set out below.

(a) There should be a specific reference to highways flooding in the document. This would send out a clear message that this was an important matter that would be monitored through the recording tool described in Section 5.5.

(b) A flooding hot spot map should be produced for Kent. Reference should then be made to it if it proved impractical to include it in the Strategy.

(c) There needed to be a greater acknowledgement of the collaborative work being undertaken with the neighbouring authorities of Medway, East Sussex and Surrey.

(d) A specific reference to the effects of changes in agricultural practices as these had a palpable effect on drainage issues through greater surface water run off from fields. It was important to evidence that this issue was understood. Greater detail could be provided at a later stage.

(e) Section 2.1.3 should include a specific mention of the responsibilities of people who lived on higher ground to take measures to prevent, reduce or slow down the rate at which surface water ran off from their properties; causing flooding problems for those who lived on the lower ground.

(f) There was a possibility that national SUDS legislation would not be enacted in the next few years. This possibility should be prepared for by taking steps to ensure that they were maintained. In this context, it was important to make clear that the actual distinction between river and surface water was not always obvious and that co-operative work with the Environment Agency was essential.

(g) The Strategy needed to state that the Committee rejected a silo mentality in favour of a broad overview. In the light of climate change and related factors, there would be a whole range of overlapping risks.

(h) There should be more detail of the role of the parish councils both in respect of their role as flood managers and in monitoring. This was particularly important as much that occurred was not specifically part of the development control regime.

(i) Section 6 should include recognition that there was a potential for a conflict between the role of the planning and flood management authorities in respect of the regeneration projects that were taking place at disused wharves.

(j) Climate change and its effects was likely to create flood risks throughout the year. The reference to winter flooding in Section 2.2 should therefore be complemented by including a reference to possible heavier rains in the summer months.

(k) It would be necessary for the Committee to consider in detail what its response should be as a consultant and partner to the issues of surface water run off and the under-capacity of highways drainage systems in areas such as Ashford and Canterbury. The Strategy could make mention that this work would be taking place.

(l) An important risk from surface water run off was its ability to spread foul water.

(8) Members also commented that the draft Strategy went a long way towards addressing the problems caused by the lack of communication between the various agencies that had been identified by the County Council during the previous decade. It was also important to accept the need for more innovative working as SUDS were not the only answer in terms of drainage and heavy rain.

(9) RESOLVED that:-

(a) Mr Tant be thanked for his work in producing the draft Strategy; and

(b) the comments set out in paragraph (7) above be noted for possible incorporation into the final version of the Draft.

14. Environment Agency Restructure - Oral presentation by Tom Daubon from the Environment Agency

(Item 5)

(1) Mr Dauben from the Environment Agency gave a presentation on the Environment Agency's Flood and Coastal Risk Management Review. Owing to time constraints, he was unable to speak to the entire content of the accompanying slides which have been incorporated with the agenda papers on the County Council's website:

<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/s37102/Presentation%20Slides.pdf>

(2) Mr Dauben said that the review had taken place in the light of the floods in the Summer of 2007, its new coastal overview role starting in 2008, the Pitt Review of 2009, the Flood Risk regulations of 2010 and the Flood Risk Management Act.

(3) The Environment Agency's strategic role was to deliver the national strategy for managing flood risk in England and Wales (providing strategic leadership and joined-up delivery with reduced funding, and improving incident response capacity).

(4) Mr Dauben said that Phase 1 of the Review had been completed in June 2012. The teams had been restructured and become more outward facing. There was also a greater emphasis on working with others including a better response to funding. Phase 2 would enable the Environment Agency to improve processes, increase cost effectiveness and deliver efficiency savings.

(5) Mr Dauben went on to set out what the Environment Agency had achieved since Phase 1 of the Review had been completed in June 2012. As well as responding to the summer flood events it had given its views on 585 planning applications and replied to 547 Information requests.

(6) Mr Dauben then informed the Committee of the Environment Agency's Indicative Capital Allocation for the next two financial years. The figures were £25 million in 2013/14 and £61 million in 2014/15.

(7) Mr Dauben described the new resilience partnership funding regime. The old system had consisted of a nationally prioritised list where full funding had been provided for the most prioritised schemes. The new system now only funded a small number of schemes whilst providing reduced funding for others, which also required a sourced contribution from a beneficiary of the project. The Environment Agency's role was to meet potential contributors and discuss the most effective ways of securing the project's success. Contributions did not need to be financial. They could take the form of equipment or even (as was happening at Aylesford) a disused quarry. The DEFRA priority list was determined by an algorithmic formula based on the level of risk, the number of properties at risk and cost benefit amongst other factors.

(8) Mr Dauben moved on to the Environment Agency's overall priorities for the next year. These could be summed up as taking a leadership role in flood risk, helping to link the various flood risk management strategies together and ensuring that its statutory obligations were met.

(9) Mr Dauben then set out the priorities in the next year for the teams in the new structure. The Flood Resilience Teams would implement an area programme for flood and coastal risk management community engagement; recruit to its incident management rotas; and develop its duty officers' skills, knowledge and tools.

(10) The Partnership and Strategic Overview Teams' priorities were to develop a strong, manageable and deliverable medium term plan for all Risk Management Authorities; support the Lead Local Flood Authorities and strategic flood partnerships; build up the evidence base; produce Local Authority briefing packs using the *Communities at Risk* data; and prioritising their planning consultations.

(11) Mr Dauben gave some examples of joint projects. The first of these was the Deal Sea Defences at a cost of approximately £6 million. This involved recharging the beach through the importation of rock and shingle and the creation of a wave wall. This project would protect some 1,500 homes and 150 commercial properties.

(12) The Tonbridge Town Lock Wall was a £1 million scheme (mainly funded by external contributors) which would assist regeneration and protect some 100 properties by reconstructing the old flood wall.

(13) The North Kent Coast Modelling scheme had cost £110,000 over a two year period and was due for completion in December 2012. It would improve understanding of flood risk between the Dartford Creek Barrier and Margate. Further modelling was taking place on the rest of the Kent and part of the East Sussex coastline.

(14) The Environment Agency was also at the planning stage with its application to re-open Dungeness Borrow Pit, which had been closed for 70 years. This was a joint application with EDF which aimed to reinforce local sea defences. Extensive work had been undertaken to meet local people's concerns and to make the proposed operation more sustainable.

(15) Mr Dauben concluded his presentation by confirming that the Environment Agency's emergency response role was unaffected by the review.

(16) Mr Dauben replied to a question from Mr Hills on the resilience partnership funding scheme by saying that information on the new regime would be disseminated through the Borough/District and Parish Councils.

(17) Mr Dauben replied to a question from Mr Muckle by saying that the purpose of the North Kent Modelling scheme was to consider different scenarios such as a 1 in 100 year event or a 1 in 200 year coastal inundation. This modelling had only been concerned with risk (rather than cost).

(18) Mr Cooke asked in respect of the Royal Military Canal whether its maintenance programme might become a capital project. Mr Dauben replied that the Environment Agency was trying to use the Internal Drainage Board's precept as a funding source whilst undertaking smarter maintenance.

(19) RESOLVED that Mr Dauben be thanked for his presentation and that the report be noted.

15. Kent Flood Update

(Item 6)

(1) Mr Tant introduced the report by saying that the Environment Agency had recently reported an increased flood risk for autumn and winter 2012/13 due to the unusually wet summer. Whilst this did not necessarily mean that actual flooding would take place, the saturation levels were a matter of concern. The Environment Agency had not issued a specific flood warning at this stage. There had been flooding incidents in West Sussex and other parts of the UK but Kent had been fortunate up to the meeting date.

(2) Mr Harwood said that KCC Emergency Planning had responded to 37 Environment Agency Flood Alerts up to this point in 2012. All of these had occurred between April and September.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16. Dates of meetings in 2013

(Item 7)

(1) The Chairman informed the Committee that he would not be seeking re-election to the County Council in May 2013 and that the next meeting in March would therefore be his last.

(2) The Committee noted that the date for the meeting in March 2013 was different from that set out in the agenda.

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(3) RESOLVED that the following meeting dates be agreed:-

Tuesday, 12 March 2013 (at 2.30 pm);

Monday, 22 July 2013 (at 2.00 pm);

Monday, 18 November 2013 (at 2.00 pm).