

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 18 September 2014

**Question by Martin Vye to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

Given that winter is only two months away, will the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport list the measures already put in place by agencies, including KCC, to prevent flooding in each of the locations where it occurred last winter; and will he also list the measures judged to be essential to prevent flooding in those locations, but for which the funding has not been identified, and inform the Council of the subsequent assessment of risk of flooding, in terms of red/amber/green ratings, in each of those locations.

Answer

The winter floods included a number of separate flood events. The first was the tidal storm surge on 5/6 December 2013, this was followed by the storms on 23-27 December 2013 and 4-6 January 20-14 that brought power cuts, fluvial, sewer and surface water flooding. The continued wet weather in the winter led to high groundwater levels and flooding on groundwater fed watercourses and groundwater flooding. Approximately 929 properties were recorded as flooding in the winter of 2013/14.

A table* summarising works undertaken to date and any long-term measures that have been identified in the areas significantly affected by flooding this winter has been included in the hard copy County Council Questions pack and will be made available as part of the online agenda for this meeting on the KCC website. In many of these areas multi-agency groups have been established to coordinate the delivery of protection measures and training has been provided for local flood wardens to coordinate the flood response locally.

A red/amber/green rating for flood risk is difficult as for many areas there are several aspects that affect the risk assessment that are not known in detail yet, including the flood frequency and properties at risk. The estimated number of properties at risk in each area from the long-term measures has been indicated where it is available. Further work is required in order to determine what schemes are viable in each area and what the benefits will be. KCC is part of a group of authorities that are delivering these schemes. KCC leads on highway works, coastal and fluvial works are led by the Environment Agency and Southern Water or Thames Water lead on sewer works.

**Table in appendix:*

County Council Question 1 – Appendix

Area flooded	Measures employed	Long-term measures required	Properties protected
Faversham	A multi-agency group has been established to oversee the identification of appropriate flood protection measures.	The tidal wall needs to be raised along with some improvements to the drainage outfalls. This is subject to a bid for government funds.	22
Westerham and Brasted	KCC are working in partnership with the EA and Thames Water to investigate the drainage system and identify areas for improvement.	Capital money has been allocated to undertake improvements this financial year. The scale of these improvements will be confirmed on completion of the ongoing survey work.	n/a
Dartford	Tankers were provided during the groundwater flooding of Bob Dunn Way.	A permanent pump will be installed to manage water levels later this year.	n/a
Edenbridge	Damage to the flood wall has been repaired.	Improved flood protection is required by increased conveyance through the stone bridge. There are no plans to undertake this work as consultation is required with the residents on the nature of the work.	216
Medway Valley, including Tonbridge, Hildenborough, Yalding, Collier Street and Maidstone	A multi-agency group has been established to review the works required. Works have been undertaken to repair damaged walls, improve conveyance, clear culverts and trees and undertake surveys.	Improved capacity at the Leigh Barrier a flood storage area on the Beult River. These schemes need to be designed. The outline design work is in hand however it is subject to partnership funding. Once the scheme is designed partnership funding will be required to deliver it, currently estimated to be approximately £17m. KCC has already supported the next phase of the development of this scheme with a contribution of £50k and is currently considering how it will continue to support it.	1,957
East Peckham	This is also covered by the Medway Valley multi-agency group. Blockages have been removed, a wall repaired and trees cleared.	East Peckham will benefit from the Leigh Barrier improvements proposed, there is also a scheme to protect it locally from the Medway River and other rivers that requires funding. A bid for government funding for this scheme is currently being considered.	313

Area flooded	Measures employed	Long-term measures required	Properties protected
Nailbourne and Little Stour Valley, including Barham, Bridge, Patrixbourne, Bekesbourne, Little Bourne, Ickham and Wickhambreaux	A multi-agency group has been established to review the works required. Works have begun to repair walls, clear culverts and improve conveyance. Southern Water is continuing to undertake works to improve the sewer network.	Further work is required to improve conveyance and flood protection along the Nailbourne, which requires additional investigation to determine the best means to achieve it. There are also schemes for the Little Stour that require funding. These are subject to a bid for government funds, but they are not cost beneficial so may not be successful.	401

It should be noted that there is a lot of uncertainty about the long-term solutions outlined here for a number of reasons:

- For many areas a specific scheme to protect homes has not been identified, therefore there is uncertainty about the costs and benefits of this scheme and the provision of funds to deliver it
- Where a scheme has been identified the government's commitment to funding these will not be announced until after the Autumn Statement and certainty about that portion of the funds cannot be given at this time
- Most schemes will require partnership funding in order to be delivered, even with a government contribution secured. There will be uncertainty over this contribution until a legal agreement is in place

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Thursday 18 September 2014

**Question by Brian Clark to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform**

A number of schools across the county are introducing schemes to provide students with tablet PCs. While some schools have a policy not to charge for such devices, some clearly are charging parents, in fact the fees can be significantly higher than devices generally available.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how many schools have such a tablet PC scheme and how many chose not to charge for such provision and would he agree that a school charging for devices used for educational purposes is the thin end of the wedge of paid-for education provision?

Answer

I am unable to confirm how many schools charge for tablet PCs as this is a decision taken locally by each Headteacher or Governing Body. We are aware that some schools run a parent laptop leasing scheme where students are provided with a specific model for a fixed monthly fee which includes licensing and support. Others loan tablets to year cohorts. Schools would need to be surveyed in order to gain that information.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 18 September 2014

**Question by George Koowaree to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport**

Now that the Secretary of State for Transport has given the go ahead for J10a of the M20 in Ashford will the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport take a lead in influencing the Minister to increase the funding for improving Barrey Junction on the A2070 so that drivers can turn right and, for those who want to visit the commercial site coming from Junction 10, can do so safely?

Answer

The A2070 is a part of the Highways Agency, HA, road network and therefore any proposed amendments to the Barry Road junction will need to satisfy their requirements. Following previous correspondence from residents, KCC officers discussed local aspirations for the provision of a right turn from Barrey Road on to the A2070 with the HA and the intention was that KCC would have investigated this request as part of the SELEP interim scheme for J10A.

The HA are now leading on the delivery of the full junction scheme at J10A and there will be a formal opportunity to raise local concerns such as this with the HA during the proposed public consultation, required as part of the planning process. The HA has issued the following statement in response to recent correspondence from KCC officers regarding Barrey Road:

The HA project team for the M20 J10a scheme will be considering any comments on the scheme, as we progress through the preliminary design and prior to submitting a planning application (through the Development Consent Order process) in autumn 2015. We will be carrying out a public consultation in summer 2015, where we will formally capture any issues arising and address them, providing evidence for any decisions on what is and is not possible.

KCC officers will also be part of the HA Steering Group for the delivery of the full J10A and will ensure that the concerns of local residents are considered by the HA project team.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 18 September 2014

**Question by Rob Bird to
Paul Carter, Leader of the Council**

Given that there is a commitment to engage Members at their local level in the shaping and commissioning of KCC services, and that many of our services require cooperation with district councils, will the Leader inform the Council of the recent active steps he has taken to engage district council leaders in constructive conversation about developing closer working between the County and District Councils?

Answer

It is indeed important that we have close and constructive dialogue and relationships between the County and the District, Borough, and City Councils, and this has growing significance as we commission more of our services. The joint working recently on the commissioned district-based Youth Services and the roll out of the Troubled Families agenda would be good examples of the Districts and County working together. There are many other examples such as:

- Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Maximising opportunities for bringing European funding into Kent
- The 'One Public Estate' programme

The Kent Leaders Group and the Joint Chief Executives Group are well established and meet regularly.

The Conservative administration is currently investigating the possibility of setting up regular briefings for all County Council Members on a double district basis to ensure Members have a comprehensive picture of KCC service provision in their division and the opportunity to discuss local issues with the responsible officer. It is the intention to invite the District Council Leaders and Chief Executives to these briefings, as well as continuing to support local boards at district level, such as Joint Transportation Boards, Children's Operational Groups, Youth Advisory Groups, and Community Safety Partnerships.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 18 September 2014

**Question by Dan Daley to
Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

Will the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health inform the Council how many users have taken Direct Payments since the new contractors have been in place, and how this has affected staffing levels in the department responsible for assessment and in the processing of invoices?

Answer

There were 6100 people who were receiving home care arranged by the council when the new Domiciliary Contract came into effect. As part of this, all of those who were affected by the changes were reminded of their right to ask for Direct Payment instead of services. As of 28 August, 1694 of these people had expressed an interest in finding out more about Direct Payments. Of the 559 who have progressed to a detailed assessment, 376 have chosen to go on to take a Direct Payment.

As part of this contract re-let, it was expected that the number of Direct Payment recipients would increase and so 4 additional staff have joined the Access to Resources Team that supports Direct Payment recipients and reviews their use of this money. This is a planned part of the transformation of Adults' Services which is delivering better outcomes for people and extending the hours that services are available, while reducing overall staff numbers.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 18 September 2014

**Question by Ian Chittenden to David Brazier,
Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport**

For a number of years Kent County Council has allowed sponsors to advertise on roundabouts in Kent.

Counties such as Surrey use advertising as a means to directly enhance roundabouts with additional planting and regular maintenance, Kent has no such scheme.

In Maidstone for example, where the majority of roundabouts sit on prime entry roads for visitors to our county town, shrubs and trees are typically choked by grass and weeds. Beyond some low level grass cutting, there is minimal maintenance and there have been no new planting programs for many years.

Does the cabinet member agree that a change in policy is needed, to allow local businesses to sponsor roundabouts, generating landscaping funding which will once again allow us to give a proper Kentish welcome to the thousands of visitors to towns across the county?

Answer

Roundabout sponsorship is managed by Kent Commercial Services, and the income made from this is returned to KCC Finance as part of its annual dividend payment. Spending more money on roundabout maintenance would mean another area of spend would need to be reduced. However I am willing to look again at the arrangements for roundabout maintenance, and the scope for a more direct linkage between encouraging greater sponsorship and maintaining roundabouts to a higher, more presentable standard in future.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 18 September 2014

**Question by Lee Burgess to Roger Gough,
Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

As we are the Authority responsible for trying to meet the requirements for the Government's promise on free school meals, could you give me assurance on the following.

The funding provided by Central Government to KCC has been described as short of the mark and that's putting it kindly and no doubt we are going to have to prioritise where the money is most needed with the very real possibility that many schools will not get what they need.

The LGA has recently estimated that Council's will have to find an average of over £400,000. to meet the shortfall and I think for an authority of our size this could be a conservative estimate. Many schools will be disadvantaged thanks to poor government policy planning. Can you assure me that in light of the shortfall in funds that other budgets, that already face extreme pressure, will not be raided in our efforts to implement this policy?

Answer

KCC has been allocated £2.7 million capital funding for Local Authority schools.

In January, KCC asked schools to complete an online survey to enable an assessment as to how best to allocate the funds. It was identified that schools where the implementation of this initiative would have the most impact, were the 140 Kent schools without onsite cooking facilities and the local schools currently providing for them. Based on the results of this survey and using local knowledge, it was immediately identified that the allocated funding was not sufficient to complete all the capital works needed to fully deliver the proposed changes. It is estimated that to fully address the UIFSM initiative, the capital required would be nearer to £7M.

This £7m would have covered the cost of converting 50 of the 64 schools transporting in over 100 meals per day into production kitchens; placing additional cooking equipment in around 60 mother kitchens; providing additional equipment in 85 kitchens; and improving ventilation in around 30 schools.

The Schools Funding Forum approved a recommendation to manage the funds centrally and using criteria based on need in order to prioritise schools within the budget available, the following projects have been agreed: 12 new kitchens; improving facilities in 1 kitchen; 5 ventilation projects and additional equipment; plus 100 smaller projects.

In addition to the £2.7M allocated, £210k has been allocated from reactive maintenance within the planned Enhancement Budget for 2014/15 to fund 5 ventilation projects.

At this time we are working on estimated meal numbers and will not know the true impact until mid-September when all KS1 pupils are full time in school. There are a few schools who are very disappointed they were not selected to receive the amount of funding they had hoped for, and a number of schools that are concerned that their school hall capacity means that the number of sittings they now have to have will impact on curriculum time. All LA schools will be providing a hot meal for UIFSM in September plus any KS2 pupils entitled to a FSM or wishing to purchase one. The Children's Food Trust are providing advice and the Client Services team are working with caterers to look at solutions such as batch cooking, adapting menus, staggering lunchtime sittings etc.

KCC will not allocate any additional funding to this initiative but there are issues that may affect individual school budgets, such as additional midday meal supervision; additional rental costs for those using village halls; additional equipment.

In October another online survey will be sent to all schools to assess the position.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday 18 September 2014
Question by Roger Truelove to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

“A recent open meeting in Sittingbourne for a group hoping to establish a Free Primary school attracted only 6 interested parents. Apart from a few isolated outbreaks of interest, do you agree that this reflects the prevailing lack of enthusiasm for Free Schools across the County of Kent?”

Answer

There are five free schools operating in Kent at present and two more in the pipeline to commence admitting pupils in September 2015. Kent County Council policy is to welcome the creation of Free Schools in areas where school places are required. Four out of the seven schools meet this expectation.

Kent County Council objected to the Secretary of State when consulted about three out of the seven schools because they did not meet our expectation of providing additional school places in locations where they were required.

The number of Free Schools is a tiny proportion of the total number of schools in Kent. In contrast Kent County Council is building seven brand new Primary Schools for September 2015 and there are several more planned for September 2016 and 2017.

The sponsors of Free Schools have all adopted slightly different models of public consultation, information and marketing. Our experience of expanding existing schools and building new ones over the past few years has demonstrated that public interest is generated when there are concrete proposals for new provision. There is less interest generated by initial generalised proposals for potential new provision in the area.

A stronger indication of the enthusiasm among parents for Free Schools is in their popularity once opened. Four out of the five operational Free Schools in Kent are oversubscribed and therefore popular with local parents. All five Free Schools are either full or nearly full in all their year groups.

It is our intention to continue our policy of welcoming Free Schools where they are needed, and continue our practice of engaging with Free School sponsors at the earliest possible stage.