

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### KENT FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 14 November 2016.

PRESENT: Mr M J Harrison (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles, Dr M R Eddy, Mr A Terry, Mr M J Vye, Mrs J Blanford (Ashford BC), Cllr Ms R Doyle (Canterbury CC), Mr J Scholey (Sevenoaks DC), Mr A Hills (Shepway DC), Mr G Lewin (Swale BC), Mr H Rogers (Tonbridge and Malling BC), Ms C Stewart (Tunbridge Wells BC), Ms G Brown (KALC), Mr D Henshaw (KALC), Mr P Flaherty (Kent Fire and Rescue) and Mr L Woollorton (Canterbury CC)

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Ms R Kairis from the Environment Agency

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### **11. Membership**

*(Item 1)*

The Chairman welcomed Mr David Henshaw (KALC) and Mr Liam Woollorton (Canterbury CC) to the meeting.

##### **12. Minutes of the meeting on 18 July 2016**

*(Item 3)*

RESOLVED that subject to the correction of the figure set out in Minute 8 (2) to 39,600 km of sewers and to minor textual amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2016 are correctly recorded, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **13. Environment Agency Winter Update - Readiness, current campaigns and Exercise Certus**

*(Item 4)*

(1) Rachel Kairis from the Environment Agency began her presentation by giving the national picture. She said that following Storms Eva and Frank in 2014/15, the EA had invested £12.5m in kit such as temporary defence barriers, pumps, instant command units, and sandbagging machines. All of this equipment was stored securely in various depots across the country. The closest depot to Kent was in Rye.

(2) Rachel Kairis then said that the EA had made changes to its modelling and forecasting system in order to enable them to get a flood warning service to more people. The aim was to be able to enable 100% of the population to receive messages and take action.

(3) The Environment Agency had also run an autumn flood risk campaign during the first two weeks in November in order to encourage communities to prepare for flooding events and to produce community flood plans.

(4) Rachel Kairis then reported on developments in Kent. She explained that she was the Instant Ready Implementation Officer in the county, responsible for leadership in the implementation of the EA's plans. There were a number of themes such as *Leadership and Behaviours* which aimed to get 100% of the EA staff (such as Flood Support Officers and Instant Support Officers) onto a duty roll. The current percentage figure was 501 staff which equated to 97% of Kent's EA staff.

(5) Another theme was *Mutual Aid and Visualisation* which aimed to make sure that EA staff throughout the UK followed the same practice. In the event of a major emergency staff from all regions would be able to support those most badly affected. At the same time, staff were now equipped with I pads so that they could relay images rapidly to the incident room. There was a possibility that the EA in Kent would be provided with drones. It was intended that CCTV on the watercourses would become more widespread.

(6) Rachel Kairis said that the EA had introduced Major Incident Plans (MIPs). Three of these covered parts of the South East Area: South West Coast, East Coast and Thames. A specific MIP was in production for London surface water. These MIPs were strategic documents for use by senior officers throughout a serious incident including the response and recovery.

(7) The Environment Agency was also looking into a system known as *Stop and Slow*. The Incident Room in Kent had been open continuously for 3 months in 2013/14. It had consequently been decided that it was necessary to identify the work that needed to continue during a major incident and that which could be stopped. The dissemination of some information could also be slowed down so that the EA could continue with defence work.

(8) Rachel Kairis concluded her presentation by describing *Exercise Certus* which had run from 5 to 12 October 2016. This was a national exercise which had involved 70 players from the South East Area out of over 1,000 nationally. It had tested a number of new procedures within the *Winter Ready* plan. The debriefing for this exercise was currently in progress and measures identified as a result would be implemented in the two remaining quarters of the year.

(9) Mr Hills said that the Government was currently re-evaluating the 1/100 and 1/200 year flood risks in response to climate change and current weather extremes.

(10) Rachel Kairis said that the Environment Agency was constantly evaluating and updating its thresholds for flood alerts and flood warnings. Following a flooding event, they would undertake validation work, including a survey to establish whether flooding had actually occurred in those properties which had been expected to be affected. If not, the threshold would be re-assessed.

(11) Dr Eddy asked why Rye had been chosen as the location for a depot. He referred to the difficulty of getting to and from this location from other parts of Kent and enquired whether the EA had experienced any difficulties with this particular strategic location.

(12) Rachel Kairis replied that she did not know the specific reason why this location had been chosen. She then explained that planning cells had been introduced in 2013/14, enabling the EA to forecast some 5 days ahead. As a result, they were always in a position to get kit to wherever it was required before an event occurred.

(13) Mrs Blanford asked whether *Exercise Certus* had been well publicised, as it was very important to assure the public that the responsible authorities were well prepared. Rachel Kairis replied that it had been on the television and radio news. The nearest live deployment had been to Solent South Downs, which might have led to coverage not being as widespread in the local media as it would have been if Kent had been the main focus. The EA had also publicised the event on social media.

(14) Mrs Doyle asked how much communication there was with officers from local authorities. Was local expertise being fully utilised? Rachel Kairis replied that each local authority area had multi-agency flood plans, which described the particular issues it faced. The EA also chaired meetings of the Severe Weather Advisory Group whenever a significant flooding event was anticipated. These meetings included representatives from the utilities companies and the Met Office who reported on those areas that were likely to be affected. The EA would then update the local authorities on the flood risk implications in their areas, gaining in return any additional information that they would perhaps not have previously been aware of. She stressed that it was vital to learn the lessons arising out of each incident in order that joint working arrangements could be improved.

(15) Mr Terry asked how much of the additional flood resilience equipment was stored in Rye. He also asked for clarification of the final sentence in the seventh paragraph of the report.

(16) Rachel Kairis replied that the Rye depot had been given 32km of flood barrier in addition to the 8km they had previously held. Further flood barrier could be provided from other sources nationally, if needed. She then explained in respect of the Water and Environment Framework (WEM) that the EA had operatives who would help erect the mountable defences. If, however, there were multiple flooding locations, they had extra contractors who were already trained in use of the specific kit, providing extra support if required for a large scale event.

(17) The Chairman noted that a number of authorities such as Kent Fire and Rescue and Kent Police had drones. He suggested that active consideration could be given to whether organisations could share this equipment.

(18) In response to a question from the Chairman, Rachel Kairis said that the number of staff trained nationally was 6,512. Of these, 501 were in Kent. Training for winter readiness was continuing.

(19) Rachel Kairis said that the EA Chairman, Sir James Bevan had recently introduced the "*Think big, act early, be visible*" approach which ensured that every event was considered for its reasonable worst case. Support could always be scaled back at a later stage. It also meant that during an event the EA always had people on the ground to answer questions raised by local communities and report any new information back to the Incident Room.

(20) RESOLVED that Rachel Kairis be thanked for her presentation and that the report be noted for assurance.

#### **14. Kent Resilience Forum - Structure and Annual Seminar**

*(Item 5)*

(1) Paul Flaherty (Kent Fire and Rescue) gave a presentation in his capacity as Chairman of the Training and Exercise Group of the Kent Resilience Forum. The slides are contained with the electronic agenda papers on the KCC website.

(2) Mr Flaherty said that the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) had been set up as a requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to provide a joined up and co-ordinated response in the event of a large scale civil emergency. It had established Category 1 and Category 2 Responders. Category 1 Responders included Kent County Council, the District Councils, the Police, Fire and Ambulance services, the NHS, Public Health England and the Environment Agency. Category 2 Responders included ports and utilities such as the water and power companies. Overall, there were nearly 100 organisations within the Kent Resilience Forum. 18 to 20 of these were major stakeholders who attended most of the constituent planning groups.

(3) Mr Flaherty said that the Environment Agency attended many KRF meetings as a Category 1 Responder and that they also convened the Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG) in the event of a flood risk. SWAG would discuss next steps in response to predicted flood conditions.

(4) Mr Flaherty identified some of the matters which had required either a co-ordinated response or joint working in preparation for potential emergencies, ranging from the coastal floods of 1953, to the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster in 1987, the 2012 London Olympics and latterly Operation Stack.

(5) Mr Flaherty went on to set out the structure of the KRF. All Category 1 Responders were represented on its Strategic Group which met every six months, usually at Chief Executive level. The Executive Group (Director level) met quarterly in order to set out operational priorities.

(6) Mr Flaherty then said that three Groups sat below the Executive Group. The first of these was the Risk Assessment Group which had published the Kent Community Risk Register in 2016. An example of this Group's work was in identifying the biggest risk to Kent as that from coastal flooding; particularly tidal surge. As a consequence, *Exercise Surge* had taken place in September 2016 in order to assess response capability in Kent. He said that a major reason why Kent had played a lesser role in *Exercise Certus* was that Kent's capacity had already been tested. *Exercise Surge* had been focussed upon New Romney because of the 14,000 people who would potentially need to be evacuated from the Marsh in the event of major tidal flooding. The issue facing the responders was how to do so when the key highways infrastructure was out of action due to being under water. He explained that a major reason for siting the Environment Agency equipment depot in Rye was that it was easier to get equipment to the Marshes from there than by using other routes.

(7) Mr Flaherty continued by saying that the Emergency Plans and Capabilities Group had the role of ensuring that the KRF had the plans to deal with identified risks, but also that they had the capability to do so. An example of the work undertaken in this regard was the work that had been done over the past two years with the EA in training flood wardens. All the most at risk parishes in Kent now had trained flood wardens. Exercise Surge had tested the *Pan Kent Flood Plan* to ensure that all Districts and Parishes were in a position to respond effectively, based on the particular needs in their areas.

(8) The Training Group, which Mr Flaherty chaired, ensured that everyone who was implementing the plans was sufficiently trained to do so. This training was undertaken by the individual agencies themselves rather than by the KRF. *Exercise Surge* had tested whether this had taken place and been effective. The Training Group also acted as a focal point for the provision of generic joint training at a local level. The aim was to ensure that when people from various local authorities and agencies were working together, the first thing they would say to one another would be “how are you?” rather than “who are you?”

(9) Mr Flaherty said that the KRF had helped deliver a number of exercises in 2016. These were *Exercise Unified Response* (February) which had been London’s largest ever civil resilience exercise (but had taken place in Kent), *Exercise Combine* on the Isle of Grain (April), *Exercise Distant Echo* at Ashford (May), *Operation Fennel table top* which was linked to Operation Stack (July), *Exercise Surge* (October) and *Exercise Cygnus* which was an NHS exercise in respect of a flu pandemic (October). All of the District Councils and KCC had been involved in these exercises.

(10) Mr Flaherty turned to the Kent Resilience Team (KRT). Kent was quite unique in having created a single team which effectively managed the day-to day work of the KRF. Membership of the Team was drawn from Kent Police (2), Kent Fire and Rescue (2) and KCC, who provided 8 personnel. It was based at Fire HQ in Tovil and had been very efficient and effective. Kent Fire and Rescue provided the Manager, with KCC and Kent Police each providing a Team Supervisor. It was able to keep on top of and update all its Plans, culminating in an annual Seminar. The major exercise planned for 2017 would test how Kent as a county could cope with mass fatalities.

(11) The KRT had initially been established in 2013 as a 3 year project. All the partner agencies had agreed that it was worth continuing. Negotiations were well underway amongst the three partner agencies to make the KRT a permanent entity from April 2017 onwards on a rolling three year programme. All the KRF’s major partners either had agreed or were in the process of agreeing to participate in the agreement by providing funding for the KRF and/or embedding personnel into the KRT. In addition to the three permanent members of the KRT, the EA and Medway Council hot desked there two days each week. Other agencies such as the Ambulance Service and Public Health England were also regularly working at the Head Office.

(12) Mrs Brown asked why KALC was not involved in the partnership, particularly as they could bring their vast experience of local conditions to the table. Mr Flaherty replied that the KRF worked with KALC, but that it was not a Category 1 or 2 Responder as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. He added that there were a number of voluntary organisations where the same consideration applied. Nevertheless, the KRF worked very closely with all of them.

(13) Mr Vye asked whether there were any plans for an exercise involving fluvial flooding. Mr Flaherty said in reply that there were a number of local, single agency exercises every year. From the KRF's perspective, exercises took place for one of three reasons. These were: a) that an event had taken place nationally which had caused the KRF to reflect on its own plans and to test whether its plans were able to meet the same scenario; b) an event had occurred in Kent which had demonstrated that the plans needed to be revised; and/or c) a plan had been updated and revised to such an extent that it needed to be tested in order to ensure that it worked. The major exercise in 2016 had been on coastal flooding. It would be based on a flu pandemic in 2017. It was likely to again be on flooding in 2018 and it was possible that it would involve a more localised fluvial flooding scenario.

(14) Mr Hills said that as a participant in *Exercise Surge*, he had not noticed any RNLI involvement. He asked how closely the KRF worked with them. Mr Flaherty replied that they worked very closely with the RNLI. They had been involved in the exercise although they had not put people on the ground on the day itself. This was because it was felt that if Romney Marsh was under threat, it was highly likely that other areas would be affected too. The RNLI would, in such circumstances be focussing its activities more widely. There was a Register of Pan Kent Flood Assets, which included all the assets in the RNLI possession as well as those from the Red Cross and the RSPCA and others. The RNLI also featured very heavily on the national asset plan for flooding.

(15) In reply to a question from Mrs Blanford, Mr Flaherty said that the KRF's Strategic Group met every six months, the Executive Group every three months, as did the three Groups below it. All of the District Authorities were represented at all of those meetings. In addition, there were partnership agreements with each of the Districts, giving them a nominated point of contact within the KRT. This contact occurred on a regular weekly basis.

(16) RESOLVED that Paul Flaherty be thanked for his presentation and that the report be noted for assurance.

## **15. Flood-Re - Affordable flood insurance**

*(Item 6)*

(1) Max Tant gave a presentation. The slides are contained with the electronic agenda papers on the KCC website.

(2) Mr Tant said that the Government had been concerned to ensure that residential homes had access to affordable insurance against flood risk. Following discussions, the Government and the Insurance industry produced a statement of principles which meant that any Insurance Company that had a policy holder who had been a victim of flooding was obliged to continue to offer insurance to that customer. As this principle did not apply to any other Insurance Company, this meant that the customer had to rely on the original insurer, and the statement of principles had not set out what terms the Company had to offer.

(3) The Insurance Companies had believed that the Government would invest more in flood defences, thus reducing their exposure to the risks. After 13 years, the Insurance industry did not feel that these expectations had been met and they had

become unhappy with this continuing. Instead, the insurance industry had developed *Flood Re* which was a re-insurance scheme for Insurance Companies, enabling them to get insurance for themselves against the risk of flooding carried by domestic home insurance policies. The policy holders were unaffected except for the premium for *Flood Re* which was set according to their Council Tax band. They continued to take out a policy and the Insurance Company took out its own policy with *Flood Re*. This applied in cases where the flood risk was at a 1 in 75 year annual return period or higher.

(4) Mr Tant said that the intention was that the *Flood Re* pot would build up to £180m through premiums paid by all companies that offered home insurance. *Flood Re* did not apply to properties that had been built after 2009, nor did it apply to businesses. There were also other exemptions which could be seen on the website [www.floodre.co.uk](http://www.floodre.co.uk).

(5) Mr Tant said that *Flood Re* was making a difference and that people who would otherwise have found the terms of their policies to be prohibitive were certainly seeing the benefit and accessing affordable cover.

(6) Mrs Brown said that as a result of *Flood Re*, the premium for her property in Yalding had reduced to £1,300 from £4,000 and the excess from £5,000 to £250. Many people in the Yalding were now able to afford an insurance policy when they had not been able to do so before, particularly as the local insurance broker had become an expert in this field.

(7) Mr Vye described the circumstances in one part of the Lower Nailbourne and drew attention to the lack of information held by Insurance Companies in respect of the actual locations where flooding had occurred. This had partly been the result of the Environment Agency's maps which indicated that a village had been affected by flooding, rather than explaining that this had occurred in particular parts of it. He suggested that this might be an area of work that the Parish Councils could undertake with the Environment Agency, and possibly with the insurance industry as well.

(8) Mr Tant said that the *Flood Re* website was particularly informative and worth reading by anyone who had concerns about the impact of flood risk on their ability to afford an insurance policy.

(9) Mr Tant responded to comments and questions by saying that buildings that had been flooded and then rebuilt after 2009 were covered by *Flood Re*. Individual Insurance Companies had also adopted different approaches to the way in which they assessed the risk of flooding. Some saw the development of expertise as a means of gaining an advantage in the market. Others took a more risk averse approach to flood risk and concentrated on other areas. Not all insurance companies were aware of or were using *Flood Re*. It was therefore important for potential customers to shop around and not treat the insurance industry as a homogeneous entity.

(10) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **16. Riparian rights and responsibilities** (Item 7)

(1) Max Tant gave a presentation. The slides are contained with the electronic agenda papers on the KCC website.

(2) Mr Tant explained that the summary he was going to give about riparian rights and ownership needed to be treated as general information as there were many aspects of Law and common law which came into play in certain situations, on occasion overriding the general principles which he was going to explain.

(3) Mr Tant began his presentation by setting out definitions. He said that a “watercourse” was defined in law as any channel through which water flowed (whether natural or man-made). A “main river” was a watercourse which had been so designated by the EA. An “ordinary watercourse” was any watercourse which was not a main river. “Ponds and lakes” were not watercourses unless they were on a watercourse. “Culverts” were pipes that watercourses flowed through. Watercourse Regulations applied as much to culverts as to any other watercourse.

(4) Mr Tant then explained that a riparian owner was anyone who owned land adjoining a watercourse. It was generally assumed that if land ownership stopped on either side of a watercourse, each landowner was responsible up to the middle of the watercourse. It was generally assumed that a landowner was solely responsible for any ordinary watercourse between their land and a highway. It was rare for the highways authority to have this responsibility, although they might be responsible for any highway drains if the road was built on land that they had purchased. Most drains next to the highway in Kent were not highways drains and therefore not the responsibility of KCC to maintain.

(5) Mr Tant went on to set out riparian rights. These were to receive the flow of water in its natural state; to protect their property from flooding and erosion; to fish in their watercourses; and to abstract a maximum of 20m<sup>3</sup> per day of water for domestic purposes and some agricultural uses. Some of these rights conflicted with guidance from other processes; for example, the presumption against increasing flood risk in planning.

(6) Mr Tant said that there were more responsibilities than rights associated with riparian ownership. The passage of water had to flow without obstruction, pollution or diversion. It was also a responsibility to accept flood flows through the land, even when it was caused by inadequate capacity downstream as there was no common law duty to improve a watercourse, and in consequence no obligation to enlarge a watercourse to protect anyone else’s property from flooding. Other riparian responsibilities were to maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse; to not dispose of waste in the watercourse; to keep the bed and banks clear of any matter that could cause an obstruction; to keep any structures such as culverts, trash screens or weirs that they owned; to protect their property from seepage; and to maintain any culvert on their land.

(7) Mr Tant then said that land drainage authorities had some powers over the watercourses in their jurisdiction. Various authorities had different powers in various forms over ordinary watercourses. The EA had authority for main rivers. Their consent was required for a wide range of activities on or near a main river. Internal Drainage Boards exercised powers on ordinary watercourses in defined districts. They could adopt bye laws, which could give them some further powers over some



watercourses in their districts. Lead Local Flood Authorities such as KCC had powers to consent works in watercourses outside the districts in the jurisdiction of IDBs. They did not, however, have powers to adopt bye laws or to carry out works on ordinary watercourses without the permission of one of the other authorities. District Authorities had powers to undertake works on ordinary watercourses and were able to adopt bye laws, although this rarely occurred.

(8) Mr Tant continued by saying that some activities in a watercourse required consent from the appropriate land drainage authority if it was intended to carry out works that might affect the flow of an ordinary watercourse. The EA and the IDBs were also able to consent works near a watercourse in order to ensure that the works did not obstruct their own ability to access it for maintenance purposes. Land drainage consent was separate from planning permission, and the one did not confer the other. This was the case when a planning permission was granted for a development across a watercourse. An inexperienced developer might not realise that land drainage consent would be required for the construction of a culvert as part of the permitted development.

(9) Mr Tant concluded his presentation by saying that enforcement on ordinary watercourses was very difficult. Lead Local Flood Authorities did have such powers, but they were very limited in scope. The EA had slightly stronger powers over main rivers whilst the LLFAs and IDBs had powers of enforcement for maintenance and unconsented works in ordinary watercourses. This was limited to carrying out the work themselves (and recharging for it, or paying compensation for any damage). Landowners could not be compelled to improve their watercourse, even if it was causing flooding.

(10) Mr Hills said that the EA was trying to pressure IDBs to take over main rivers, even though they did not have the same legal powers. This included some of the very old pumping stations along the rivers. This proposal seemed to be shifting the burden onto local rate payers.

(11) Mr Tant replied that he was aware of the “de-maining” proposal and he considered that it would present an opportunity for the IDBs to carry out works that they considered necessary, but which the EA had given a lower priority to. It needed to be very carefully developed as it represented risk as well as opportunity.

(12) Mr Bowles said that he had been a riparian owner. He had also served on IDBs for 23 years, both as a Local Authority and as an elected landowner representative. He believed that the discussions on the future role of the EA would have great implications. He was concerned that the likely end result would be that the local tax payers would end up with financial responsibility in many areas which were currently the responsibility of others.

(13) Mr Henshaw asked if there was a legal difference between a pond and a lake. Mr Tant replied that he was unaware of any legal definitions. The two categorisations were probably historical, following convention rather than specific definitions.

(14) Mr Terry asked who was responsible for keeping all the records up to date. He pointed out that watercourses did not always follow the same line. Mr Tant replied that nobody was responsible for mapping any watercourse except for main rivers. According to the law of *ad medium filum*, the land boundary of a watercourse

followed its exact location at any given time. There were exceptions to this law, such as if the boundary of a watercourse changed very rapidly due to erosion or a man-made obstruction. Further details could be found on the Land Registry's website.

(15) Mr Tant replied to a question from Mrs Stewart by saying that there would probably be some benefit if LLFAs were able to make their own bye laws. An example would be if they were entitled to set their own maintenance distances for planning purposes. The reason that the ability to make bye laws had not been given to them under the Flood and Water Management Act was that a number of Districts wished to continue to carry out their own maintenance work. The power to do such works was the reason for having the entitlement to make bye laws.

(16) RESOLVED that the report be noted and that Max tant be thanked for his presentation.

## **17. EFRA Future Flood Prevention Report**

*(Item 8)*

(1) Mr Tant reported on the EFRA Select Committee's report on its Future Flood Prevention Inquiry, which had been published on 2 November 2016. This report had made a number of recommendations including disbanding the Environment Agency and setting up a new flood protection agency. Other recommendations included proposals for better links between planning and flood risk management.

(2) Mr Tant agreed to provide links to the responses from various different bodies for inclusion in the Minutes. Not many of these supported the recommendation to disband the Environment Agency. These were:-

CLA: <http://www.farmbusiness.co.uk/business/politics/cla-warns-against-mps-recommendation-for-new-national-flooding-authority.html>

NFU: <http://www.nfuonline.com/news/press-centre/press-releases/future-flood-prevention-nfu-response-to-efra-com/>

Blueprint for Water: <http://blueprintforwater.org.uk/2016/11/changing-the-status-quo-will-it-reduce-flood-risk/>

National Trust: <https://ntplanning.wordpress.com/2016/11/02/future-flood-prevention-our-response-to-the-efra-committees-report/>

LGA: [http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/8021485/NEWS](http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/8021485/NEWS)

(3) Mr Tant then said that the Government had to give a response to the Select Committee report and that he would report further to the Committee as these responses materialised. It was likely that this would not occur until the Summer.

(4) Mr Vye suggested that there were matters in the Select Committee report which the Committee should receive reports on. Examples were; Catchment Scale Management (the Stour); effective SUDS in all major developments in Kent; and the EU Directives which currently governed flood response activity.

(5) Mr Lewin suggested that the Committee could receive a report on the implications for Kent of the Environment Agency's Thames Strategy.

(10) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **18. Exercise Surge - Oral report by Tony Harwood**

*(Item 9)*

(1) Tony Harwood delivered a presentation relating to *Exercise Surge* which took place between 27 and 29 September. The slides are contained with the electronic agenda papers on the KCC website.

(2) Mr Harwood said that as Mr Flaherty had already spoken in detail about this subject, he would limit his own presentation to a brief summary which would draw out points of special significance.

(3) Mr Harwood confirmed that there had been an element of fluvial flooding response within *Exercise Surge*. The exercise had been based on a 1 in 500 year flooding incident based on a 1 in 1000 year tidal surge affecting the whole Kent coast. This had covered watercourses such as the Medway and Stour. The inclusion of a fluvial event had enabled all the Kent Districts to participate.

(4) Mr Harwood said that the exercise had been very ambitious in terms of its scale. Nearly 900 people had participated during the main part of the exercise, which had been between 27 and 29 September. The key focus of the evacuation element of the exercise had been Littlestone. 150 people had been evacuated, with each person being counted as 10 for the purposes of the exercise.

(5) All the District Councils except Shepway DC had utilised Oakwood House in Maidstone to simulate a table top response. Shepway DC had used their Emergency Centre because of the major impact in their area. The KCC Emergency Centre in Invicta House had been well utilised, including the participation of elected Members, Directors and other Officers. The links between the KCC and Shepway DC Emergency Centres had been excellent.

(6) The Evacuation Assembly Point for road evacuation had been in Littlestone and the Welfare Centre at the Marsh Academy in New Romney. The moveable flood defence barrier had been tested in Littlestone. The Coastguard and Kent Fire and Rescue Service had been the main players in the "wet rescue" element of the response which had taken place in one of the gravel pits near Dungeness. Lydd Airport had been the site of a separate exercise, simulating a situation where one emergency could be the trigger for another. The Recovery phase had also been rigorously tested on 29 September. KCC had taken the chair for this phase, after Kent Police had chaired the Response phase.

(7) Mr Harwood concluded his remarks by saying that the critical point of running exercises such as *Exercise Surge* was the learning that came from it. There had been much to learn because of the large number of participants and agencies involved and the realism of the scenarios. A multi-agency debrief was taking place at the same time as the committee meeting, and he would report to the Committee on the eventual recommendations.

(8) The Chairman suggested that the Committee might visit the Kent Fire and Rescue Service during the morning of its next meeting in order to see the Kent Resilience Team set-up.

(9) Mr Flaherty said that the Committee would be welcome. He would be able to provide a presentation giving greater detail of the work of the KRF as well as a detailed joint presentation with Mr Harwood on the recommendations arising from *Exercise Surge*.

(10) Mr Flaherty then said that perhaps the greatest amount of learning gained had been on the Recovery side, to which a whole day had been devoted. From now on the person who chaired the Response Group would attend the Recovery Group meetings from the onset.

(11) RESOLVED that the report be noted and that Tony Harwood be thanked for his presentation.

## **19. Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC Flood Response activity since the last meeting.**

*(Item 10)*

(1) Mr Harwood said that Kent had received only 50% of its average rainfall for October. This had followed four drier than average months, including the driest four month period for North Kent since records had begun. This dry spell had resulted in a large number of issues, including adverse agricultural and ecological impacts. It had followed a very wet period in the month of June when 149 properties had been flooded or had required partner interventions to prevent them flooding. The last four months had only seen 4 flood alerts, in contrast to 20 for the same period in 2015. These figures demonstrated the great unpredictability of weather in Kent.

(2) Mr Harwood said that due to the wet early part of summer, water levels remained at normal levels except for the clay catchments. The River Beult was currently running at a very low level. Recently, the weather had been wetter and this was expected to result in re-charging of aquifers and watercourses.

(3) Mr Bowles said that the unpredictability of rainfall levels had been demonstrated on 10 November when the four month dry spell had been followed by surface water flooding that had been so intense that it had brought parts of Kent to a standstill. His personal data for rainfall levels indicated that in recent years, they had become more volatile than ever before.

(4) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **20. Dates of meetings in 2017**

*(Item 11)*

(1) The Committee asked the Clerk to bring forward the next meeting of the Committee to Monday, 6 March.

(2) RESOLVED that the meetings of the Committee be scheduled as follows:-

Monday, 6 March 2017;  
Monday, 17 July 2017; and  
Monday, 13 November 2017.