

From: Tony Hills, Chairman, Kent Flood Risk Management Committee
To: Scrutiny Committee – 11 October 2022
Subject: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee Annual Report
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the work of the Kent Flood Risk Management for the period May 2021 – July 2022.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to note the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee Annual Report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee's (KFRMC) first Annual Report to the Scrutiny Committee since the May 2021 election. The KFRMC has met on four occasions since then, with meetings in July 2021, November 2021, March 2022 and July 2022.
- 1.2 The topics covered during this period were:
- Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings
 - KCC severe weather response activity
 - Short Term Adaptation for Long Term Resilience to Climate Change
 - Kent Flood Action Group Forum
 - Southern Water Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans
 - Southern Water Pathfinder Scheme
 - KCC Flood and Water Management
 - Catchment Management Farming
 - Storms Eunice and Franklin
 - Little Venice Country Park and Marina
- 1.3 The Committee's terms of reference are set out at Appendix 1. The membership comprises 7 KCC Members. There is also a standing invitation to each of the District Councils, Internal Drainage Boards, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC), who send representatives to the meetings. The Committee's approach is to encourage attendance by as many organisations as wish to be represented.
- 1.4 In 2018/19, the Committee adopted a two-pronged approach to its work. It continued to gather as much information as possible on the effects of and preparedness for climate change, whilst also assessing the Kent's ability to respond to events in the short term.
- 1.5 Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings as well as KCC severe weather response activity are reported to every meeting.
- 1.6 Most items discussed were accompanied by presentation materials. These can be accessed on the KCC website at democracy.kent.gov.uk.

2. Committee meeting on 8 July 2021

- 2.1 Little Venice Country Park and Marina

The Chairman outlined the steps taken to investigate the issue of flood risk at the site, after it was raised by Members in March 2020. He confirmed that he had met virtually with the landowner to discuss Members' concerns and understand the measures undertaken to protect vulnerable residents on the site. KCC's Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager, explained that there was a historic planning permission for a mobile home site at Little Venice Country Park and that there had been significant flooding events in recent years which had led to several precautionary evacuations, including some carried out during the previous winter. He confirmed that the site was a permitted development and that KCC officers and partner agencies had sought to overcome the risks, using such measures as the on-site Emergency Plan.

2.2 Short Term Adaptation for Long Term Resilience to Climate Change

KCC's Environmental Projects Manager gave a presentation which detailed KCC's involvement in the Short Term Adaptation for Long Term Resilience to Climate Change (STAR2Cs) project, alongside European partners. It was explained that the project sought to promote climate adaptation by overcoming an implementation gap between national strategies, in order to adapt to climate change and undertake local adaptations in Kent. Members were shown predicted climate trends, which included that temperatures were projected to rise by between 2 and 3 degrees by 2040 and 5 to 6 degrees by 2080, with average summer rainfall reducing by 20-30% by 2040 and 30-50% by 2080. STAR2Cs' seven principles were: Co-Design, Customised, Flexibility, Multi-Functionality, Incrementalism, Integration and Cost Effectiveness. It was noted that KCC, supported by JBA Consultants had carried out significant research and wide stakeholder engagement with 120 key stakeholders, publishing the results of the climate risk assessment in late 2020. The assessment highlighted the environmental changes that Kent could experience over the next 20-80 years, the potential risks and opportunities these changes posed to Kent's society, economy and environment, and made recommendations for adaptation action.

3. **Committee meeting on 24 November 2021**

3.1 Kent Flood Action Group Forum

The Chairman of Collier Street Parish Council gave a presentation on the Kent Flood Action Group Forum (KFAGF). He outlined its functions to help communities to better prepare before, during and after flooding, whilst also promoting effective communication, and collaboration with other Flood Action Groups to ensure that collective knowledge and experiences were shared. He confirmed that the KFAGF had met for the first time virtually in November 2020. The need to challenge local planning authorities in respect of inappropriate development on identified flood risk areas was stressed. Members recommended that the Forum engage with a series of Partners across Kent, including the River Stour and Nailbourne Management Group. Members were urged to encourage their residents to register to receive flood alerts.

3.2. Southern Water Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans

Southern Water addressed the Committee, explaining that Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMP) would ensure that drainage and wastewater management was fit for the future, with the necessary resources allocated, taking account of factors such as growth and climate change. Reassurance was given that DWMPs would identify future risk in terms of flooding and pollution, which would be shared with customers. Concerning storm overflows, they confirmed that the region had been broken down into

three categories: Not Significant, Moderately Significant and Very Significant, it was noted that there were very significant concerns over North Kent. Members were informed that there were 1038 storm overflows (release valves to discharge water when the capacity of the sewage system was exceeded) across Kent. Not all of these were active, but those which were, were identified as 'high spillage.' Members raised grave concerns at the number of illegal discharges made in Kent over recent years.

3.3 KCC Flood and Water Management Team

KCC's Flood and Water Manager gave a presentation on his team's operations. He outlined KCC's responsibilities as a Lead Local Flood Authority, which extended to: setting local flood risk strategy, currently the Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2017-2023; being a statutory consultee for surface water in major planning applications; promoting sustainable drainage; and investigating floods. He explained that the Team were investigating four flooding events, each triggered by internal flooding to five properties or more, which had occurred during Summer 2021.

4. **Committee meeting on 9 March 2022**

4.1 Southern Water Pathfinder Scheme

Southern Water gave a presentation which included reassurance that it supported requirements under the Environment Act 2021 to make demonstrable improvements in the sewerage systems together with progressive reductions in the harm caused by untreated sewage discharges. They confirmed that the company had set a target to reduce storm overflows by 80% by 2030, founding a Storm Overflow Task Force.

4.2 Storms Eunice and Franklin

KCC's Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager brought a report which addressed the impact of Storms Eunice and Franklin on Kent's communities, infrastructure and natural environment between 18 and 21 February 2022. The preparations of the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) were explained, and included five media releases, which warned the public and the additional rostering of emergency services, local authority, Environment Agency, utility and NHS personnel. The Committee were informed that 71,000 properties and much critical infrastructure was affected by power outages, including several water treatment and pumping stations. In response to KCC Highways receiving 1,233 emergency alerts, it was confirmed that 50 crews had been deployed to clear hazards. It was explained that a Vulnerable People and Communities Cell was set up to support residential care, children's and respite care centres, accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and Afghan refugees affected by the storms amongst other individuals and communities. Members commended all partners involved in the emergency response.

5. **Committee Meeting on 5 July 2022**

5.1 Catchment Management Farming

Natural England gave a presentation which covered: Catchment Management Farming; their Farm Advice Team; an overview of the Marden Project which encouraged holistic natural farm management potential through Farm Advice work; and the benefits of on-farm meetings for ensuring successful promotion. Following questions from the Committee it was confirmed that a priority farm list had been developed based on water

quality assessments, which informed decisions to target specific farms through the Catchment Management Farming scheme. Natural England also assured Members that they engage with farmers who express interest in the scheme.

5.2 Southern Water Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans

Southern Water presented on the results of their investigations into pollution, internal sewer flooding and storm overflows; their Plans to create resilient wastewater systems; and partnership working with local authorities, farmers and National Highways. In response to Member inquiries, Southern Water confirmed that they had developed a sustainable drainage policy to manage rainwater run-off. The requirements for the company to improve how it captured and used rainwater and reduce the proportion of rainwater flow into combined sewers were acknowledged. Southern Water recognised the challenge of encouraging retrofitting in older housing stock to achieve this improved rainwater management. Members stressed the need for Southern Water to act urgently to tackle pollution, especially in regard to reducing the flow of rainwater into combined sewers, given the impact this had on Kent's coast and agreed to continue monitoring the company's performance in these areas.

6. Future activities

6.1 The Committee will maintain its two-pronged approach, continuing to receive updates on how agencies are adapting to climate change, whilst also monitoring the responses to current issues. A continued emphasis will be placed on holding partners to account for poor performance and unmet targets.

6.2 The Committee's next meeting is scheduled for 9 November 2022, with planned business including:

- A review of Highways Maintenance during Winter 2021/22;
- Presentations on:
 - the work of KCC Sustainable Drainage Team;
 - Southern Water's progress against their commitment to reduce storm overflows by 80% 2030; and
 - the Environment Agency's sea defence developments and low carbon flood solutions
- Met Office Environment Agency Alerts and Warnings
- KCC severe weather response activity

7. Conclusions

7.1 Kent Flood Risk Management Committee is carrying out an important oversight and scrutiny function in receiving regular reports on the work carried out by KCC and its partner agencies. The Committee's influence has benefited from the continued positive engagement by those local authorities who regularly attend and by the positions of authority that their representatives hold within those organisations.

7.2 Climate change is having the effect of increasing the threat of flooding and other severe weather impacts. The Committee's role is to examine whether and how KCC and all its partner agencies are working together effectively to reduce the risk and to respond to events. The general picture of preparedness is encouraging. Sudden flash flooding is a growing risk and is responded to very thoroughly whenever and wherever it occurs, whilst

preparations for major coastal and fluvial floods and reservoir inundation are constantly being updated and tested. At the same time, research of a very high standard is being carried out by different agencies, and the information gathered is widely disseminated amongst them and shared with communities.

8. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee Annual Report.

9. Background Documents

Appendix 1 - KFRMC Terms of Reference

10. Contact Details

Tony Hills
Chairman, Kent Flood Risk Management Committee
tony.hills@kent.gov.uk

Matt Dentten
Democratic Services Officer
03000 414534
matthew.dentten@kent.gov.uk