

**From:** Tony Hills, Chairman, Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

**To:** Scrutiny Committee – 1 November 2023

**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 October 2022 – October 2023.

**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) second Annual Report to the Scrutiny Committee since the May 2021 election. The KFRMC has met on three occasions since October 2022, with meetings in November 2022, March 2023 and July 2023. Future meetings are scheduled for November 2023, March 2024 and July 2024.

1.2 The topics covered during this period were:

- Environment Agency Sea Defence and Low Carbon Solutions
- Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings
- KCC Highways Drainage Systems
- KCC severe weather response activity
- Impact of global weather patterns on UK weather
- Introduction to the work of the KCC Sustainable Drainage Team
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy development
- Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act
- Shoreline Management Plans
- Southern Water Storm Overflows, Pollution and Pathfinder Project activity

1.3 The Committee's terms of reference are set out at Appendix 1. The terms of reference have been reviewed by the Committee to enhance its ability to monitor flood risk and water management developments, with a view to changes being approved by the end of 2023.

1.4 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 non-voting representatives to the meetings.

1.5 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 Kent's ability to respond to severe weather events in the short term.

- 1.6 Environment Agency and Met Office alerts and warnings, KCC severe weather response activity and updates from Southern Water are reported to every meeting.
- 1.7 Most items discussed were accompanied by presentation materials. These can be accessed on the KCC website at [democracy.kent.gov.uk](https://democracy.kent.gov.uk).

## **2. Committee meeting on 9 November 2022**

### **2.1 Southern Water Storm Overflows, Pollution and Pathfinder Projects**

Southern Water addressed the Committee, explaining the Storm Overflow Task Force's mission to reduce the use of storm overflows by 2030, through its Deal, Margate and Swalecliffe pathfinder projects, 'Slow the flow' passive water butt initiative, sustainable drainage systems and sewer level monitoring. The Committee questioned the rationale for selecting the pathfinder scheme areas; the risk that future development would nullify the improvements made by the schemes; and the impact of density, insufficient runoffs and the replacement of green space on surface water flooding.

### **2.2 Highways Drainage Systems**

KCC's Drainage Asset Manager provided the Committee with an overview of KCC's drainage responsibilities as a Highway Authority, including the responsibility to mitigate flood risk to the public highway; KCC's Highway drainage assets; the risk based approach to gully management and cleansing, which included over 12,500 drains cleansed per month; emergency responses; the impact of water runoff from private land; recent highways drainage schemes, including drainage upgrades; and future challenges. The Committee examined fault reporting; how the proactive approach to drainage clearance had been adopted to maximise service effectiveness and utilised data to prioritise drains with the highest associated risk; KCC's five-year drainage works programme; and how new developments were required to have a higher sewer capacity and enhanced highway drainage systems, which were designed to withstand a 1 in 100 year flood in addition to a 30% increase in capacity for climate change. Members recognised the Highways Drainage Team's strong performance and delivery of an enhanced service using less resources.

### **2.3 Sea Defence and Low Carbon Solutions**

The Environment Agency gave an overview of their Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy, which sought to protect 14,500 homes, 700 businesses and nationally important critical infrastructure from the risk of flooding. The Lydd Ranges Flood Alleviation Scheme infrastructure project was explained. The actions required for the Scheme to achieve net zero by 2030, including a 6750 tonne CO2 reduction was explained, with it noted that the Scheme had achieved a 45% CO2 reduction against its benchmark already. Members

questioned the criteria which determined which sections of the coast were protected by flood defences; the Strategy's 100-year plan; the Lydd Ranges Flood Alleviation Scheme's 25-year lifespan, which promised no drop in performance over that time; and the Environment Agency's legal commitment to maintain the Scheme for its lifespan.

### **3. Committee meeting on 21 March 2023**

#### **3.1 Southern Water Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce Update**

Southern Water updated the Committee on the company's three pathfinder projects in Kent; their use of source control, infrastructure optimisation and the construction of larger infrastructure; Slow the flow; and partnership work. The Committee received assurance that Slow the flow would reduce combined sewer overflows at Swalecliffe to the extent that residents would notice the impact, though it was noted that other interventions were required. The Committee scrutinised the funding arrangements for Southern Water's infrastructure schemes as well as how areas were prioritised for future pathfinder initiatives. Members encouraged further pathfinder initiatives across the county.

#### **3.2. Global weather patterns and UK Climate Projections (UKCP)**

The Met Office gave a presentation on the impact of global weather patterns on the UK's climate, including El Niño, the North Atlantic Oscillation and Stratospheric Polar Vortex. They also detailed UK summer climate projections which forecast average air temperature increases by the 2030s of 1.1 to 2.3°C, 1.9 to 3.9°C by the 2050s and 3 to 7.3 °C by the 2080s as well as precipitation reductions of 4 to 29% by the 2030s, 12 to 44% by the 2050s and 20 to 63% by the 2080s and winter projections, which forecast precipitation increases of 7 to 20% by the 2030s, 9 to 28% by the 2050s and 14 to 49% by the 2080s. The Committee questioned and received confirmation that there was no definitive evidence that global warming had a direct impact on El Niño; it was explained that the average temperature in the UK had increased by 0.8°C, rainfall by 7.3%, and sunshine by 5.6% between the 1961-1990 and 1991-2020 climate periods.

#### **3.3 Introduction to the work of the KCC Sustainable Drainage Team and Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act**

The Committee received a report which outlined the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) plan to implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which would require KCC to approve, adopt and maintain sustainable drainage in the county. KCC's Sustainable Drainage Team Leader provided a presentation on KCC's role as the Lead Local Flood Authority in planning, registering and maintaining assets; the importance of flood management planning factoring in the projected 175,500 increase in houses in Kent between 2016 and 2036; and the Schedule 3 implementation process. Following Member questioning, it

was confirmed that Schedule 3 only applied to surface water and that it was anticipated that the new burden would be funded through applications fees.

#### **4. Committee meeting on 12 July 2023**

##### **4.1 Southern Water Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce Update**

Southern Water updated Members on individual projects delivered in the Deal, Margate and Whitstable pathfinder areas, including the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). Following questions from Members on whether there was enough public knowledge on SuDS, Southern Water acknowledged that a greater understanding was required, and that significant community outreach had been undertaken. Commitments were made by Southern Water to enhance their private soakaways advice webpage and update Members on their water quality testing Beach Buoy system at the Committee's next meeting.

##### **4.2 Shoreline Management Plans**

The Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board explained the purpose of Shoreline Management Plans, as a policy framework for managing flood and coastal erosion risk, which were developed by seven strategic coastal groups, with consideration of the developed, historic and natural environment. They informed Members that the management policies fell into four categories: Hold the Line, Managed Realignment, No Active Intervention and Advance the Line. They noted that the proposed solutions had to be technically feasible, environmentally acceptable and economically sustainable. Kent's coastal risk was addressed, and it was confirmed that Shoreline Management Plans were being refreshed. The Committee questioned how the importance of a section of coastline was judged in Plans; the modelling used to develop Plans; how existing shoreline flood defences were monitored; and the importance of making the public aware of the impact changes would have on their communities.

##### **4.3 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy development**

KCC's Flood and Water Manager updated the Committee on the Council's responsibilities as the Lead Local Flood Authority concerning surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses, its duty to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and the progress made under the previous Strategy. Areas for further improvement, Flood Risk Regulations and timeframe for the future Strategy were shared. The Committee examined whether KCC was working closely enough with water companies to ensure that the management of surface water didn't have an unforeseen impact. KCC's role as a statutory consultee on all major planning applications regarding surface water and local plan authorities' obligations to undertake a local flood risk assessment on any sites proposed were also discussed. The

Environment Agency's role to comment on and object to development on the floodplains was recognised by Members.

## **5. Future activities**

5.1 The Committee will maintain its two-pronged approach, continuing to receive updates on how flood risk management authorities are adapting to climate change, whilst also monitoring the responses to current severe weather events. A continued emphasis will be placed on holding partners to account for their performance and encouraging natural solutions to flood risk management.

5.2 The Committee's next meeting is scheduled for 14 November 2023, with planned business including:

- Draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Southern Water Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce Update
- Environment Agency River Basin Management Plans
- KCC Emergency Planning responsibilities, plans and activities
- Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings

## **6. Conclusions**

6.1 Kent Flood Risk Management Committee maintains an important overview and scrutiny function in receiving regular reports on the work carried out by flood risk management authorities in Kent as well as climatic projections which inform its future business.

6.2 Climate change continues to have the effect of increasing the threat flooding and other severe weather events pose on the county and its communities. The Committee's role is to examine how KCC and its partner flood risk management authorities are working together to reduce the risk and respond to events. Through the Committee's regular monitoring, infrastructure improvements have been identified and continue to be encouraged in order to reduce the risk of future flooding.

## **7. Recommendation**

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

## **8. Background Documents**

Appendix 1 - Kent Flood Risk Management Committee Terms of Reference

## 9. Contact Details

Tony Hills  
Chairman, Kent Flood Risk Management Committee  
[tony.hills@kent.gov.uk](mailto:tony.hills@kent.gov.uk)

Matt Dentten  
Democratic Services Officer  
03000 418381  
[matthew.dentten@kent.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.dentten@kent.gov.uk)