

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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 Wednesday, 12 July 2023.

PRESENT: Mr A R Hills (Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mr P Cole, Ms M Dawkins, Jenni Hawkins, Mrs M McArthur and Ms L Wright

ALSO PRESENT: Mr G Brooker, Mrs G Brown, Cllr P Garten, Mr C Mackonochie

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Tant (Flood and Water Manager), Mr T Harwood (Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

32. Declarations of Interest
(Item 4)

No declarations were made.

33. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2023
(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

34. Southern Water - Presentation
(Item 6)

Jon Yates (Pathfinder Delivery Lead (East), Southern Water) and John Mealey (Stakeholder Engagement Manager (Kent), Southern Water) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Yates gave a presentation which updated Members on the work of Southern Water's Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce since the Committee's last meeting. The contents of the presentation included:
 - a. the objectives of the Swalecliffe, Margate and Deal pathfinder projects;
 - b. source control, optimisation of existing infrastructure and construction of larger infrastructure as the three main types of intervention; and
 - c. sustainable drainage systems in Whitstable and Deal, which included the installation of five free raingarden planters at 13 schools, education

sessions and a successful bid to the Department for Education to work with a further 50 schools in 2023/24.

2. A Member asked whether there was sufficient public awareness and understanding of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). Mr Yates acknowledged that there was insufficient public understanding of SuDS and water usage. He explained that Southern Water had undertaken a significant amount of community outreach and expanded the Taskforce's staff from 6 to 20 in recent weeks which included professionals with education and communications expertise.
3. In response to a question from a Member, Mr Yates agreed to provide an update on the Beachbuoy initiative at the Committee's next meeting.
4. Mr Yates agreed to provide the Committee with a copy of the business plan for combined sewer overflow infrastructure.
5. The Chairman thanked Mr Yates for his presentation and answers to the Committee's questions.

RESOLVED to note the content of the presentation.

35. Shoreline Management Plans - Presentation
(Item 7)

Priscilla Haselhurst (Clerk and Engineer, Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board) was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Haselhurst gave a presentation. The contents of her presentation included:
 - a. 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 environments;
 - b. that management policies fell into one of four categories, Hold the Line, Managed Realignment, No Active Intervention or Advance the Line;
 - c. that the proposed solutions had to be technically feasible, environmentally acceptable and economically sustainable;
 - d. Kent's coastal risk; and
 - e. the Shoreline Management Plans refresh process.
2. Members asked how the importance of a section of coastline was judged in Plans. Ms Haselhurst explained that economic impact and the scope for environmental improvement were key factors and also significantly influenced funding opportunities.

3. In response to a question from a Member, Ms Haselhurst confirmed that shoreline flood defences were monitored extensively, considering their condition and effectiveness. She noted that monitoring on privately owned shoreline was a challenge.
4. A Member asked to what extent existing infrastructure influenced a plan's policies and for further information on the Shoreline Management Plan affecting Whitstable. Ms Haselhurst agreed to provide the requested information following the meeting.
5. The Chairman stressed the importance of keeping communities informed on the impact Plans would have on their local shoreline and how that impacted flood risk.
6. The Chairman thanked Ms Haselhurst for her presentation and answers to the Committee's questions.

RESOLVED to note the content of the presentation.

36. Local Flood Risk Management Strategy development - Presentation
(Item 8)

1. Mr Tant updated the Committee on the Council's responsibilities as the Lead Local Flood Authority concerning surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. He explained that KCC had a duty to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and acknowledged the progress made under the existing 2017-2023 Strategy. He highlighted areas for further improvement, Flood Risk Regulations and the timeframe for the future Strategy which was to be decided.
2. Members examined whether the Council was working closely enough with water companies to ensure that the management of surface water did not have an unforeseen impact.
3. Following a question from a Member, Mr Tant explained KCC's role as a statutory consultee on all major planning applications regarding surface water as well as local planning authorities' obligations to undertake a local flood risk assessment on any sites proposed for development. He confirmed that the Environment Agency's was required to comment on and object to development on the floodplains.

RESOLVED to note the content of the presentation.

37. Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC severe weather response activity
(Item 9)

1. Mr Harwood introduced the report which updated Members on water levels, weather statistics, Environment Agency and Met Office warnings, and flood response activity since the last meeting of the Committee. The report stated that 20 flood alerts warnings had been issued by the Environment Agency

which contrasted with no flood alerts in the corresponding period in 2022. He noted that March and April 2023 had seen rainfall above the long-term average in Kent, whilst May and June had been much drier at 45% of the long-term rainfall average. He added that June had been the hottest on record and negatively impacted infrastructure, with pipe loss and damage experienced. The Kent Resilience Forum's response activity was drawn to the Committee's attention. It was explained that the summer temporary use (hosepipe) ban had reduced water use by 4%.

2. Following a question from a Member, Mr Harwood reassured the Committee that KCC worked with all local utility providers and handled incidents through the Kent Resilience Forum Utilities Group. He confirmed that KCC were cognisant of developments with Thames Water and that contingencies had been discussed with government.
3. In response to a question from a Member concerning preparedness for hot weather, Mr Harwood confirmed that Emergency Planning worked with the Director of Public Health through Kent's Health Protection Board and considered the responses required to protect vulnerable residents.

RESOLVED to note the warnings received since the last meeting of the Committee.