

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 Tuesday, 5 July 2022.

PRESENT: Mr A R Hills (Chairman), Ms M Dawkins, Ms M McArthur, Mr M J Sole, Mr A Weatherhead, Mr S McGregor (Sevenoaks DC), Mr G Brooker (Kent Fire and Rescue), Mr C Mackonochie (KALC) and Mr M Dendor

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Hood

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Tant (Flood and Water Manager), Mr T Harwood (Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager), Miss K Reynolds (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny), Mr D Murphy (Southern Water) and Mr B Thompson (Natural England)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

8. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Lewis. Ms Dawkins was present as substitute for Mr Lewis.

9. Membership
(Item 3)

RESOLVED to note that Mr Andy Weatherhead had replaced Mrs Lottie Parfitt-Reid as a member of this committee.

10. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
(Item 4)

There were no declarations of interest.

11. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022
(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee held on 9 March 2022 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the chairman.

12. Catchment Management Farming - Presentation by Natural England

(Item 6)

- (1) Mr Ben Thompson from Natural England gave a presentation. The slides can be viewed on the KCC website page for this meeting. Mr Thompson began his presentation by saying that restoration practices had positive impacts on natural flood management.
- (2) Mr Thompson described the roles and structure of the Farm Advice Team at Natural England. He highlighted the two strands of work delivered by the Farm Advisors: Land Management Advice and Catchment Sensitive Farming. It was said that this work was expanding in Kent due to an uplift in funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).
- (3) Mr Thompson provided an overview of the Marden Project area as an example of delivering holistic natural farm management potential through Farm Advice work. He highlighted the work undertaken to restore soil quality and improve the percentage of soil organic matter. This was said to improve water infiltration rates and capacity for natural flood management. The Farm Advice work included the restoration of species rich grassland, establishment of flower rich margins and winter bird plots with no herbicides or pesticides.
- (4) In response to questions from Members it was said that:
 - (i) There were financial incentives for farmers to enter into a five-year agreement with Natural England.
 - (ii) A priority farm list had been developed based on water quality assessments. This informed decisions to target specific farms through the Catchment Management Farming scheme. It was also said that Natural England engage with farmers who express interest in the scheme.
 - (iii) On-farm meetings and demonstrations were found to be the most successful promotion activities for the benefits of these farming methods. Having one-to-one advisors on site during these meetings was considered a key way to develop connections with farmers.
- (5) RESOLVED to note the content of the presentation.

13. Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans - Presentation by Southern Water

(Item 7)

- (1) Mr David Murphy from Southern Water gave a presentation. The slides can be viewed on the KCC website page for this meeting.
- (2) Mr Murphy said that the Drainage and Wastewater Management plans had been finalised since the November meeting of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee. He said that these plans were informed by the risks associated with the current drainage and wastewater management systems and accounted for long-term challenges such as climate change, population growth, environmental capacity, and affordability.

- (3) Mr Murphy said that Southern Water's modelling suggested that the number of homes at risk of sewer flooding could double by 2050. The end-of-pipe solutions included underground storage tanks placed at strategic locations. However, these were only effective at the local level. Therefore, there was a requirement for strategic, system-wide investments into Southern Water infrastructure. Mr Murphy said that these investments included optimising existing infrastructure through the use of smart technology and improving customer awareness of the correct disposal of products that cause blockages.
- (4) Mr Murphy also said that installing sustainable drainage systems was a viable catchment-based solution to sewer flooding and storm overflows. He emphasised the necessity of improving water run-off systems in new housing stock through green roofs, permeable paving and wetlands.
- (5) Mr Murphy encouraged Members to respond to the public consultation on the Southern Water's Regional (Level 1) Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan available at: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/dwmp>. The public consultation ran from Monday 13 June through to Monday 5 September 2022.
- (6) In response to questions from Members it was said that:
- (i) Southern Water was not a statutory consultee on planning applications. However, they had issued a sustainable development policy highlighting the issues of rainwater run-off management. Mr Murphy said that collective power through collaboration with various stakeholders, including local planning authorities, could improve drainage and wastewater management in the urban environment.
 - (ii) Improving the capture and usage of rainwater was important for reducing the proportion of rainwater flow in combined sewers. Additionally, reducing the rainwater in the system would decrease the carbon and energy costs involved in water treatment because the biological treatment processes worked more efficiently on concentrated wastewater. However, Mr Murphy said that Southern Water acknowledged the challenge of encouraging retrofitting in older housing stock to achieve this improved rainwater management.
- (7) RESOLVED to note the content of the presentation.

14. Highways Maintenance Update for Winter 2021/22 - Presentation
(Item 8)

This agenda item was deferred to a future Kent Flood Risk Management Committee meeting.

15. Introduction to the work of the KCC Sustainable Drainage Team - Presentation
(Item 9)

This agenda item was deferred to a future Kent Flood Risk Management Committee meeting.

16. Environment Agency and Met Office Alerts and Warnings and KCC severe weather response activity
(Item 10)

- (1) Mr Tony Harwood introduced the report which provided an update on the current water situation, weather statistics, Environment Agency (EA) and Met Office Warnings, and flood response activity since the last meeting of the Committee on 9th March 2022.
- (2) It was highlighted that Kent had experienced another unusually dry March and April in 2022, following a similar pattern to that established in 2020 and 2021. There were no flood alerts or warning issued by the EA since the last meeting of the Committee. This contrasted with the 11 flood alerts in the corresponding period in 2021.
- (3) In response to questions from Members it was stated that there were annual tetrad surveys being undertaken in east, mid and west Kent to establish the impact of climatic and disease stresses on native tree species. The Committee was assured that tree species indigenous to Kent were in fact resilient to the warmer climates of southern Europe.
- (4) RESOLVED to note the warnings received since the last meeting of the Committee; and contribute to planning and response policy and practice through oversight and debate.