

Minutes of the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Sub-Committee Meeting held on 10 June 2016 at 10:00 am in the Room GO2S, Riverside, Lowestoft

Present: Councillors Mary Evans (Chairman, Suffolk County Council), Christine Block (Suffolk Coastal District Council), James Caston (Mid Suffolk District Council), Peter Gardiner (Ipswich Borough Council), Wayne Hailstone (St Edmundsbury Borough Council), Barry Gasper (Babergh District Council), and Craig Rivett (Waveney District Council).

Also present: Councillors Sonia Barker, Derek Hackett and Matthew Hicks

Supporting officers present: Katherine Bailey, Democratic Services Officer
Matt Hullis, Head of Environment Strategy
Linda Pattle, Democratic Services Officer

With the agreement of the Sub-Committee, the Chairman altered the order of business as set out below.

11. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Christine Mason.

12. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. Public Participation Session: recent heavy rainfall

Before the Sub-Committee considered Agenda Item 6 relating to flooding of the Kirkley Stream in July 2015, Councillor Sonia Barker, Suffolk County Councillor and Waveney District Councillor for Pakefield, spoke about recent heavy rainfall which had caused the Kirkley Stream to flood again. She questioned whether the training of local flood wardens (as recommended in the Section 19 report into the flooding) had taken place, and highlighted the fact that there was still confusion about the correct telephone number to use to report flooding problems.

15. Public Participation Session: Investigations into the flooding of Kirkley Stream, Lowestoft, July 2015

During the course of the discussion noted under Minute 16 below, members of the public spoke as set out below.

- a) Mr Adam Robertson expressed sympathy for those affected by the July 2015 flooding and praised the employees of Waveney District Council who had arrived on the scene very promptly to help local residents. He applauded the efforts made to reduce the risk of future flooding and thanked Matt Hullis for his work as Head of Environment Strategy. He referred to proposals to build at least 7,000 homes in the area. Whilst acknowledging there was a need for more housing, he expressed concern that this could increase the risk of flooding in the future. He highlighted the importance of reducing fly tipping and spoke about the need for volunteer flood wardens.
- b) Derek Hackett, County Councillor for Lowestoft South, expressed the opinion that the gratings in the Stream were badly designed. He referred to a grant of £300,000 which he said had been awarded by DEFRA specifically to address issues of flooding of the Kirkley Stream, but had not been used for that purpose. He also referred to new properties which in his view had been built with unsustainable drainage arrangements. He anticipated more flooding in the future, especially during extreme weather events, because of the number of new homes that were planned. He doubted whether sustainable drainage could mitigate this flood risk. He expressed the view that developers and Council Tax payers would need to pay for the Kirkley Stream to be re-engineered, and that this should be put into place before any new houses were built.
- c) Paul Light, Waveney District Councillor for the Carlton Colville ward, spoke about properties to the north of Kirkley Stream which had a history of flooding when there was torrential rain. Many householders in his ward had experience of flooding of their gardens and outbuildings. In his opinion some of the difficulties were caused by the inappropriate size and positioning of drains. He referred to the confusion which had existed in the past about the ownership of land in the area and highlighted the problems of litter and fly tipping.
- d) Mr Crisp of Birds Lane stated that in previous years the Stream had been checked annually but that this appeared to have ceased. He also reported that children had been seen using pallets to cross the Stream. He believed that debris cleared from the Stream but left on the banks had exacerbated recent flooding problems.
- e) Mr Soanes of Long Road commented that cuttings from the clearance of the stream had been left on the banks and were washed into the culverts when the river levels rose.

16. Investigations into the flooding of Kirkley Stream, Lowestoft, July 2015

At Agenda Item 6 the Sub-Committee considered a report setting out the County Council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority in working with local communities and local flood risk management bodies in investigations into the flooding of Kirkley Stream, Lowestoft in July 2015.

Copies of the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Strategy were circulated at the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the following witnesses:

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection, Suffolk County Council

Councillor Colin Law, Leader, Waveney District Council

Hugh Crerand, Collection Manager Norfolk East, Anglian Water

Justin Arnold, Customer Liaison Manager for the Lowestoft area, Anglian Water

Councillor Hicks introduced the report and Matt Hullis gave a presentation reviewing the actions taken since the flooding of the Kirkley Stream in July 2015, which had been the most serious case of non-tidal flooding in the county in recent years. Sub-Committee members had an opportunity to ask questions and comment on what they had heard.

Recommendations: The Sub-Committee agreed:

- a) To commend all parties on the way in which they continued to work together to learn from experience and reduce the risk of the flooding of homes by the Kirkley Stream.
- b) To recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection that members of the local community should be encouraged to volunteer as flood wardens and be provided with training in order to work with responsible authorities to monitor the status of the stream, report any concerns and facilitate engagement with local residents.
- c) To recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection that engagement with the wider local community, including schools, should continue on a regular basis and include:
 - i) emphasising the importance of keeping the stream free of debris;
 - ii) emphasising the importance of reporting all flooding events, including those not affecting buildings;
 - iii) promoting awareness of the range of property level flood resilience measures available to home owners.
- d) To recommend that all organisations whose telephone number was listed as an emergency contact number for the Kirkley Stream should ensure that call centre staff were aware of how to respond to, and escalate, any call indicating that levels in the Stream were rising.
- e) To recommend that authorities responsible for planning development in the catchment of the Kirkley Stream should implement policies that limited surface water run-off from all future developments, and that they should require developers to install mitigation measures before dwellings were built.
- f) To request the following information, to be provided for the Sub-Committee at its next meeting:
 - i) an update on progress with the development of the Kirkley Stream partnership and the allocation of a contract to maintain the stream;
 - ii) an update on progress with the reconsideration of the design of the Anglian Water trash screen;

- iii) a copy of the guidance provided to Anglian Water call centre staff advising them how to respond if a caller informed them that water levels in the Kirkley Stream were rising;
- iv) an update on progress with the implementation of the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Strategy, including information on how individual projects would be funded.

Reason for recommendation:

- a) The Sub-Committee was aware that the Flood Risk Partnership did not have legal powers or duties to enforce flood prevention activity. Nevertheless, members appreciated that all the partner organisations had worked well together to investigate thoroughly the causes of the July 2015 flooding of the Kirkley Stream and to implement measures to reduce the risk of further flooding of homes or businesses in the area.
- b) It was recognised that Anglian Water made strenuous efforts to inspect the Stream within the limits of its resources, but members considered that a strong commitment from local people was needed in order to monitor the Stream regularly for fly tipped rubbish and detritus, and to raise awareness of the importance of keeping the Stream clear to reduce the risk of flooding. The Sub-Committee heard that at public meetings people had been invited to assist, but that so far it had not proved possible to recruit and train volunteer flood wardens. Nevertheless, the Flood Risk Partnership would continue to try to establish a flood warden scheme.
- c) The Sub-Committee heard that since July 2015 the Partnership had held regular public meetings with local residents and had issued a number of newsletters setting out progress. Members wished to see this engagement with local people continue and expand. They were aware that debris in the Stream added to the risk of flooding, and heard suggestions that schoolchildren might be partially responsible for the fact that pallets in the Stream had contributed to recent problems. Therefore they saw value in including local schools in any communications. Witnesses had emphasised that it was useful to receive reports about all flooding incidents even if they did not affect buildings, as this enabled them to strengthen their mathematical models, and the Sub-Committee wished to see this message relayed to local people. Members were also aware of the measures individual home owners could take to reduce flood risk, and considered that it would be useful to remind local people about these.
- d) The Sub-Committee was concerned to hear that recent events had shown that not all call centre staff knew the correct way to respond to and escalate any call indicating that there was a risk of the Kirkley Stream flooding. They wished to see this rectified.
- e) Members were aware that a common theme in discussions with local people was concern about how future development might impact on the amount of water entering the Stream. The Sub-Committee heard that the recent implementation of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 meant that the Flood Risk Partnership was now in a better position to manage issues relating to sustainable drainage. The County Council was

now a statutory consultee with regard to applications for new developments of 10 houses or more and would be able to require that policies be put in place before new homes were built in order to reduce the amount of water running off sites upstream. The Sub-Committee was cautiously reassured but wished to remind planning authorities of the need to ensure that all new developments, including those of less than 10 houses alleviated, rather than exacerbated the existing flood risk.

- f) The Sub-Committee was aware that recently a Kirkley Stream Partnership had been formed. It had agreed a process for maintaining the Stream and a long term plan was close to being agreed. In future, maintenance would be undertaken by one contractor jointly funded by the various bodies who had responsibility for different parts of the Stream. It was envisaged that when appointed, the contractor would be required to liaise with local residents and flood wardens wishing to report fly tipping. Members wished to be kept informed of progress in developing the Partnership and appointing the contractor.

Members were aware that there had been criticism of the design of the Anglian Water trash screens. They heard that Anglian Water was currently evaluating its designs, and the Sub-Committee wished to be updated on the findings.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the guidance for Anglian Water call centre staff was being amended to try to ensure that calls about the Kirkley Stream were handled correctly. Members wished to have sight of the amended guidance.

Members were aware that the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Strategy 2016 was currently at public consultation stage, with comments invited by 29 July 2016. The Sub-Committee heard that approximately £25 million would be spent by 2020 to implement the Strategy, but it was not yet clear how much of that would be spent on alleviating the risk of the Kirkley Stream flooding. With regard to the Stream, the Strategy included 15 measures currently under consideration, some of which could be put in place in the longer term in order to reduce flood risk. The Chairman had received written representations about the problem of silt in the Stream, and members heard that dredging was one of these 15 measures, although it was clear that dredging alone would not solve the problem. The Sub-Committee wished to be kept informed about the implementation of the Strategy and how individual projects within it were to be funded.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

17. Information Bulletin

The Sub-Committee received an Information Bulletin at Agenda Item 7.

18. Forward Work Programme

At Agenda Item 8 the Sub-Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Decision: The Sub-Committee agreed:

- a) To consider at its next meeting how drainage, including highways drainage, was being managed in the current planning process.
- b) Provisionally, that at its meeting in June 2018 it would visit the Ipswich tidal barrier.

Reason for Decision:

- a) The Sub-Committee wished to focus on progress with the adoption and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems for housing developments and roads.
- b) Members wished to review progress on a new £21 million tidal barrier which formed part of a £53 million flood protection scheme for Ipswich.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

19. Election of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Christine Block was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the 2016/17 municipal year.

20. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 11:53 am.

Chairman