

minutes



Meeting FLOODING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 12 March 2007 (commencing at 10.00 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Councillor Yvonne Davidson (Chair)
Councillor Brian Wombwell (Vice-Chair)

A John Carter
A John Clarke
Sybil Fielding
Pat Lally

Tom Pettengell
Peter D Prebble
Sue Saddington

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor V H Dobson

Mike Evans - Newark & Sherwood District Planning Officer
Barbara Cast - Head of Overview and Scrutiny, Nottingham City Council
Ray Dunajko - Communities Department
Sally Gill - Communities Department

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12 February 2007, having been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Carter.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

CITY FLOODING ISSUES

Barbara Cast, Head of Overview and Scrutiny from the Nottingham City Council had been invited to update Members on the City's Review of Flooding in Nottingham. A report was circulated which provided information on the progress made towards the implementation of recommendations that had been drawn up following a review of flooding issues in Nottingham in 2004.

Ms Cast took the Select Committee through the recommendations that were attached as an appendix to the report.

Councillor Saddington felt that no action was being taken to improve drainage. There was potential for the drainage system to overload when a few more houses are built and then a few more a while later. Councillor Davidson referred to a letter she had received some time ago from the Bob Hart, Acting Assistant Director of Environment (Highways) (at that time) concerning Severn Trent reclassifying the status of certain public sewers and the associated problems arising from this. Councillor Davidson asked for an update to be provided at the next meeting on this situation.

Mr Evans, Head of Planning Services at Newark and Sherwood District Council was asked to comment on the City's update. Mr Evans said that he believed that PPS25 had dealt with flooding, in particular, in making the Environment Agency a statutory consultee for planning applications. Mr Evans had some concerns about potential new growth locally and said that although sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) were easy to promote, there were issues around their maintenance and adoption. He also felt that a lot of the new major development should get Section 106 funding and that securing private sector contributions was a benefit.

Councillor Davidson reminded the Select Committee that they had agreed for a letter to be sent to DEFRA following their last meeting to ascertain its stance on Section 106 funding.

Mr Fell, a member of the public said that he welcomed the funding of flood defences via Section 106 agreements.

PRESENTATION ON DRAINAGE ISSUES

Ray Dunajko, Head of Service for the Local Transport Plans and Programmes, Communities Department provided the Select Committee with a summary on Drainage Issues. He explained that the Highways Network Management Plan (HNMP) contained current policy on drainage which encouraged the use of positive drainage systems (traditional piped systems) and that at present there was no specific policy on Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) The County Council had however produced a 'Sustainable Developers Guide' which encouraged developers to consider the use of SUDS where possible.

It was recognised however that there were problems with the adoption of SUDS, due to the additional maintenance obligations and cost they brought with them and possible safety concerns regarding open water. Developers also did not want to lose additional land to accommodate SUDS systems.

Mr Dunajko said that it should be recognised that there were many SUDS type design features, already in use, such as ditches, French drains and soakaways. Sherwood Energy Village was cited as an example of a sustainable drainage development where the SUDS system was maintained privately.

Councillor Wombwell referred to a recent recurrent problem with blocked drains in Stapleford and wondered what the County Council's policy was on drain cleaning. Mr Dunajko said that he believed that they were cleaned on a regular basis.

Councillor Wombwell understood that they were only cleaned when there was a problem. It was suggested that the matter be looked in to.

Councillor Prebble expressed his own concerns in relation to the drainage problems at Mill Lane in Newark. He wondered if the problem was due to the age of the Victorian drains which were no longer able to cope with the demand or if it was due to a lack of cleaning. Mr Dunajko explained that the drains in question might be part of a combined system carrying rainwater and sewerage and that surcharges from storms might be overloading the system. Modern systems were kept separate.

Councillor Davidson asked Mr Dunajko if a policy had been started for SUDS. He explained that current policy was to prefer positive drainage systems but that a commitment had been made in the HNMP to produce a SUDS policy.

Councillor Saddington expressed her concern about Severn Trent not being a Statutory Consultee in the planning process, particularly where smaller developments were not being taken into consideration in the grand scheme of things. It was felt that this was an area that required further attention.

PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 25 (PPS25): DEVELOPMENT AND FLOOD RISK

Sally Gill, Acting Planning Manager, Communities Department introduced the report on Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25) "Development and Flood Risk" to the Select Committee. Ms Gill had been invited to talk to the Select Committee on the policy and its implications for regional and local planning. Ms Gill referred to the key planning objectives for Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and drew Members' attention to the risk based approach which was adopted at all levels of planning. This included a strategic approach through policies in Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and Local Development Plans (LPDs) which avoided adding to causes of flood risk such as inappropriate development in flood risk areas.

Ms Gill commented on the importance of the Environment Agency's lead role in advising on flood risk issues on all applications for development in flood risk areas.

Ms Gill also drew the Select Committee's attention to a significant change in minerals workings which she explained were now categorised in the flood risk vulnerability classification as "water compatible development". This meant that mineral extraction could be appropriate in the functional flood plan. This was particularly important to the County Council as a Minerals Planning Authority.

Ms Gill commented on the implications for the County Council's role in Regional and Local Planning process and said that some of the practical issues in preparing FRAs had not been addressed. These issues concerned resource implications, in terms of who produces them, how they will be assessed and the extra burden it will place on local authority's resources. A Practice Guide Companion "Living Draft" had been published at the end of February 2007 in which it was hoped that some of these issues might be clarified further. The guide was out for comment until 20 August 2007.

Ms Gill concluded that the County Council was currently working in partnership with other relevant bodies to produce a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for the Greater Nottingham Conurbation and River Trent Corridor. The consultants Black and Veach involved in the assessment anticipated a completion date of 31 July 2007.

In response to a question, Ms Gill expected FRAs to be reviewed as they became out of date.

Mr Fell, a member of the public commented that he did not agree with the County Council's responses on the draft PPS25. He raised a number of issues which related to the County Council's Role as a Minerals Planning Authority. Ms Gill said that she would pass his concerns onto the Minerals Planning Team.

Mr Evans reminded the Select Committee that flooding was high on the agenda and said that the River Trent was second behind the River Severn as the most studied river in the UK. His own concern was that the Environment Agency gets the resources it needs.

EVIDENCE AND INFORMATION RECEIVED BY THE FLOODING SELECT COMMITTEE

Councillor Davidson asked the Select Committee for their comments on the report before them which gave a summary of the information and evidence gathered during the course of their review. Following discussion it was agreed that evidence on the following issues be heard at the next meeting.

Plans for the development of a SUDS policy.

DEFRA's view regarding Section 106 Funding.

Flooding resulting in bridge closure (eg at Kelham and Gunthorpe) and the need for a further Trent crossing.

Details on policy and procedures in place for cleaning of drains.

Progress on issues raised in a letter dated 10 May 2006 to Councillor Davidson, from Bob Hart, Acting Assistant Director of Environment for Highways (at that time), concerning Severn Trent reclassifying the status of some of its public sewers in Nottinghamshire.

It was agreed that approval be sought from the group whips for an additional meeting of the Select Committee to take place on Monday, 16 April 2007 at 10.00am

The meeting closed at 11.30am.

CHAIR

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