

minutes



Meeting FLOODING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 26 March 2007 (commencing at 1.30 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

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

A John Carter
John Clarke
Sybil Fielding
Pat Lally

A Tom Pettengell
Peter D Prebble
Sue Saddington

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor V H Dobson

MINUTES

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

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The Head of Scrutiny Declared a Personal Interest in respect of Agenda Item No.4 – Evidence and Information requested by the Flooding Select Committee, because of having shares in Severn Trent plc.

EVIDENCE AND INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THE FLOODING SELECT COMMITTEE

The Chair welcomed Bob Hart, Service Director, Highways to the meeting who had been invited to brief Members on issues they had raised at the meeting held on 12 March 2007.

In terms of a County Council Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) Policy, Mr Hart said that such a policy was usually applicable to new developments and that a Highways SUDS policy had yet to be developed. The Department did have a sustainable development policy for new developments. There was no framework in place to produce a SUDS policy. In principle, the Department fully supported SUDS but in practice Mr Hart said that the use of them was much easier on new developments. Mr Hart explained that in terms of Highways objecting to building on

a flood plain that the Highways comments were limited to the building of roads and drainage.

Councillor Pettengell wondered what happened when soakaways became inactive. Mr Hart said that they would look for other ways of discharging water into water courses or build a new soakaway, which was not a preferred option since it was expensive.

In response to a question from Councillor Carter, Mr Hart explained that Highways would comment on a planning application if it were in an area of flood risk, and that any building in a flood plain area would generally be dealt with by the **Planning Authority with the benefit of Environment Agency inputs**. The Highways' comments were limited to the building of roads and feasibility of drainage. These usually came earlier on in the planning process. Developing on flood plains was a separate matter for the Planning Authority.

In terms of sewers, Mr Hart said that there were 2 **main** issues within Highways; the status of carrier drains and Severn Trent's reclassification of certain public sewers. Discussions were taking place at a higher level in relation to the latter. The Government's latest view on private sewers was based on smaller feeder sewers which would not impinge on the Severn Trent **negotiations**.

In response to a question regarding responsibility for new developments, Mr Hart said that the powers regarding adoption were covered by Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980. A problem lay with older sewers and their status being unknown. New legislation could mean that private sewers would come under the responsibility of the water authority.

Councillor Pettengell referred to a local situation whereby homeowners were being caught in the middle of a situation where new development was being built on old sewerage and drainage systems.

Mr Hart said that roadside gully cleaning was carried out once a year. In response to a question, he said that **this** cleaning **frequency** did not also apply to culverts although the larger ones (minimum 1.5m) were inspected on a regular basis. A specific problem was raised in relation to the A6097 which Mr Hart offered to look into. Councillor Carter also referred to a local situation where he felt that gully cleaning was being carried out on an ad hoc basis and wondered if there was any inspection carried out on the work. Mr Hart offered to arrange for this to be looked into if Councillor Carter wished. **Councillor Carter said that he would recheck the situation personally before doing this.**

The Chair suggested that this might be something which Members may want to look into in their own area.

Finally, Mr Hart told the Select Committee that there were no long term **definite programmed** proposals for a further bridge crossing over the River Trent. A need for another bridge would have to be based on traffic congestion and not flooding.

The Chair thanked Mr Hart for addressing the matters raised by the Select Committee. The Chair welcomed residents from the village of Gunthorpe. Mr Fell, thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak to the Select Committee. He had

provided the Select Committee with a copy of a submission which he had been put together with support from the Gunthorpe Environment and Flood Alleviation Group, Burton Joyce Residents Association and other individuals. It followed on from six years of work since the flood event in 2000. He summarised the remaining areas of concern as being:-

- Rural areas, villages in flood plains with no flood defences and the level of support to these.
- Identifiable victims should receive a higher level of support, in the way of clear information and guidance on actions intended and facilities to be supplied.
- As well as the Environment Agency's warning services, flood plain dwellers should have a private telephone number and access to the Emergency Planning's gold command.
- In relation to Planning Policy Guidance (PPS25) it was essential that Flood Risk Assessments be based on accurate data.
- The height of the A6097 impacting on property flood risk and the reduction of height by 300mm having a benefit to the community.
- Military support vehicles used to ferry people through flood waters had caused bow waves which exacerbated the flood impact on buildings.

Mr Rob Fisher, Head of Services for Emergency Management and Registration responded by saying that he welcomed bringing people together who were affected by flooding. He referred to the flood warden scheme and said that it was more efficient for communities to work with flood wardens. Mr Fisher commented on the amount of material that Mr Fell had shared with the Select Committee and suggested that he meet with him outside of the meeting.

Mr Hart said that **he had had no contact from the Environment Agency regarding** the lowering of the A6097 and said that he would be meeting with the Environment Agency soon and would raise the matter with them.

The Chair suggested that a recommendation be added to the Select Committee's final report to take account of the worst affected areas being kept informed and updated on matters.

The Chair thanked the residents of Gunthorpe and the Member from Gunthorpe Parish Council for their contribution to the meeting.

The Chair had received further clarification on a matter relating to the Planning Policy Statement (PPS25) and informed the Select Committee that the Minerals and Waste Planning Authorities did not require a separate Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

The Chair referred to the draft report on the findings by the Flooding Select Committee and asked Members to let Martin Gately, Scrutiny Officer have any comments they wished to make before the end of the week. Councillor Saddington commented that she had heard that the Environment Agency had changed its flood mappings and wondered if this had happened or was about to happen. The Chair suggested that the matter be looked into further and a further recommendation be included to take account of any boundary changes, and the public being made aware of these. The Select Committee heard about an agreement which had been drawn

up by the Association of British Insurers after the 2000 floods, to ensure that flood victims were not refused insurance cover. This was agreed up to 2007, provided that they remained with the same insurer.

The Select Committee agreed to the following recommendations being included in its final report:-

Recommendation 1

For residents not protected by flood defences – there be better communication, clear information and guidance on actions intended and facilities to be supplied.

Recommendation 2

That the Environment Agency's plans for mapping flood risk areas be investigated, and if there is to be any change to the areas mapped as being at risk of flooding, this be communicated to the residents and the planning authorities.

The meeting closed at 2.50 pm.

CHAIR

Ref: flooding/m_26march07