

minutes



Meeting FLOODING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 18th September 2006 (commencing at 2.00 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

	John Carter	Tom Pettengell
A	John Clarke	Peter D Prebble
	Yvonne Davidson	Sue Saddington
	Sybil Fielding	Brian Wombwell
	Pat Lally	

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The appointment by the County Council of Councillor Yvonne Davidson as Chair and Councillor Brian Wombwell as Vice-Chair of the Committee was noted.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Committee, as set out above, was noted.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor John Clarke.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor John Carter declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 – Presentation from the Environment Agency given his position as County Council representative on the Midlands Regional Flood Defence Committee.

WORK PROGRAMME OF THE FLOODING SELECT COMMITTEE

Councillor Yvonne Davidson invited the Select Committee to comment on the dates for further meetings and the proposed themes of each meeting.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the meeting scheduled to take place on 27 October, at which the District Councils are invited to attend, be re-arranged to a different date to ensure the attendance of all its Members.

The Select Committee agreed to the planned themes for scrutiny as set out in the report.

SETTING THE SCENE - PRESENTATION

Councillor Yvonne Davidson welcomed representatives from the Environment Agency Morgan Wray, Asset Systems Management Team Leader, and Andrew Disney, Development Control Team Leader. They had been invited to provide the Select Committee with a background to the issues involved in flooding, including the County Council's responsibilities and that of other organisations involved.

Mr Wray began by saying that the Environment Agency was the primary Government authority for flood defence and that it had been involved in investigating options to protect properties and people along the left bank of the River Trent by reviewing its defences through Nottingham. He said that part of their function was to undertake the management of flood risk by influence over planned developments within identified flood plains and by the development of capital schemes to reduce flood risk to existing communities.

Mr Wray referred to the widespread flooding in 1998 and 2000, in the Nottingham area, and said that although it was contained by the existing flood defences, it had highlighted concerns for the widespread damage that would result from a moderate rise in flood levels. Mr Wray explained that the Fluvial Trent Strategy was a high level review of the Trent Catchment which had highlighted sections that merited further attention since they either did not protect to an appropriate standard or were approaching the end of their design life. The strategy had taken into account planning over the next 50 years and included consideration of any possible affects of climate change. It found that over 22,000 properties in Nottingham were at risk from a 1 in 100 year flood event. The Nottingham Strategy had evolved from the Fluvial Trent Strategy to manage the flood risk, and recommended the construction of two flood defence schemes within Nottingham, the Nottingham Trent Left Bank Flood Alleviation Scheme and the West Bridgford Flood Alleviation Scheme. The schemes would be providing 30km of defences, protecting 22,000 homes, costing £64m and take four years to build.

Mr Wray went on to give a brief summary of the appraisals carried out for both schemes and the other options that had been taken into account.

Mr Disney, Development Control Team Leader gave the Select Committee a summary to the Select Committee of the Environment Agency role in Development and Control. In doing so, he said that they provided comments to planning applications. Flood risk assessment was now accepted as a major part of the planning process and controlled under planning guidance. Mr Disney explained how flood risk was considered under the guidance and touched on the stages involved in the planning and development process in order to reduce future damage to property and loss of life. In doing so, he highlighted the position in relation to the current and future planning guidance, the latter, he said, would place greater emphasis on development behind flood defences.

Councillor Saddington expressed her concern in relation to properties in particular areas of the County, having not flooded and not being able to get insurance cover. She urged that this be looked into carefully. Mr Wray said that the Environment Agency did offer their support to the public.

Councillor Davidson asked what the district and borough council's relationship with the Environment Agency was like in respect of planning matters. Mr Wray said that they had very good links with the councils and their planners.

Councillor Prebble commented on the difficulty in knowing if planning officers were giving consistent advice.

In response to a question from Councillor Pettengell, Mr Wray explained that the scheme life could be affected by the amount of funding received from Government and how it fit into the Environment Agency's other priorities.

Mr Wray invited the Select Committee to visit their offices in Lady Bay.

Following the presentation given by the Environment Agency's representatives the Select Committee adjourned to engage in a short tour along the River Trent to witness first hand some of the improved flood defence work already being carried out.

Following the tour the County Council's Head of Emergency Management and Registration, Rob Fisher gave a presentation to the Select Committee on the role of the Nottinghamshire County Council Emergency Planning Team in co-ordinating the County Councils response to flooding.

It was explained that the County Council had a duty of care role for all of its communities in Nottinghamshire and that its role was ultimately to support the community through all phases of an emergency from response through to recovery.

Mr Fisher said that the Multi-Agency Floods Response Plan had been written after the 2000 floods and had been further developed to the present day. The plan supplemented the Environment Agency Local Flood Warning plan which highlights those areas at risk from flooding and the flood warning arrangements.

Mr Fisher referred to the Local Flood Warning Plan that was chaired and facilitated by the Environment Agency and pointed out that its intention was to get together all of the appropriate agencies and to update them of any changes to flood warnings as well as organisational changes. He said that in the future flooding will become a capability issue which will mean the development of work that the current group does can be expanded into areas of planned development, training, exercising and awareness raising.

It was pointed out that the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 had placed new duties on Local Authorities, Government agencies, Emergency Services and most NHS organisations (Category 1 organisations) to share and co-ordinate information with each other. The new duties included the sharing of information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and warning and informing the public. There was an overview of multi-agency work in place to deal with flooding.

Mr Fisher further explained that the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Risk Assessment Working Group had been tasked with identifying risks and developing a process for informing local planning arrangements. The Forum had recently put together a Draft Generic Response to developers who wished to develop flood plain and come to the Emergency Services and Local Authority's emergency planning teams for comments

on their proposals. This response was there to advise that any development should not be permitted in the Flood Plan unless it meets certain criteria highlighted in the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) generic response, attached at appendix 1 to the report.

In response to a question, Mr Fisher said that the Local Authorities took the lead of the recovery phase once a flood emergency had gone past the initial life saving and rescue phase, and that this responsibility was passed on from the Police.

Councillor Carter raised his concern regarding the planning response rate. Mr Disney said that in terms of the ones that they responded to there was a 90% response rate on a 10 day deadline. Councillor Davidson asked for details to be given to the Select Committee.

Councillor Davidson asked the Select Committee if they had any thoughts or comments to add following the presentations.

Councillor Pettengell felt that it would be useful to have an update from the Environment Agency early in the New Year.

Councillor Lally asked that District Planners and Planning Officers be invited to attend to give their perspective on flooding issues to the Select Committee.

Councillor Davison suggested that the Select Committee visit the Environment Agency offices on 13th November 2006.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.

CHAIR

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