



Meeting: Place Select Committee

Date: Monday 22 July 2024 (commencing at 2:00pm)

**Membership:**

**County Councillors**

Mike Adams (Chairman)  
Tom Hollis (Vice-Chairman)

Matt Barney  
Richard Butler  
Anne Callaghan BEM  
Penny Gowland  
Kane Oliver  
John Ogle

Mrs Sue Saddington  
Roger Upton  
Elizabeth Williamson

**Substitute Members**

None

**Other County Councillors in attendance**

Councillor Neil Clarke MBE

**Officers and colleagues in attendance:**

David Arnold	-	Head of Planning and Estates
Wayne Bexton	-	Director, Green Growth, Investment and Assets
Nick Crouch	-	Natural Environment Manager
Martin Elliott	-	Senior Scrutiny Officer
Sue Jacques	-	Flood Risk Manager
James Lavender	-	Democratic Services Officer
Catherine Mayhew	-	Local Nature Recovery Strategy Manager
Heather Stokes	-	Conservation Team Manager
Mark Walker	-	Service Director, Place and Communities
Gary Wood	-	Head of Highways and Transport

**1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 May 2024, having been circulated previously, were confirmed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **4. FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT – SECTION 19 REPORTS – STORM HENK FLOODING JANUARY 2024**

Councillor Neil Clarke MBE, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, Derek Higon, Executive Director for Place, and Sue Jacques, Flood Risk Manager, presented a report on the significant flooding incidents that had been caused by Storm Henk in January 2024 under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010). They highlighted the work undertaken by officers in producing the sixteen Section 19 flooding reports, as well as recognising improvements needed in the County Council's response to flooding events as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). They also recognised the work undertaken by the Council's partners at Via, Flood Wardens, and the volunteers of the communities affected by the floods in January. The following points were highlighted:

- A Section 19 report was produced when five properties or more within a catchment area were internally flooded. They did not identify specific measures to alleviate flood risk; they only identified who, when, and how properties became flooded. Further work would be undertaken to find flood mitigation measures for the areas that had been affected.
- The Storm Henk floods were along the River Trent corridor. 344 homes and 40 business across 65 communities were internally flooded. 2,000 people were affected by internal flooding. Coupled with the Storm Babet floods in October 2023, around 100 communities had been affected by flooding during the past year. There were 69 road closures that had been implemented during the flooding, with frontline volunteers operating road closure signage schemes.
- A review was taking place into how the Council could support communities to become more flood resilient. This involved examining flooding mechanism studies, drainage, natural flood management, working with landowners to provide a more sustainable approach to flooding. There will also be a review of properties which consider flood resilient building features such as concrete floors and drop-down electric sinks.
- Since the publication of the agenda, further comments had been received from Severn Trent Water (STW) and the Environment Agency (EA) on some the Section 19 reports. As such the following amendments were detailed which meant the following sections of the report were amended:

### **Severn Trent Water amendments:**

- Burton Joyce – the word ‘misconnection’ had been replaced by ‘unauthorised connection’.
- Severn Trent Water had been added as a Risk Management Authority in paragraph 4 of Lowdham, Newark-on-Trent and Retford reports.
- Severn Trent Water had added actions in the following reports: Farndon (paragraph 25c and 31), Newark on Trent (paragraph 31) and Worksop (paragraph 33).

### **Environment Agency amendments**

- The Environment Agency’s ‘Risk Management Authorities and their responsibilities’ section had been updated to include “the issuing of Flood Warnings using the national Flood Warning System.” in the reports on: Collingham, Farndon, Girton, Gunthorpe, Lowdham, Newark on Trent, Retford, Stapleford, Woodborough, Worksop, Zouch.
- In the Girton report, paragraph 21 had been updated to remove note of ‘Burton Joyce Community Flood Signage Scheme (CFSS)’ and instead refer to ‘Girton CFSS’.
- In paragraph 8 of the Lowdham report, the EA had suggested some minor textual amendments.
- In the Zouch report, paragraph 10 had been updated to confirm that the River Soar had reached record river levels.

In the discussion that followed, members raised the following points and questions:

- Concerns were raised that flood signage that had been put in place to protect road users was not always respected during flooding events.
- Members welcomed the work of flood wardens and volunteers to help deliver groceries and move people out of flooded properties. Members requested that people should be made more aware of how to use flood defence equipment.
- Members requested if further communication from the County Council could take place setting out the actions that residents should take if their property was flooded. Members also requested that Council staff should be on the switchboard to respond to quick enquiries during a flooding event.
- Those Members whose areas were affected by the Storm Henk thanked officers from the Place department for keeping them updated about the flooding situation as it had developed.

- Members raised issues of flooding in areas which were not subject in the Section 19 reports such as Grassthorpe, Normanton on Trent, West Drayton, and East Markham.
- Members highlighted the response from particular communities that had been affected by flooding, such as Pleasley, who had formed a Flood Resilience Group which had recently won a Flood and Coast Excellence Award for their work.
- The presence of Nottinghamshire Police during flooding events would provide greater compliance from drivers towards flooding restriction on roads and highways.
- Members wished to know the progress of the scrutiny review into flooding alleviation and asked for reassurances that many of the County's gulleys were fit for purpose.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of solutions to the flooding that had been highlighted in the Section 19 reports and the lack of communication from partner organisations such as STW and the EA with members about what actions were being taken to alleviate flood risk in a particular area.
- Flood agencies and other community partners needed to communicate more with residents about why flooding occurred.
- Members noted that changes in personnel across community partners could mean that key relationships were lost, which meant that the maintenance of certain flood defences could become more difficult.
- Some drainage gulleys needed further clearing and that blocked gulleys could contribute to the severity of flooding during heavy rainfall.
- Members asked why properties subjected to groundwater flooding did not get included in Section 19 reports.
- Members requested further information about Flood Storage Grants.
- Members highlighted the lack of powers which the Council as Lead Local Flood Authority possessed.
- Members noted that flooding alleviation solutions such as Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) were part of conditions included within planning applications.
- Members queried STW's capacity for storing wastewater.

In relation to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment and officers provided the following responses:

- The scrutiny review into flooding alleviation that was currently taking place was considering factors raised during this meeting, such as public communication and gulley cleaning.
- The Council faced difficulties in enforcing hard road closures during flooding events. Discussions would take place with Nottinghamshire Police around the provision of additional signage outlining that drivers would be breaking the law if they did not respect the road closures during floods.
- Farmers and their vehicles could be utilised in communities to help people during heavy rainfall and snowing.
- Regular communication with members was key to coordinate flood responses. Officers would also tailor the Council's communication methods based on the needs of the different communities that were by flooding in order to best meet residents' needs.
- Residents and drivers needed to be more aware of the risk to public safety of dangerous situations under the flood water, such as lost manhole covers. Communicating this message was a key priority for the Council.
- Meetings between officers and local members on flooding created by Storm Henk, but which had not met the criteria for a Section 19 report, would take place.
- The Government intended to devolve authority to regional mayors who would work with local authorities to take a more coordinated approach to flood risk management.
- There were around 140,000 gulleys in Nottinghamshire. Members were advised that there was currently an accelerated programme of gulley cleaning was taking place. On 3 April 2024, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment had approved £467,000 worth of extra resources into gulley emptying and ditch clearance works, with a further £50,000 shortly to be allocated to enable additional clearing of blocked gulleys which needed digging out manually.
- Information was provided on specific flooding alleviation measures being that were being in order to mitigate the impact of future flooding events.
- Across Nottinghamshire and in the aftermath of Storms Babet and Henk, 44 drop-in sessions had been delivered to communities about the risks posed by flooding and to give officers a greater understanding of the challenges of flooding within these communities.
- A meeting of the Strategic Flood Risk Management Board had been recently hosted by the Council where representatives of the districts and boroughs, STW, the EA, and the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board had attended. All these organisations were willing partners, however the County Council as the

LLFA acted in a coordinating role around flooding relief efforts with partners, and as such could not set down specific activities that partners should carry out around flood alleviation. The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment stated how he hoped that, in future, LLFAs would have greater powers in around directing the delivery of specific flood alleviation measures where needed.

- When a flooding event took place, it was managed by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF was made up of the districts and borough councils, the emergency services, the County Council, and other partners. Their responses took the form of several meetings including the Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG), which deals with situations which could lead to potential risk to life, followed by risk to property. During Storm Henk, the TCG issued a county-wide warning of the risk to life and hence relief efforts were focused on reducing the risk to life. Such measures included evacuating people from isolated companies such as Girton and others. Through the work of the LRF and TCG, there was the opportunity to build working relationships with colleagues in the district and borough councils.
- The County Council recorded and followed-up instances of groundwater flooding. If five or more properties were subjected to flooding via groundwater, then they should be subjected to a Section 19 report.
- After the flooding caused by Storm Henk, Via moved quickly to make sure bridges were viable, inspecting the roads adjacent to the Trent Valley to ensure that they were viable, and gulleys were cleared.
- Flood Warden and Road Closure training could be offered to Members.
- The main strategy behind flood risk management was to slow the amount of water going into the rivers whether this was through gulleys or SuDS. Within the creation of flood defences, there was a move towards softer flood management schemes such as rain gardens and swales.
- STW were licenced by the EA to discharge sewage discharge into other water courses in the event of sewer flows becoming too high.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, the Executive Director for Place, and the Flood Risk Manager for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

#### **RESOLVED 2024/09**

- 1) That the Section 19 reports, in line with the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Council's, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, responsibilities, and as detailed at Appendix A-P of the report, be received.
- 2) That the comments of members in their consideration of the Section 19 reports be noted.

- 3) That the following issues raised by the Committee in its consideration of the report be progressed:
  - a) That the work of the Council's Flooding Team in supporting communities impacted by flooding be commended.
  - b) That the Chairman of the Place Select Committee writes to the Secretary of State Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs regarding the committee's considerations around the role and responsibilities of Lead Local Flood Authorities.
  - c) That information on the Flood Warden/Road Closure training programme be circulated to the members of the Place Select Committee.

## **5. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAM LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY**

Councillor Neil Clarke MBE, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, Wayne Bexton, Director for Green Growth, Investment and Assets, David Arnold, Head of Planning and Environment, and Catherine Mayhew, Local Nature Recovery Strategy Manager, attended the meeting to present a report on the development of the Nottinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The following points were highlighted:

- The draft version of the LNRS would be ready by the end of March 2025. The consultation process was currently taking place with communities and key stakeholders on the impact of the LNRS.
- The LNRS would provide a coherent strategy developed for nature recovery and bio-diversity restoration and enhancement. It was a new statutory system of spatial strategies for nature's recovery brought in by the Environment Act 2021 to provide a national nature recovery network across the whole of England. All 48 county councils in England had to provide this strategy. The strategy was designed to be locally led, transparent and collaborative and NCC will be delivering this on behalf of the seven borough and district councils, as well as the City Council, and Natural England.
- The strategy would map the most valuable existing areas for nature, including areas which already possess statutory or local planning protections. Together with the key partners stakeholders, priorities would be agreed for nature's recovery in terms of spaces, habitats, and species. This will also include special proposals for creating and improving habitats to provide natural flood management and resilience to climate change.
- Regulations and guidance were provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to County Councils around the process for developing an LNRS. This included mapping existing areas of natural importance within Nottinghamshire for the purpose of protecting and improving biodiversity.

- Various advisory and working groups were assisting with the delivery of the LNRS. Political oversight of the strategy was provided by the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee. The East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) would also be working alongside the districts, boroughs, and the City of Nottingham.
- The LRNS would be delivered through the provision of 10% bio-diversity net gains as part of planning permission for new developments.
- The public consultation process and subsequent delivery of the LNRS would encourage the public to deliver action for the protection, recovery, and enhancement of nature within Nottinghamshire. The initial stakeholder and public consultation would take place throughout Summer 2024, after which a draft engagement of the strategy would need approval by the Council's Cabinet in September 2024, followed by approval by the involved local authorities. The formal public consultation would take place from November to December 2024. The final publication of the LNRS would be by the end of March 2025. The regulations state that there will be a review every three to ten years.

In the discussion that followed, members raised the following points and questions:

- Members requested further details of funding from DEFRA that would be available for the delivery of the LNRS in addition to the funding that had been made available to the Council to support its development.
- Members requested that 'No Mow May' areas, woodland, and hedgerows be marked on the online Habitat Map. Members also requested if the Habitat Map was now available on the Council's website.
- Members sought further information on how residents were being engaged with on the creation of the LNRS.
- Members welcomed the LNRS strategy and noted that the involvement of farmers would play an important role in its development and successful delivery.
- Members asked if they could refer nature sites within their own divisions to be included within the LNRS.
- Members queried about what the LNRS guidance said about invasive species.

In relation to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, and officers provided the following responses:

- No further funding had been granted by DEFRA to the Council beyond what had already been received, but officers were awaiting further information from DEFRA on this issue.
- DEFRA provided a prescribed list of habitats to be included on the map, so some woodland could be included under nature reserves and wildlife sites. No



Mow May areas could also be included in the LNRS as priority areas for biodiversity.

- Public engagement sessions would take place to raise awareness of nature recovery. The Habitat Map was now available on the Council's Planning and Environment webpages that highlighted different habitats.
- The EMCCA was looking to establish a Biodiversity Commission for the East Midlands. The LNRS would feed into this process. Wider conversations within the EMCCA would take place into how the strategy would benefit the visitor economy of the East Midlands.
- The planning application process would enhance the impact of the LNRS through the 10% contribution from developers towards biodiversity net gains on-site or elsewhere.
- Work was ongoing to manage invasive species such as American Signal Crayfish and American Mink within Nottinghamshire.
- Feedback would be provided by Members about habitats within their areas which could be included within the LNRS and the Habitat Map.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, the Director for Green Growth, Investment and Assets, the Head of Planning and Environment, and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Manager for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

#### **RESOLVED 2024/10**

- 1) That the statutory duties placed on the Council as the Responsible Authority in preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to cover Nottinghamshire and Nottingham and the role of the Supporting Authorities in shaping the LNRS be noted.
- 2) That the progress made so far and the key milestones that need to be achieved over the next 10 months (including the proposed timetable for decisions that need to be taken by the County Council, City Council and the Nottinghamshire District and Borough Councils) in endorsing the LNRS plan, be noted.
- 3) That the following issues raised by the Committee in its consideration of the report be progressed:
  - a) That members of the Place Select Committee inform the Conservation Team of any sites that they feel should be considered for inclusion in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
  - b) That the link to the interactive local habitat map be circulated to the members of the Place Select Committee.

## **6. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the Work Programme.

### **RESOLVED 2024/11**

- 1) That the Work Programme be noted.
- 2) That Committee Members make any further suggestions for consideration by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for inclusion on the work programme, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) and senior officers, and subject to the required approval by the Chairman of Overview Committee.

The meeting closed at 3:44pm.

**CHAIRMAN**