

**FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 OCTOBER 2017**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D MCNALLY (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors P A Skinner (Vice-Chairman), W J Aron, T R Ashton, Mrs A M Austin, Mrs W Bowkett, B M Dobson, Mrs C J Lawton, C R Oxby, C E Reid and R A Renshaw

Councillors: C J Davie attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Paul Brookes (County Flood Risk Manager), David Hickman (Growth & Environment Commissioner), Andrew Jee, John Ray (Senior Advisor Flood and Coastal Risk Management, Environment Agency), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Vaughan (City of Lincoln Council).

9 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members' interests made at this point of the proceedings.

10 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FLOOD AND WATER
MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 JULY 2017

During consideration of the minutes, reference was made to minute number 5, and the paragraph relating to the role Internal Drainage Boards, and it was commented that the wording was more negative than the tone of the debate which took place, and that the Internal Drainage Boards managed water very well in terms of drought and providing water for irrigation for farmers, and it was this that meant Lincolnshire was well-placed to explore new ways of managing water in the future.

It was also requested that the suggestion to visit an Internal Drainage Board be taken on board and added to the Work Programme.

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That the minutes of the Flood and Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee, held on 17 July 2017, be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the above being noted.

11 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR ECONOMY AND PLACE AND THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER FOR ECONOMY AND PLACE

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place reported that the North Sea Observatory at Chapel Point was progressing well, and it was suggested that the Committee may want to have a visit there in the future.

He also reported that he had recently returned from a visit to Hunan Province in China, and there could be many opportunities which may have some relevance to this committee in future.

The Growth and Environment Commissioner advised that the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee had met the previous week and had agreed the local levy funding proposals which had been requested by LCC.

It was also reported that the Environment Agency, nationally, was looking at carrying out a review of Shoreline Management Plans, and it was noted that there were two which covered the Lincolnshire coast. They were agreed between the Environment Agency and Lincolnshire County Council and other partners in 2010-2011. It was noted that these Plans were part of Lincolnshire County Council's Policy Framework. The local implementation of the Plans was being taken forward through projects such as the Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point scheme. Any substantive changes to the Plans would need to be approved by the full Council.

The Growth and Environment Commissioner also advised that he had been informed by Anglian Water that an all-party parliamentary group of MP's was conducting a review into water availability and its use as a resource in relation to housing provision. The Council had been asked by Anglian Water to provide comments to feed into the Review.

12 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

The Committee received an update from John Ray from the Environment Agency on Environment Agency activities including progress on key capital schemes. It was noted that programme of works for Lincolnshire was stable, whereas others around the country had seen some movement.

In guiding members through the report, work on the Boston Barrier was highlighted as the biggest capital scheme underway for the Environment Agency in Lincolnshire.

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It was also noted, that another key scheme, the Louth and Horncastle flood alleviation scheme was now completed, and ready if required.

It was also noted that the Environment Agency had now moved into new premises in Lincoln at Ceres House, with an improved incident room and were ready for winter.

Members were provided with the opportunities to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was queried whether the new incident room would be linked to the wider emergency services. Members were advised that this would be for Environment Agency staff responding to local incidents. If there was a significant event requiring gold command, then the relevant staff would be located in the emergency planning bunker.
- The bank raising work for the Boston Barrier would be finished before the barrier was completed.
- The Horncastle scheme had not yet been signed off on the land registry.

RESOLVED

That the update provided be noted.

13 REVIEW OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE FLOOD RISK AND WATER MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Committee received a presentation from the Growth and Environment Commissioner which provided an update on the work of the Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership. Further information was provided in relation to the following:

- Lincolnshire has a unique Joint Scrutiny Committee reflecting the Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership
- Joint Flood Risk and Drainage Management Strategy
- The need for a review of partnership arrangements
- Key questions

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the presentation, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was confirmed that if there was a performance measure that the committee was not happy with, this would be reported back to the partnership through the existing governance channels.
- It was commented that it was an interesting concept to consider scrutinising the management of water which would pose a threat and also seeing it as an opportunity for economic growth. It was suggested that this could be done through the consideration of exemplary case studies to illustrate where this has worked in other areas.
- Members were interested to know how this would fit in with the water Resources East programme and the interconnectivity of water courses in the

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south of the county. It was noted that this was one of the key areas that had developed since the Partnership had been set up.

- Economic growth and water management should be considered together in order to develop long term protection measures that would be necessary for the coast.
- It was commented that there was a need to look at the positive aspects of water management.
- Members were advised that there was now a much greater focus nationally on flood risk and water management as part of the government's broader agenda.
- It was commented that this committee had been very involved in the Louth and Horncastle scheme and it was suggested whether there should be a piece of work done on how the Partnership had worked and what lessons could be learnt. It was thought that there was a need to look at how the models which had been put in place could be used, as Lincolnshire was seen as being at the forefront of partnership working.
- It was noted that the Internal Drainage Boards were running a pilot scheme, the Partnership Approach to Catchment Management (PACM), focusing on developing successful multi-agency working at a local level, involving the involvement of landowners and farmers. It was agreed that the Committee would receive an update on this at a future meeting.
- It was noted that partnership working was important and there was a need to see Lincolnshire as part of a bigger picture and the more that Lincolnshire could engage with neighbouring areas, and then the county would be more able to have a major role in the national picture.
- Members were advised that it was recognised that water did not abide by boundaries and the impact water could have on Lincolnshire if it fell in Nottinghamshire, for example, needed to be considered. There was a need to work holistically.

RESOLVED

That the presentation and comments made be noted.

14 WATER RESOURCES EAST UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which updated members on activities relating to Anglian Water's Water Resources East (WRE) and the opportunities which might emerge from it in relation to the GLLEP Water Management Plan and LCC's Waterways Development Strategy. It was reported that officers were supporting Anglian Water to develop the proposal and to ensure that Lincolnshire was correctly positioned to benefit from the opportunities which may emerge from it. It was noted that this project could bring significant investment into the county.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that it was interesting to hear that a potential reservoir (or group of linked reservoirs) proposal – if this proved to be the solution

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ultimately selected to progress WRE - could be on a scale equivalent to Grafham Water, and it was queried whether the effect on planning was a concern. Members were advised that Anglian Water and the authority were working in consultation with landowners, and there was also a representative of the NFU on the project board.

- A major infrastructure project may not go through local planning processes as it could be a regionally or nationally important project.
- It was queried whether any reservoir would use good agricultural land, and it was confirmed that this would be an important factor in site selection.
- It was noted that a balance would be needed in relation to the use of agricultural land for any reservoir, as there was a need to consider how this land would be maintained if there was not enough water available for the crops. There was also a balance required in relation to land use for housing growth as well.
- It was clarified that the underlying strata required for a reservoir needed to be clay, and this was not the underlying strata for grade 1 agricultural land.
- All options would be looked at in relation to water management due to increasing uncertainty with climate change and both the frequency and quantity of rainfall.
- Members commented that they were pleased that the idea of a reservoir was being looked at seriously and queried whether due to the geography it would be an embanked reservoir. It was also queried whether there were other reservoirs of this scale which were completely embanked. It was suggested that fenland topography could require the use of embankments.
- It was highlighted that Boston Borough were going through the examination process for its local plan and it was queried how this sort of proposal could affect it as there was no indication of timescale. However, it was agreed that it was an exciting concept. The document would set out the local plan until 2036, so any large scale infrastructure proposal could have an impact on overall land use as set out in the Local Plan.
- Members were advised that this would be considered in a different way to local planning issues, but officers were not yet certain of the process by which it would be addressed. All agencies which would be involved had their own powers to permit development. In terms of timescales, it was reported that even if there was a public inquiry it was expected that an outcome would be decided by 2019 and the earliest construction could start in 2025. However, a lot of the added value needed to be brought in ahead of this date.
- It was noted that local plans should be kept under review, and the South Lincolnshire Local Plan would be reviewed every 5 years so it should pick up on any relevant initiative in the future.
- It was noted that partnership working through the Waterways Development Strategy was mature and effective and had been successful in delivering £26m of projects to date.
- It was noted that Anglian Water would need to move water in the same channels as boats would move, and so there were a lot of synergies.
- The Executive Councillor commented that he had always been a supporter of waterways work and now there would be opportunities for growth of the economic and tourism agenda and this proposal should be looked at as an

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enabler for private sector development. There would be a need to be prepared to bid for funding at short notice.

- It was noted that the Council was working very closely with the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) to ensure that focus remained on water management structures for economic growth purposes. It was commented that if the government could be influenced to start thinking in terms of the potential benefits to the east of England, Lincolnshire may stand a better chance of opening up wider investment channels.
- It was queried whether similar projects had been carried out in Europe or beyond. Members were advised that some of these things had been done elsewhere, but there was a uniqueness to each individual area.
- It was queried whether using the waterways for goods and services had been considered, and it was reported that it had, but was not considered feasible due to the amount of goods which would need to be carried. However, it was noted that there was always a mindset which would look for opportunities.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that officers be tasked to continue to work with Anglian Water and other stakeholders to ensure that LCC was positioned to attract the investment that WRE could bring to the County and to exploit the wider opportunities that this would create.

15 INVESTIGATIONS MADE IN THE COUNTY UNDER SECTION 19 OF THE FLOOD & WATER MANAGEMENT ACT 2010 (FWMA)

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Committee with a position statement on all current Section 19 investigations within the County.

The Committee was advised that in Quarter 2 (July - September 2017) two new Section 19 investigations had been commenced. The same period in 2016 returned three flooding events requiring investigation, although this was in contrast to 2015 when 15 investigations were initiated. It was reported that this reflected the random nature of flooding events, particularly the intense summer storms which could lead to surface water flooding, and a relatively dry period of weather.

It was also noted that according to the Environment Agency, the last two months had been wetter than normal, but the region had not experienced the intense rainstorms that it normally would.

Members considered the spreadsheets which showed the current Section 19 flood investigations within the County, and some of the incidents highlighted by the Committee included the following:

- 28 June 2012 – Horncastle – South Street, Bull Ring – it was reported that flooding incidents were still occurring, and that this had been ongoing for five years now and it was queried when this would be resolved. Officers advised that this would be followed up outside of the meeting.

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- It was noted that parked vehicles seemed to be an issue for blocking gullies and preventing them from being cleaned which could lead to an increased risk of surface water flooding. It was queried whether households could be informed when gullies on their street were to be cleaned and be asked to make sure their vehicles were not blocking the gullies.
- It was suggested whether a report clarifying the gulley cleaning regime should be brought to a future meeting and it was agreed that this would be useful.
- 28 June 2012 – New Bolingbrooke – it was queried when the works would be completed.
- It was requested that Councillor A Austin be kept informed of progress of investigations taking place in Boston.
- It was also requested that Councillor Mrs C Lawton be kept informed of the ongoing reports in Spalding.
- It was clarified that if members had any queries regarding any of the investigations, they should contact Paul Brookes, the Flood Risk Manager, in the first instance.

RESOLVED

That the progress made on investigations undertaken within the County under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 be noted.

16 FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
 PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report which enabled members to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focussed on areas of greatest benefit.

Members were advised that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 26 February 2018.

RESOLVED

That the Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, as presented, be agreed

The meeting closed at 11.30 am