

**FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21 FEBRUARY 2022**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR P A SKINNER (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors P Ashleigh-Morris, T R Ashton, A J Baxter, M Brookes, S Bunney, K J Clarke, A G Hagues and G J Taylor

District Councillors R Austin BEM (Boston Borough Council), P Vaughan (City of Lincoln Council), Mrs F M Martin MBE (East Lindsey District Council), Mrs L Hagues (North Kesteven District Council), H Crawford (South Kesteven District Council) and I G Fleetwood (West Lindsey District Council)

Councillors C Davie and R Reid attended the meeting as observers via Microsoft Teams

External Agencies:- Morgan Wray (Environment Agency) and Andrew McGill (Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board).

Officers in attendance:- Matthew Harrison (Flood Risk Manager), Ryan Davies (Assistant Flood Risk Office), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer) and Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer)

External Agencies in attendance via Microsoft Teams:- Jonathan Glerum (Anglian Water

Officers in attendance via Microsoft Teams:- Darrell Redford (Network Resilience Manager) and Graeme Hemsall (Local Resilience Forum – Emergency Planning & Business Continuity)

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Seymore (South Holland District Council), H Sprat, R Reid and T Dyer.

25 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2021 were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- Councillor Dyer's title to be corrected.
- The Anglian Water Update to be added.

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27 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

Councillor Davie (Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning) announced that Council had recently approved a budget of £1.5 million allocated to flood and drainage works and that the effects of the recent storms were currently being reviewed.

28 DEVELOPMENT FUND - DRAINAGE INVESTIGATIONS & FLOOD REPAIRS - PROGRESS ON PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Consideration was given to a report by Matthew Harrison, Flood Risk Manager on the progress with the Development Fund for Drainage Investigations and Flood Repairs. The following was reported:

- The flood repairs budget had successfully delivered programmed schemes.
- A long-term scheme had been programmed to address issues concerning surface water flooding in Kirton. A meeting had been scheduled with the Parish Council and work was scheduled to begin in April 2022.
- Investigations into flooding in Scothern had concluded and works were due to commence.
- In addition to programmed works, £750,000 had been dedicated for flood additional works over the next two years to resolve smaller longstanding drainage issues.

Members considered the report, and the following comments were raised:

- Near misses concerning residential flooding were recorded but were not categorised as Section 19 incidents.
- Flood works at Bardney were under the remit of the Highways budget and did come under the Development Fund.
- Flood works at Cherry Willingham had been delayed as a need for a detailed modelling survey had been identified in order to properly understand the issues before works could commence.
- Flood monitors had been installed in Langworth.

Members discussed that flood works may not be prioritised if they existed under the remit of the Highways budget, and that incidental reporting of residential flooding could be made more robust, as in Section 19 reporting.

Members felt that a breakdown of responsibilities in the event of flooding could be reported to the committee to help all Members better communicate processes to constituents.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

29 LINCOLNSHIRE HOMEOWNER PROPERTY FLOOD RESILIENCE ASSISTANCE SCHEME UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by Matthew Harrison, Flood Risk Manager on the development and promotion of the Council's pilot approach to enhancing the resilience of properties. The following was reported:

- The trial was based on a similar carried out by Essex County Council and adapted to LCC processes for Lincolnshire. This included a case management system that minimised administrative burdens and aligned processes with the National Property Flood Resilience Code of Practice.
- The new process for property flood resilience was trialled last year – with 10 properties volunteered for the trial.
- Moving forward, it was the Council's ambition to take 35 properties out of the high flood risk category every year by implementing this scheme.
- Take up was currently low with seven properties having signed up. Further methods to promote the scheme were being explored.

During consideration of the report, some of the following comments were raised:

- Common flood prevention controls had been used throughout the trial and had been found to be both effective at lowering the risk of flooding as well as cost effective for these small-scale schemes.
- Wider publicity of the scheme was needed. Officers welcomed Member led promotion in support to their efforts.
- An identified barrier to the scheme's wider uptake was thought to be owners were hesitant to formally identifying their house as being at risk of flooding due to impacts on insurance costs and resale value, especially as flood knowledge did not always change hands when properties were bought and sold.
- Sustainable drainage was ensured in the approval of new schemes and planning developments.
- Assurance was given that applications for solar panel farms in Lincolnshire were being processed through the national infrastructure project and assessed by the strategic planning team.

Members discussed that the provision of a briefing note for all Members would be useful to promote the scheme, and that new developments must prioritise sustainability in terms of current and future flood risk with greater oversight by the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

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30 LINCOLNSHIRE RIPARIAN PROJECT UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by Ryan Davies, Assistant Flood Risk Officer on the development of the Council's approach to the network of riparian watercourses. The following was reported:

- The project emerged following widespread flooding experienced in 2019 and explored how existing ways of working could be improved to develop a more robust, coordinated and sustainable approach to managing the risk from riparian assets and watercourses.
- A questionnaire was undertaken with Parish and Town Councils, the responses to which were analysed in the light of national, regional and local experiences. The data informed the development of a joint action plan with a focus on raising awareness of rights and responsibilities and ensuring a consistent approach regarding the management of watercourses.
- Enforcement had been consistently maintained.
- Many of the issues raised concerned watercourse ditches being filled in.
- The draft action plan on watercourse works was to be presented to the Committee later in the year.

During consideration of the report, some of the following comments were raised:

- Greater engagement and education regarding riparian rights and responsibilities were needed to help stop ditches being filled in, as functionality and value of watercourses were not widely understood.
- Greater oversight of developments that replaced dikes and ditches with pipes was needed, as many pipes were not suitable for current and increasing volumes.
- There were substantial limitations in funding to make enforcement more robust. There was an opportunity for the Council to lead on the issue of the importance of riparian and watercourse enforcement and present a plan to central government, as it was a large rural authority with Internal Drainage Boards that had expert knowledge on the matter.
- Section 25 enforcement was only actioned as a last resort – working with people to solve issues proved more efficient in terms of resources.
- Members discussed that the inclusion of enforcement updates in the report would be useful for Members to consider, and that Riparian rights could be included in County News.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

31 FLOOD RISK TEAM UPDATE (INCLUDING SECTION 19 INVESTIGATIONS)

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Consideration was given to a report by Matthew Harrison, Flood Risk Manager on the recent work of the Flood Risk Team. The following was reported:

- The recent storms had resulted in some light surface water flooding and the reporting of near misses; however, the situation was still developing.
- Newly identified efficiencies were set to sustainably reduce the backlog of works from 2019/20.
- A Section 19 reported in Market Rasen was determined as a near miss upon further inspection.
- The Council continued to work in close partnership with Anglian Water in dealing with flood risk.

Members discussed the report and noted the following comments:

- The Riparian watercourse on Altham Terrace, Lincoln had been blocked and works scheduled to resolve the issue had not yet been completed.
- Reports of near misses were made public, with the exception of some being exempt where personal information was being disclosed. Exempt reports could be redacted so as to be reported publicly.
- Over 200 investigations into reports of near misses emerged from adverse weather in 2019-20. It was noted that this needed to be factored into the pressures put on resources going forward.
- A Section 19 investigation into Waddingham Bank was currently underway.
- A Section 19 investigation into Long Bennington was currently delayed due to complexities concerning ownership.
- Members suggested that a detailed report on near misses would be useful in understanding wider flood risks across the county.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

32 LOCAL FLOOD INCIDENT MANAGEMENT - DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN LCC AND DISTRICT COUNCILS

Consideration was given to a report by David Hickman, Head of Environment on the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between local authorities for localised emergency events. The following was reported:

- The MoU was designed to help bolster, describe and clarify the roles of various authorities in an emergency flooding incident.
- The draft MoU had been shared with all relevant partners for comment.

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Members discussed the report and welcomed the MoU giving greater clarity concerning emergency responses and financial responsibility. Members identified some typographical errors and wished to see clarity on responsibilities communicated to the public.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

33 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by Morgan Wray, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager - Environment Agency (EA) on the EA's recent activities. The following was reported:

- High Spring tides had not caused much disruption; nevertheless, flood alerts had been issued.
- Remaining flood alerts were anticipated to be resolved imminently.
- The Gibraltar Point beach management scheme had proven successful, and completion was anticipated by the end of the financial year.
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust's draft Holistic Strategy had been completed and was due to be finalised in the coming year.
- The Wainfleet Action Plan capital programme was being finalised and was to be fully funded.
- The partnership between Lincolnshire County Council, East Lindsey District Council and Lindsey Marsh had successfully rolled out the dredging scheme on the removal of silt on the East Coast with Phase 2 having been finalised and Phase 3 being developed. The scheme sought to enhance water quality and naturally suppress weed growth to improve amenity value and flood protection.
- Boston's flood gates, dock entrance and defences were being improved to reduce flood risk to properties.
- A modelling survey was underway by the Lower Witham Resilience Project to inform a flood resilience action plan.
- Gibraltar Point's flooding strategic outline had been finalised and a business plan was being developed to cost necessary works.
- Aging amenity assets in Sleaford were due refurbishment and replace over the coming years.
- £6.5 million had been established for works to protect approximately 2,000 properties in Lincoln over several sites.

The Chairman extended thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Environment Agency representative for their presentation.

During consideration of the report, some of the following comments were raised:

- The pace of flood defence maintenance needed to be increased to meet the pressures brought about by climate change.

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- Works were needed to repair the slipping footpath along Altham Terrace, Lincoln and Dixon Street.
- The Lower Witham Project was crucial to mitigating flood risk in Lincoln.
- Maintenance of rivers needed attention, especially considering mud and weed build-up in places such as Chapel Hill.
- Members welcomed the opening up of rivers for amenity leisure use, and that the Slea and Witham showed great potential.
- Members also sought clarity on funding for the Lower Witham Project to evaluate whether sufficient resources were allocated.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

34 ANGLIAN WATER UPDATE

A verbal update was presented by Jonathan Glerum, Regional Flood Risk Manager, Anglian Water (AW) on AW's recent activities. In addition to the discussion of cases/projects under previous items, it was noted that works at Altham Terrace, Lincoln had been delayed by approximately one month due to complexities concerning conditions. The contractors were to continue with cutting down roots and relining the pipe in the coming weeks.

Members considered the report and asked no further questions.

The Chairman extended thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Anglian Water representative for their update.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

35 FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its Work Programme.

During consideration of the report, some of the following comments were raised:

- Members requested a future update on the progress of relevant partner Working Groups.
- It was requested that a breakdown of responsibilities in the event of a flood emergency was provided to Members.
- Members requested a report on flooding near misses across the county in the future.
- Information was sought in relation to funding for the Lower Witham Project.

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The Scrutiny Officer provided assurance that these topics would be taken under consideration for adding on to the Work Programme for 2022-2023.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved, subject to the inclusion of future agenda items highlighted above.

The meeting closed at 12.31 pm