

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R P H REID (CHAIRMAN)

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

District Councillors Mrs A M Austin (Boston Borough Council), P Vaughan (City of Lincoln Council), Mrs L Hagues (North Kesteven District Council), M D Seymour (South Holland District Council), H Crawford (South Kesteven District Council) and I G Fleetwood (West Lindsey District Council)

External Agencies – Morgan Wray (Environment Agency), Peter Reilly (Environment Agency) and Jonathan Glerum (Anglian Water)

Councillor C Davie attended the meeting as an observer.

Officers in attendance:- Matthew Harrison (Flood and Water Manager), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Kiara (Scrutiny Officer) and Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer)

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor F Martin (East Lindsey District Council).

11 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of members' interest were made at this stage of the proceedings.

12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Flood & Water Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 May 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

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

- On 18 November 2022, the FloodEx took place at the County Emergency Centre; the exercise was facilitated by the Emergency Planning Team. The event was a worthwhile exercise and proved very informative.
- Pete Reilly, Environment Agency, was in attendance today to discuss the issue reported at Council and further at the Public Protection & Communities Scrutiny Committee in September in relation to the high levels of weeds and dead fish in River Witham in the Boston area.

Councillor Davie, Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning, made the following announcements:

- On 9 November 2022 the Greater Lincolnshire Ground Water Project received a grant award from the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme of £7,184,000 to deliver until March 2027. A new Flood Resilience Programme Coordinator had been appointed to support the delivery of the project. Meetings were already underway with relevant trial communities.
- Consultants were working on chalk and limestone models across the county to better understand ground water.
- The Council had received 7 reports of properties being internally flooded, which were being investigate, but remained a live situation in the context of further rain predicted for the current week. These were in addition to reports contained in the following agenda item.

14 FLOOD RISK TEAM UPDATE (INCLUDING SECTION 19 INVESTIGATIONS)

Matthew Harrison, Flood and Water Manager, presented a report on the recent work of the Flood Risk team. The following matters were reported:

- There was a backlog of section 19 investigations, impacted by the storms in August 2022, with Market Rasen and Spalding being most badly affected.
- Flooding was exacerbated by compacted earth due to the summer droughts and exceptional rainfall.
- The Lincolnshire Ground Water project was moving forward to plan, and flood alleviation works at Scothern had been completed.

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

- Residents of Market Rasen and Spalding had been badly hit by recent floods, with some properties flooding six times within the year. However, due to the backlog of section 19 investigations, residents were still waiting on responses to incidents from 2019. Some residents were now at breaking point and more resources needed to be targeted in these badly hit areas.
- Better coordination of emergency teams was a priority and the importance of the Memorandum of Understanding had to be stressed to all parties.

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

- Near miss reports also needed recording, as they still represented flooding of residents' properties.
- Risks had been identified regarding pump stations in the event of long-lasting power outages. Stations were fitted with reserve generators to handle these situations.
- Regarding the flood alleviation works at Kirton, remedial works were being finalised and all other works had been completed. There had been no further flood issues reported since works commenced. The full costs of the works were still being calculated and were expected to be under budget – further information would be circulated when it becomes available.
- Updates regarding the investigation into the ownership of Cross O'Cliffe Hill dyke would be circulated.

Members also reported that they had found the recent Flood Ex – prepare and protect exercise very informative and helped clarify how to effectively deal with a flood event and recovery. Members also noted that there was no requirement to wait for a section 19 investigation for action to be taken regarding a flood event.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report and comments be noted.
2. That further updates be circulated, as requested.
3. That the committee wish to see outcomes of section 19 investigations actioned in a timely manner and reported to back to the Committee and local Member for information.
4. That the Committee wish to see the Memorandum of Understanding completed.
5. That the Committee wish to see a definition of 'near miss' regarding section 19 investigations be established.

15 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

Morgan Wray, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, presented an update on Environment Agency activities in Lincolnshire. The following matters were reported:

- The Witham extraction license strategy looked to protect the following
 - Meet river basin management plans
 - Protects the environment
 - Provide water extraction rights
- Local approaches to sustainable management of water sources were outlined.
- The priority water catchment areas were central and southern Lincolnshire, which were supplemented by various aquifers across the county.
- The strategy included provision for surface water extraction – for residential supply and industrial and agricultural use.
- It was projected that climate change would impact flow rates over the coming years.

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

FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21 NOVEMBER 2022

- The Ancholme was fed from Torksey.
- Applications for licences followed statutory deadlines and there were set timeframes for processing.

An update on the weed build up in Boston was presented by the Environment Agency. The following matters were reported:

- Floating weed had been a presenting problem in Boston for the second year in a row and had resulted in damage to biodiversity and overall water health and contributed to foul smell.
- Weed growth had been exacerbated by low flow rates due to droughts in the Summer.
- The lead organisation regarding the issue was the Canals and Rivers Trust and held a statutory duty to maintain healthy rivers and water levels.
- The Environment Agency maintained the river from a flood risk management perspective.
- The weed presented no risk to flooding, as such there was no funding available to the Environment Agency to undertake removal works.
- The Environment Agency had a statutory responsibility to investigate category 1 and 2 environmental incidents, such as a fish kill, although there was no funding to support necessary action.
- The Environment Agency had been meeting to with relevant parties to manage the situation before the it worsened; however, it had no resourcing to attend category 3 incidents or investigate them to stop them worsening.
- It was anticipated that similar situations would present in subsequent years.

The following comments were raised:

- The reputation of Boston was at stake, as the foul smell damaged the attractiveness of the town.
- Boston and the Witham needed to be recognised as significant a watercourse and burden of drainage costs needed to be better distributed across the county.
- The watercourse was not navigable with the current levels of weed seen.
- Serious environmental incidents (category 1 and 2) included the following:
 - over 100 fish killed
 - a single eel killed
- Business located by the river and business dependant on the watercourse had been badly impacted by the damage.
- River weed also presented an issue in Lincoln on the Bayford Pool.

RESOLVED:

1. That the updates and comments be noted.
2. That the briefing note on the river weed situation in Boston be circulated to Members.

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

3. That an update on the river weed situation in Boston be presented at a subsequent meeting of the Committee.
4. That the Committee write to the Secretary of State asking them to support the Environment Agency in their ability to respond to category 3 environmental incidents.

16 ANGLIAN WATER UPDATE

Jonathan Glerum, Anglian Water, presented an update on Anglian Water's activities in Lincolnshire. The following matters were reported:

- Key investment locations of over £3.5 million concerning water quality improvement were outlined.
- The Get River Positive initiative was outlined, which sought to protect watercourses as community assets and strive to do no harm to them.
- Flood risk management and pollution management investment of £243 million investments over 5 years was committed.
- Anglian Water was pursuing the Largest AMP7 plan of any water company and featured a focus on partnership solutions.
- Work was underway to separate surface water drainage and sewage management in Louth under the WINEP.
- Co-funding for flooding near misses was being explored.

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

- Out of 100 other site locations, Screddington had been found to be the most preferable site for the construction of a new reservoir, as it offered the greatest opportunities regrading mitigation of flood risk and limited disruption to land. Further information would be circulated regarding other potential sites, including proposals along the River Witham west of Lincoln.
- Feedback concerning the presence of sewage in flooding was being monitored.
- Road closures caused by burst water mains were always handled in a manner of least disruption.
- Increased instances of road works caused by burst water mains were in part due to ground movement caused by extreme weather conditions.
- Water pressure had been lower in specific areas due to works to water mains and was not due to a lack of water caused by draughts.
- It was clarified that storm tanks were open tanks that helped reduced spills caused by changes in flow. They also helped protect water quality.

RESOLVED

That the update and comments be noted.

17 FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

6

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

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.

Members agreed that the following matters be programmed:

- Surface flooding
- Developments concerning the coastal barrage and sewage drainage into rivers – including a representative from Centre Point

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved, subject to the addition of the items listed above.

The meeting closed at 12.25 pm