



FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 25 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C MATTHEW (VICE-CHAIRMAN IN THE CHAIR)

Councillors W J Aron, T R Ashton, Mrs A M Austin, M Brookes, A G Hagues, Mrs C J Lawton, C R Oxby, C E Reid and R A Renshaw

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), C Benn (South Kesteven District Council) and I G Fleetwood (West Lindsey District Council)

External Agencies – John Ray, Norman Robinson and Morgan Wray (Environment Agency)

Councillors: C J Davie, B M Dobson, D McNally and Eddy Poll (Anglian North Regional Flood and Coastal Committee), attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Paul Brookes (Flood Risk Manager), Matthew Harrison (Senior Commissioning Officer - Flood Risk), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer)

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors P Skinner (Lincolnshire County Council), Councillor M D Seymour (South Holland District Council)

21 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

22 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9 September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**23 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS
AND LEAD OFFICERS**

The Chairman reflected on the recent periods of extreme rainfall, emphasising that the extreme weather conditions were no longer exceptional, but the result of a shifting environmental climate. It was felt that the scrutiny had a role to play in shifting environments.

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place concurred with the Chairman, advising that the rainfall patterns were much more intense and extreme weather was a regular occurrence.

It was noted that successive rainfall had added to high water levels and that systems were struggling to recover quickly enough, leaving the County more susceptible to further flooding. As a consequence, the Council's resources were under pressure.

Members were advised that Norfolk County Council were making good progress with the report on the Wainfleet flooding incident, with a large amount of data having already been gathered and it was currently being analysed. The full report was expected to be published at the start of 2020.

Members recognised the need for a greater investment from the Government to allow the Council to meet the challenges posed by climate change.

The Committee highlighted that importance of protecting Lincoln's agriculture, as it was a large food resource for the country and played a large part in Lincolnshire's economy. Members felt that Lincolnshire's agricultural land was being undervalued.

It was recognised that the Council needed to work with partners to examine the possibility to deliver long term solutions to flooding across the County, particularly in the rise of extreme weather and climate change.

The Executive Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management emphasised that all risk management authorities in Lincolnshire had performed exceptionally well to ensure that events were being controlled the best that they could be.

The Executive Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management raised concerns over the number of new houses being built on high flood risk areas and the approval of planning applications on this basis.

**24 TO REPORT PROGRESS ON THE INVESTIGATIONS MADE IN THE
COUNTY UNDER SECTION 19 OF THE FLOOD & WATER
MANAGEMENT ACT 2010 (FWMA)**

Consideration was given to a report by the County Flood Risk Manager, which invited the Committee consider the position of all current Section 19 (S.19) flood investigations in the County.

Members were advised that there had been 40 further flood investigations initiated since the last report to the committee.

Members were informed that the long-term average rainfall in Lincolnshire over the last six months had been 'exceptionally high' in the central and southern parts of the county, and above normal in the most northern areas. Members were provided with an illustration of the rainfall totals in a number of catchments across the County.

The committee were reminded that Norfolk County Council were currently undertaking the investigation into the Wainfleet Flooding Incident on behalf of the Lincolnshire County Council (LCC). The investigation was progressing well and it was hoped that the report would be completed by early 2020.

Members were referred to Appendix A to the report, which detailed the record of current flood investigations in the County carried out in accordance with Section 19 of the FWMA. It was noted that there were currently 140 on-going investigations, which explicitly excluded sewer flooding. Lincolnshire County Council worked with partners where surface water had influenced sewage flooding, but these incidents were not included within the Section 19 investigations.

Members were invited to ask questions, in which the following points were noted:

- As a result of the growing number of flooding incidents, officer and budgetary resources were limited. Officers advised that the Council had a statutory duty under Section 19 of the FWMA to investigate flooding incidents caused by surface water. Provision was being made to ensure that officers had sufficient resource and budget to adequately investigate these issues.
- It was clarified that completed investigations were not able to be removed from the log if work was still outstanding on these issues. Although LCC worked in partnership with other organisations to help resolve issues as quickly as possible, they did not have the power as the local flood authority to compel or instruct another organisation to carry out works. However, officers met regularly with partners to align programmes and look at solutions to outstanding issues.
- Officers confirmed that the Council operated a 24 hour flood support line; however members of the public were advised to ring 999 if they were having serious flooding issues.
- All contact with LCC was recorded and passed on to the local highways team or out of duty emergency officers. LCC then worked with partners to resolve flooding issues.
- Members raised concerns over the number of on-going sewage water flooding incidents that had not been responded to. The Chairman agreed to write to Anglian Water to raise the Committee's concerns.
- The Chairman agreed to write to the Executive Director - Place on behalf of the committee to request clarification on who the main point of contact should be for any anybody reporting a flooding incident. Members emphasised the importance of communicating a clear message to the public and having one clear point of contact in the event of a flooding issue.

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- It was clarified that for incident where life and properties were at serious risk, the Duty Strategic Commander would make a judgement to invoke an emergency situation, which would result in a combined response system being put in place.
- Officers were recommending the use of Flood Sacks as an alternative replacement to sandbags. Flood sacks expanded to absorb water but were easier to dispose of.
- Members questioned the point at which the spillage of sewage water became a public health issue. Officers agreed to investigate this and provide this information to Members following the meeting.
- Members queried why the work status for the 2012 flooding incident in Horncastle remained as 'on-going' when it appeared that LCC had been proactive in responding to the incident in 2012. Officers reiterated that they did not have the power to compel an organisation to complete works.
- The committee agreed that going forward, a section be added to the S19 report to specify when LCC had carried out necessary works on outstanding S19's and had issued recommendations to external partners. It was requested that a description of outstanding work also be included.
- The committee resolved that tighter reporting be sought in relation to outstanding S19's and the organisations responsible for outstanding works.
- Members thanked the County Flood Risk Manager and all other officers for their hard work during challenging times.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That tighter reporting be sought in relation to outstanding S19's and the organisations responsible for outstanding works.

25 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Area Manager – Environment Agency, which provided an update on Environment Agency (EA) activities, including progress on key capital schemes.

The Area Manager – Environment Agency thanked those who had assisted with recent flooding issues within Lincolnshire. It was noted that work was still on-going to resolve some issues.

Partners across the county had worked extremely well together to manage risks throughout the county. Efforts were now focussed on the recovery of flooding incidents. The Environment Agency were currently operating a 24/7 emergency response rota and were in a period of heightened response, which was likely to continue to the end of 2019

The Environment Agency were currently dealing with flooding issues in 19 areas across Lincolnshire in four key locations. A team of inspectors were also ready to inspect the rest of the county.

It was noted that the recent period of heavy rainfall had meant that Lincolnshire's riverbanks were under significant pressure. Officers were working closely with Internal Drainage Board colleagues to identify where issues had occurred.

Going forward, the Environment Agency would be analysing ways to make space for water and alleviate pressure on the farming community. Officers were investigating how to drive maintenance programmes in rural environments.

Members were invited to ask questions, in which the following points were noted:

- The Area Manager – Environment Agency agreed to provide Members with current recovery lists, timescales and completed maps of locations where the Environment Agency have carried out work on flooding issues.
- It was confirmed that at the time of the meeting, there were eight properties within Lincolnshire with fluvial flooding issues, and 86 with surface water flooding.
- Members were encouraged by the recovery efforts made by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency agreed to provide an update on recovery.
- It was noted that the Environment Agency were hoping to mobilise the breach on the Barlings Eau river on the week commencing 25 November 2019.
- It was confirmed that flood mapping was updated and reviewed every two to three years. A review was on-going to analyse the current climate and weather trends and amend the chance predictions where necessary.
- Members raised concerns over flood map predictions in the area of Wilsford, as residents were struggling to obtain home insurance despite the area not having suffered from flooding in recent times. Officers advised that flood maps were based on predictions of extreme weather of 1 in 1000 rainfall. However, the Senior Flood Risk Manager - Environment Agency recognised that some maps may not be completely accurate for some locations and work was on-going to update them. The flood maps for the area of Wilsford would be reviewed as part of on-going work.
- It was noted that members of the public had not been informed of the reasons for the decommissioning of the pumps at the Black Sluice Pumping Stations and were unaware of the alternative arrangements that had been put in place that would be more beneficial. Members were advised that plans were in place to provide this communication in due course.
- Members were concerned by reports from farmers that had been advised that they were not permitted to fill their reservoirs. The Area Director – Environment Agency agreed to liaise with the relevant Member to resolve these issues.
- It was clarified that dredging was one of a number of flood risk solutions. In the places where it was proven to be successful, the Environment Agency carried out dredging. Members were advised that dredging was not a flood risk solution alone, and was actually unsuitable in some places. Flood professionals would put in place the most effective flood risk solutions with the money available. Currently, the Environment Agency were focussed on the integrity of Lincolnshire's raised banks.

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- Officers had investigated the possibility of operating the grand sluice navigation lock in reverse, however the benefits of doing so were not found to be substantial enough to warrant doing so.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

26 JOINT LINCOLNSHIRE FLOOD RISK & WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2019-2050

Consideration was given to a report by the Senior Commissioning Officer – Flood Risk, which invited the committee to consider the Lincolnshire Flood Risk & Water Management Strategy 2019 -2050.

Members were advised that the updated strategy provided a more holistic approach, by combining the flood risk management activities of the Council and its partners with a strategic view of water supply and resource management, and a stronger emphasis on the additional economic benefits that it could deliver for Lincolnshire.

Members were invited to endorse the Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk & Water Management Strategy 2019-2050.

The Senior Commissioning Officer – Flood Risk thanked all risk management authorities across the county for their efforts in contributing to the final version.

Members were referred to Appendix A to the Executive report, which set out the Joint Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Strategy 2019 - 2050.

Members were satisfied with the updated report agreed to endorse the strategy.

RESOLVED:

That strategy be endorsed by the Committee.

27 FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focussed where it could be of greatest benefit.

The Scrutiny Officer had noted the concerns raised by the Committee throughout the meeting and agreed to liaise with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee to update the work programme where necessary.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be amended as necessary.

The meeting closed at 12.10 pm

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