

FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

TUESDAY, 4 JULY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Phillip Bicknell, Malcolm Beer, Richard Kellaway and Martin Coker

Also in attendance: Parish Councillors Coker, Williams and Thompson, Scarf

Officers: Wendy Binmore and Simon Lavin

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grey and Lenton, and Parish Councillors Hewitt and Larcombe.

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January be approved.

UPDATE FROM ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Scott Salmon from the Environment Agency (EA) gave Members an update which concentrated on Old Windsor, Datchet, Wraysbury and Horton. He stated there was an outline design for flood channels and Councillors Thompson and Williams attended a meeting and provided information which would be included in the impact assessment. The next step was to go through the planning process. Future discussion would include active dialogue with parish councils which were very productive.

In terms of modelling outputs, that was an ongoing programme to ensure the flood prevention programme would work. He wanted to talk with local parishes following the modelling work. Briefings regarding the archaeological and ecological impacts were being provided as any capital scheme to prevent flooding needed to assess the impact to that environment.

Following modelling work and planning permission, the next phase would be the procurement stage. There was still a shortfall in funding; therefore, Scott Salmon would be approaching the Treasury. He urged Councillors to approach businesses and sponsors to try and raise funds to help plug the funding gap.

The EA were negotiating with landowners over interests in land and options being looked at by the EA to see where it was possible to lease any land, buy it, or go through compulsory purchase to acquire the land required.

The EA were liaising with Network Rail, Thames Water, Affinity Water, Heathrow and engagement was taking place. The River Thames Scheme was more than just a flood scheme; it was about protecting the infrastructure, protecting major roads, utilities as well as protecting environmental areas and recreational facilities. Scott Salmon stated that it was not possible to stop flooding altogether so the EA were also looking at local schemes to try and protect houses which would not be protected by the large River Thames Scheme (RTS).

The Acting-Chairman enquired whether the EA had been in contact with the Borough's Communication and Marketing Team and if information had been circulated via the Parish Newsletter. Scott Salmon confirmed the scheme had a communications manager that took care of that side of things and that he liaised very well with parish councils to get the message out. Parish websites were up to date and included information on the RTS. The parish Councillors were very happy with the information being received from the Environment Agency.

Scott Salmon agreed that getting all the funding in place was problematic and added that once modelling and design work had taken place, he could approach the Treasury for funding. He could not confirm any talk of local authorities sharing the costs as that was not his field. Cllr Beer stated there should be a national fund as residents should not have to pay for the full costs of the scheme as it affected people and businesses on a national scale.

Scott Salmon stated the timeline of the works was available on the EA website and the scheme would start in 2018 with planning permission being sought. The scheme was expected to be completed by 2025. Scott Salmon confirmed that the modelling of the scheme was carried out using computer enhanced hydraulic modelling. He added the design company the EA had used had been working on modelling for a long time and where people were flagging up issues, they were being worked on; therefore, the modelling was not presently available. Scott Salmon said that group discussions were taking place and when there were concerns regarding the design, they were all taken on board.

Scott Salmon said he was unable to give a comprehensive answer as to what point finance issues became critical. He stated there were checkpoints which dictated at what point the EA could approach the Treasury. Prior to talking to the Treasury, an online business case had to be submitted.

Scott Salmon confirmed he was unable to give an exact timeline of what would happen and when as there were a lot of complex issues from procurement and what materials were to be used up to the actual starting of the build. However, the construction phase was scheduled for 2020 – 2024; but that also depended on ongoing talks with the landowners.

Parish Councillor Ian Thompson stated there was a funding group within the EA to raise money for the project; part of the group's remit was to submit to the Treasury a budget which would request the release of funding. The business case for that was expected to be ready for submission by January 2018. Scott Salmon stated there was a constant dialogue about where else funding could be raised.

Scott Salmon stated temporary flood defence schemes were under the River Thames Scheme. It was a national scheme used predominantly in the North of the country. If Parishes local authorities could come up with viable options for temporary defence schemes, they could be implemented before the flood water hit the ground and they helped to get resources deployed much quicker. Cookham Parish Council did their own flood exercise and came up with their own flood plan that worked for them.

Parish Councillor Ian Thompson said some research on flooding was carried out in 2014; he found gauges were failing and that concerned him. The EA said they were not aware of any issues but they would raise it as a matter of urgency. Scott Salmon

confirmed that modelling could be carried out and he would go back to the Asset Team and ask them to confirm the gauges were working properly.

The EA considered raising the Bisham footbridge to help alleviate flooding. Other measures to prevent flooding were also being looked at and they were looking to liaise closely with the Borough. However, following the modelling, it showed that the bridge was not causing a flooding obstruction. Bisham Road opposite Cookham Bridge, a flood alleviation pipe was considered but, that needed revising; modelling would be carried out and costs sought to see how that could be resolved.

UPDATE FROM THAMES WATER

Cyril Mitkov, Thames Water told Members he was providing a general update. Currently, water resources were below the average rainfall so ground water levels were below the normal flow; therefore, there was less flooding risk. The ground was hard and dry and it was possible for sharp showers could cause some issues but, nothing major had occurred. In terms of water restrictions, it would come down to what the next winter was like. If the country had another dry winter, it could mean restrictions would need to be put in place. Denise Kinsella stated other water companies might be getting their water from different sources and may have offered different advice on water shortages and restrictions. There were things that households could do to reduce water usage.

Denise Kinsella, Thames Water provided Members with an update on the Bin It, Don't Block It campaign and stated sometimes flooding was caused by the wrong things being flushed down drains. Thames Water were looking at 2,500 properties from June 2017 and would continue to target those properties till November 2017 to educate households with what could and could not be flushed into drains. She was hopeful that the target areas would reduce the amount of items going into drains which should not be there.

Councillor Beer stated the sewage works at Ham Island underwent major refurbishment works and he was concerned regarding the safety of the bridge. It had been repaired but, his concern was the concrete as it was found to be faulty and needed to be replaced. He added that no one in the Borough took any interest in his concerns and he wanted it minuted that he received no help from the Borough to determine the state of the structure under the concrete. Councillor Beer explained that he had been told it was the Borough's responsibility for to ensure the safety of bridges. Councillor Bicknell confirmed the Borough was only responsible for the bridges it owned. There was an approved budget of £75k for the upkeep of bridges. He added he would need clarification on who was responsible for the bridge as Thames Water spent a lot of money on the bridge as it was their bridge. There was no evidence to suggest it was a Borough responsibility.

Denise Kinsella confirmed that Thames Water were not considering raising the electrics up higher in the pump station. It would be a major operation and, even if the electrics were raised, there was an electric sub-station in there so, if that got wet, it would shut the supply to the pump station down.

UPDATE FROM RBWM

Councillor Bicknell explained that in emergency situations, the flooding team could be contacted through the commissioning team who will divert queries to the right person.

Parish councillors requested phone numbers for flooding emergencies so that they could open flood hubs. Councillor Bicknell confirmed it would be a more centralised way of doing things. Simon Lavin, Flood Officer stated six years ago, the council did a preliminary flood assessment and that was currently being reviewed. Flood risk mapping was to be completed by 2019 and flood risk plans would be produced by 2021. Risk areas were identified but, there needed to be 35,000 properties in the flood risk zone before it could be designated a flood risk area. Modelling had been approved and was being carried out. The assessment was based on surface water flooding and was a very comprehensive assessment.

PARISH FLOOD GROUP UPDATE

Datchet Parish Council requested the EA carry out a site survey with reference to the over pumping and improved flood protection. The EA were aware of the request and the parish council were waiting for a date for the inspection. They also wanted an evaluation of the flood barrier in Southlea Road. Datchet Parish Council also wanted a barrier behind the golf course to prevent water flooding Datchet; but it was Crown Land and Network Rail land. Scott Salmon, Environment Agency confirmed the defences would be bespoke to areas and more defences would be provided in a flood event.

Cookham Parish Council stated bus services at times of flood get diverted and miss out Cookham. They were trying to get something in place to get a bus across from High Wycombe that could work in times of flood. Bus companies had not been very cooperative with the idea. Cookham Parish Council also requested making bus tickets available to use on trains so the village was not cut off during floods. It was necessary as there were elderly people that could not leave the village. Councillor Bicknell confirmed the Borough subsidised the buses and he noted the issues. Councillor Beer suggested using the Duck Tours bus service but the Parish Councillor for Cookham responded that Duck buses caused waves which flooded the properties to a greater extent. As a solution, Councillor Bicknell suggested using People to Places or, to use a bus with a snorkel and hire it, asking people to donate in order to pay for it.

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The EA stated that there was no further information available other than the paragraph emailed to Members regarding the Navigation on the River.

Councillor Beer stated that emergency planning would be a shared service that was run Berkshire-wide, the HQ would be based in West Berkshire with once officer from each local authority, with three of those officers being based at the east of the Borough.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The meeting, which began at 6pm, finished at 7.55pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....