

FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

WEDNESDAY, 12 AUGUST 2020

PRESENT: Councillors David Cannon (Chairman), Martin Coker, Gerry Clark and Ewan Larcombe

Also in attendance: Councillor Donna Stimson, Councillor John Baldwin, Councillor Carole Da Costa, Councillor Wisdom Da Costa, Councillor Gurch Singh, Duncan Parker, Councillor Helen Taylor and Councillor Simon Werner

Officers: David Bedlington, Sue Fox, Denise Kinsella, Mohammed Mamun, Shilpa Manek, Fatima Rehman, Carolyn Richardson and Brianne Vally

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mike Williams, Ian Thompson and Malcolm Beer.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be approved.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

<u>Action arising from previous minutes</u>	<u>Progress</u>
Place on next Agenda (David Bedlington to attend the next meeting of the Flood Liaison Group and facilitate discussion on how public engagement on the RTS may be progressed.)	Completed.
Denise Kinsella to follow that response in writing with an email to the Council's Commissioning Team confirming the extent of Thames Water's land ownership at this location.	ACTION: Clerk to share details with Denise Kinsella.
Clerk to add to minutes (The Clerk to attach the report written by Councillor Larcombe on the Wraysbury Drain to the minutes).	Completed.
Can a full set of the data be provided to the borough in relation to flooding maps.	Data was shared with the Borough. Maps were due to be printed and shared with Parish Councils and the Borough, however there was limited access to printers due to COVID-19. PDF map versions could be shared in the interim. ACTION: Brianne Vally to share PDF maps with Parish Councils and the Borough.
Brianne Vally to look into possibility of taking failed telemetry gauges offline.	This was escalated and Brianne was awaiting a response, with a view to update at the next meeting. ACTION: Brianne Vally to update the Group on the telemetry gauges.
Thames Water to review pump run times at The Avenue SPS, Friary Road SPS and the sewage pumping stations in the vicinity of	Information was sent to Simon Lavin, who had left the role, and Mohammed Mamun was his successor. This had not been

The Street in Waltham St Lawrence and report back to Simon Lavin.	picked up by Mohammed yet. ACTION: Clerk to share information with Mohammed Mamun to review the information.
Amy Gower to check whether a copy of the updated Causeway Plan can be shared with Cookham Parish Council.	Parish Councils were engaged with the Causeway Plan which had progressed, and an update was due post-meeting. Due to COVID-19, there were delays. ACTION: Carolyn Richardson to check the progress on the Causeway Plan.
Environment Agency to share results of hydraulic modelling undertaken at Datchet with the Council's Commissioning Team.	Sue Fox had not received the results from the Environment Agency (EA). Brianne said a draft of the results were received by the consultant, but there were revisions to be made, and therefore there was a delay in sharing the results. The final version was due on Monday 17 August, which once reviewed would be shared with Mohammed Mamun and Sue Fox. ACTION: Brianne Vally to share the hydraulic modelling results with Mohammed Mamun, Sue Fox and Datchet Parish Council.

(Duncan Parker, Horton flood representative, joined the meeting.)

RIVER THAMES SCHEME

The Chairman introduced the item and said the River Thames Schemes' sponsoring group decided to progress with the scheme without Channel 1 from Datchet and Bells Weir on 31 July 2020.

David Bedlington, Environment Agency, said the Treasury required the Borough to demonstrate that the funding for the scheme was in place; without this commitment, the scheme could not be progressed. A sponsor meeting took place on 31 July to decide whether the scheme should be delayed to address all the funding issues, or progress the scheme with the secured funding for Channels 2 and 3. It was agreed to move forward with Channels 2 and 3, which the EA would undertake as the delivery body on behalf of the sponsor group.

The delivery of the scheme and construction work would start four years from now, and the net impact of Channels 2 and 3 in Surrey would be positive for the Borough, though not as positive if the full scheme was executed. Channels 2 and 3 would draw down levels in the River Thames, though the benefits diminished upstream.

(Councillor Clark joined the meeting.)

A commitment was made in the sponsor meeting for all bodies to support and work together on flood risk reduction in the Borough, even though this was not part of the channel solutions.

Councillor C Da Costa asked if there was any negative effect to the Borough without Channel 1. The Group was informed that there were no negative effects and RBWM would continue to receive some benefits. The benefits were larger closer to Channel 2 and reduced further upstream. Councillor Baldwin said that despite Channel 1 no longer being part of the business case, work was continued with the sponsor group to look at remedial measures in flood reduction in the Borough. He wanted to know what the measures would be. The Group was informed that there was a commitment from the Borough and EA to work together and find alternatives to reducing flood risk.

Councillor da Costa said he understood one of the reasons for Channel 1 not progressing was due to the lack of funding, and wanted to know if the Borough was awaiting to lobby the government to provide a mechanism to raise funding to pay for the scheme.

The Chairman said a decision was made by Full Council in 2017 to agree to commit to fund £53 million for Channel 1. £10 million was funded from the budget and the remaining £43 million would have been

borrowed, subject to a national flood levy being placed on the Borough. This meant that the residents were to fund for the repayments of the loan. The legislation was not introduced by the government despite intense lobbying since 2017 and in recent months. Without this, the Section 151 officer was unable to allow a loan of £43 million, as there were no means to repay the loan and therefore the Borough was unable to fund the scheme via this route and the sponsor group was unable to accept the progression of Channel 1.

Councillor Da Costa asked if the original commitment to support Channel 1 was subject to the flood levy. The Chairman agreed and said the decision was made on 26 September 2017 in a Full Council meeting, which was subject to new legislation being enacted to make provision for this.

Councillor Larcombe said Surrey County Council was able to supply the partnership funding and asked if they required legislation to do so. He wanted to explore alternative methods to receive funding for Channel 1. The Chairman said Surrey County Council chose to borrow funding, which was a larger sum in comparison to the Borough's funding, and was also a larger organisation, which covered both Channels 2 and 3. The Borough was unable to borrow more than it could afford and the Section 151 officer would not have allowed a large loan that could not be repaid. The Chairman welcomed any alternative mechanisms to fund the scheme.

The Chairman said he was concerned that the Scheme was progressing without the Borough and the Borough would work closely with the EA to put alternative flood alleviation methods to protect residents.

Councillor Larcombe asked for further details on the consideration of other flood defence alternatives in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury. The Chairman said specifics of the alternative flood scheme would not be discussed in the meeting, but conversations would take place between EA and the Borough. The Borough had a budget of £10 million for the scheme, as well as money from the EA that was to be used in Channel 1, which may now be available to fund other flood defences. A progress report on the defences was anticipated to be received by the Group in the next meeting.

Councillor Brar asked if £10 million had already been invested in the scheme and the Chairman informed that only £1 million was invested, which was used for modelling and preparatory work and would be the basis to identify and define alternative works that could take place.

Councillor Baldwin asked why the item was a verbal report rather than a written report, whilst press release and social media statements had been released on the decision. He would have preferred a document to read and prepare for rather than making ad hoc responses at the meeting.

The Chairman said the agenda was published before the decision made by the sponsor group and there were no formal reports from officers or councillors in relation to the decision made. There would be a formal report updated to the Full Council and Cabinet in future regarding the decision and future steps.

UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Brianne Vally, Environment Agency, reported the following:

- Water situation report summary – July 2020
 - Thames Area received 95% of the Long-Term Average rainfall for July. Soils remained drier than expected for the fifth consecutive month. Monthly mean river flows were mixed across the Thames area, the majority were normal for the time of year. The groundwater levels continued their seasonal decline at all indicator sites, but most of them remained normal for the time of year.
- Recent publications:
 - The Defra flood policy statement set out a package of measures to protect and prepare the country for long-term flood and coastal erosion risk.
 - The Environment Agency Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for England.

The link for The Defra flood policy statement was <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-policy-statement>.

The link for Environment Agency Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for England was <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-strategy-for-england--2>.

The Chairman asked if the water table was as expected, despite the heat experienced at the end of July. The Members were informed that the soil was drier than expected for the fifth consecutive month and the ground water continued to decline, but there was no indication of a drought-like situation.

Councillor Brar said the Parish Councils did not receive documentations and maps from the EA, and the response from the arising actions from previous minutes section was reiterated. Martin Coker thanked Brianne for the lidar information and said some maps that were A2 were difficult to work with.

Councillor Larcombe said the quality of the new level sensing system installation at the bottom of the Jubilee River was poor, as the electrical wiring was stapled to the fence. Brianne said she was unaware of this issue and would address this with the team. The Chair advised Members to raise any operational issues with the Environment Agency incident service and this was seconded by the EA.

ACTION: Brianne Vally to update on the development of the installation quality at Jubilee River and update at the next meeting.

UPDATE FROM THAMES WATER

Denise Kinsella, Thames Water, reported the following:

- It was a wet winter in 2019/20, though this did not have a significant impact to the Borough apart from Waltham St Lawrence. The Thames Water's sewage pumping station was flooded by overland flow of surface water, which resultantly impacted the residents in the area. To protect the station from future surface water, a wall was built, there was a change in pump times, and a sump pump was installed so that sewage could be removed to the ditch system.
- Thames Water continued with its normal operational activities of planned maintenance cleaning and 'bin it, don't block it' messages which continued due to an increase in blockages from incorrect items being placed down the sewer.

On behalf of Malcom Beer, the Chairman asked Denise to engage with Malcolm Beer offline regarding his query on Ham Islands' sewage work, which was outside the remit of the Group. Denise agreed to this and said regular meeting were undertaken regarding Ham Islands.

Councillor Brar asked if an update was available on the pump run times at Lightlands Lane, and the Group was informed that the flood defence was extended and the surface water soakaway was improved so that water went into the wet well to protect the site.

UPDATE FROM RBWM

Carolyn Richardson, Joint Emergency Planning Manager, reported the following:

- The Cookham Causeway Plan, which needed to be shared with Mohammed Mamun, Senior Flood Risk Consultant, would be shared with the Group.
- New members of staff were due to join the flood warden community in September, who would be familiarised to the area should flooding occurred.

Martin Coker asked for information on the depth boards located adjacent to The Pound. Carolyn said this was checked in the winter period and the team would be notified and the Martin would be updated. Martin said the positioning of the depth boards needed to be reviewed because the board could not be seen from the road due to overgrown foliage. The Flood Committee at Cookham was trying to contact causeway management to arrange training for volunteers.

ACTION: Carolyn Richardson to report back to Cookham Parish Council regarding the depth boards.

ACTION: Carolyn Richardson to consider training considering social distancing limitations.

Martin Coker asked if issues could be directly risen with Mohammed and the Group was advised to direct enquiries to the RBWM Highways inbox, and the query would then be forwarded to the appropriate person.

Mohammed Mamun reported the following:

- Wraysbury Drain:

- As a short-term solution, the weir height could be raised by approximately 10mm. The water levels at different locations would be monitored to ascertain the impact of the weir height adjustment.
- Letters were sent to riparian landowners asking to fulfil their riparian responsibilities as a result of blockages in the drain near Feathers Lane. An inspection, some minor tree clearances and other works may be carried out.
- Revision of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) had been carried out, which identified short- and long-term action plans. Consultation would be arranged before adoption.
- The existing telemetry system that were not functioning had been reviewed, and research had been carried out to identify different measures that could be implemented. Suppliers wanted to undertake a site visit prior to finalising a quote, which was not possible due to COVID-19. Site visits were now in the process of taking place.

The Chairman asked if the telemetry was regarding the RBWM River Thames telemetry and the Members were informed that the telemetry was in the Borough and not on the river. Sue Fox, Principal Commissioning Officer, said the telemetry system was mainly on ordinary watercourses and ditches. VolkerHighways had an enhanced inspection regime on the watercourses that took place when rainfall was anticipated, with a check before, during and after rainfall.

Councillor Larcombe said the gravel from the bridge installed near the Dive Centre needed to be unblocked to allow the water to flow, rather than changing the weir at the Wraysbury Drain. He said the issues arose due to over thirty years of a lack of maintenance of the drain. He said it was positive there was progress on the issues in Feather's Lane, because the concrete blockage was there for over a year, which he had reported last year and in June with no response or action taken.

(Councillor Stimson joined the meeting.)

The Chairman said the riparian owners of Wraysbury Drain received letters to advise them of their riparian rights. Contractors would inspect the area with the permission of the landowners, with a view to enforce riparian owners to undertake the necessary work to remove the blockage, before the authority's contractors or volunteer communities addressed the blockage.

Councillor Larcombe asked when the inspection would take place, and the Chairman said he had asked this to occur within the next ten days.

Martin Coker said he raised a query in the previous meeting about the drainage system at the lower end of Whyteladies Lane. There was allegedly a site meeting and no issues were raised. He asked if there would be a regular inspection of the drains to ensure they were unblocked prior to the flooding season. Sue Fox said she was unfamiliar with this issue as she did not attend the previous meeting and would pick this up offline.

ACTION: Sue Fox to report on the drainage inspections near Whyteladies Lane.

Councillor Stimson, Lead Member of Environmental Services, Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside, stated that the climate change strategy had launched, which was unanimously passed by all Councillors, and was now under consultation. She invited all residents, Members of the Group, businesses and anyone interested to help make the strategy as good as possible.

Councillor Stimson showed the Members how to navigate the consultation RBWM page. The link for the Environment and Climate Strategy Consultation was https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200171/energy_and_sustainability/1541/environment_and_climate_strategy#:~:text=%20The%20Environment%20and%20Climate%20Strategy%20focuses%20on,cycling%2C%20as%20well%20as%20investing%20in...%20More%20.

The draft Environment and Climate Strategy had four sections including energy, travel, natural environment and circular energy. Each area had objectives and actions, some of which could be met as a community, whilst others would require assistance from the government and the consultation reviewed each area to ensure the strategy was effective.

Chris Joyce, Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth, said the key question of the consultation was how the strategy could be delivered and the role organisations could play.

Duncan Parker, Horton Flood representative, said the main problem regarding the Wraysbury Drain was the lack of maintenance of River Colne Brooke. The EA had told Duncan that this did not have a

flooding impact on residents' homes, however he said the poor maintenance impeded the flow of water back to Horton. He asked if any progress was made on this, and the Group was informed that maintenance issues were raised by residents and elected members to the EA. Brianne said the schedule of work had been shared in previous meetings and would be re-circulated. If River Colne Brooke was not on the planned maintenance, enquiries would be made to review this.

ACTION: Brianne to report to the Group if River Colne Brook was on the maintenance plan and assess the water in Coppermill Road and Horton.

Duncan Parker said the Colne Brook floods ran into the Wraysbury gravel pit and fed the drain into Hythe End's holding lakes, which could not hold water due to a lack of maintenance of river Colne Brook. The Chairman asked Duncan to share the details of his query via email so that they could be addressed.

Councillor Larcombe said every watercourse, land and drainage infrastructure in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury needed an inspection and work to be done. There was not a system in place with a division between ordinary watercourses and designated main rivers.

The Chairman said the designated main rivers were the responsibility of the EA and ordinary watercourses were the responsibility of the Local Flood Authority (LFA), who would enforce maintenance through the riparian owners respectively. Maintenance was the riparian owners' responsibility, which was enforced by either the EA or LFA. The correct organisation needed to be contacted for concerns to be dealt with through this system.

Councillor Larcombe said he wrote a report that detailed the issues and was addressed in the meeting in October 2019. He said there was a failure to action the system and said there was no cost to the Borough to send letters to the landowners or charge landowners for the maintenance if contractors were used to resolve the issues. The Chairman said Councillor Larcombe should continue to address the issues with LFA regarding the land drainage management, which would be dealt with in order of priority.

Duncan Parker said he raised issues about River Colne Brooke with the EA for many years and the response he received was that the river was narrowing itself. River Colne Brook was a main drain for the area, and once the land reached its capacity of water, it would push up the gullies in Coppermill Road. The Chairman said this item would remain on the agenda until it was resolved.

Duncan Parker said the bridge on Coppermill Road had two islands forming with trees growing which needed to be removed, however the EA said there was no funding for this.

Brianne asked Duncan Parker to send all the details and incident reports that were raised, and a cross border liaison was required as the area was covered by two EA teams. Duncan said no incident reports were available as all correspondences with the EA took place via telephone or face-to-face.

UPDATE FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS

Councillor Larcombe asked for a copy of the barrel arch inspection report and CCTV images. The Chairman said this was not a Parish Council matter and was the responsibility of the Borough, which would be dealt with structural engineers. Councillor Larcombe said it was important for the village residents to know what was in the barrel arch as they paid for the inspection and the barrel arch ran under the centre of the village. The Chairman said it was a live matter and would be dealt with the Borough and structural engineers.

Councillor Larcombe asked for progress information on the flat valve near Datchet, and Members were informed that this was being reviewed. Sue Fox said that as a result of the decision undertaken regarding River Thames Scheme, the Borough and EA were looking at alternative flood management in the local area. The Chairman said the flat valve was regarding the main river works rather than the inland channel, which would not be impacted by the River Thames Scheme decision, and therefore could be progressed.

Councillor Larcombe addressed the failure of the maintenance of the land drainage infrastructure and requested for the £10 million available to invest in this area. The Chairman said the budget was assigned for Channel 1's flood defences in the River Thames Scheme and the use of the £10 million was a matter for the Council. The available money from the EA could be used for infrastructure projects to defend residents.

The Chairman wanted to open a discussion on Battlemead with the Forum, which would be added to the next agenda as an item for a formal discussion.

Councillor Brar said the amended Battlemead Plan that was introduced on 20 July 2020 did not ensure that Cookham did not have an increased flood risk. The Council was committed to increasing biodiversity as part of the Environment and Climate Strategy, which included nationally designated areas for conservation actions like the Priority Flood Plain Grazing Marsh in the East Field. Dividing the habitats would harm the wildlife through habitat fragmentation. She said the Battlemead Plan must increase biodiversity whilst assessing the flood risk to ensure it was not increased in Cookham.

Councillor Stimson said the plan would not increase the flood risk, which was rendered with Aston Foot Ecology involved. The Battlemead Plan was paused because Friends of Battlemead were not consulted and that was a mistake. The Borough bought the land for £1 million for both access and biodiversity and an ecologist from Austin Foot was asked how accessibility could be achieved without threatening the biodiversity. The response was launched as a plan for Battlemead, which received a backlash and therefore was put on hold. There was a plan to set a meeting with the Friends of Battlemead in mid-September to discuss this issue, who would consult their own ecologist to tackle the question of accessibility and biodiversity.

Councillor Brar asked for the plan to incorporate an assurance that there would not be an increased risk of flooding in Cookham and the Chairman said there would be reassurance of this in the Plan.

Dick Scarff, Cookham Society, said White Brook was an important drainage in flood conditions for the south of Cookham. It was also an important access over the A4094 and the last dry access. The EA had limited dredging for flood purposes of White Brook channel and allowed minor maintenance to keep up enough flows for Maidenhead waterways. This was because the major flood flows were out of the channel across Battlemead Common, which was a wide and deep channel. There was little gradient on this section, and it needed to be kept clear of vegetation so that water could flow, which was not being incorporated in the management of Battlemead.

Councillor Stimson said she was a Maidenhead Waterways Champion and there was a Waterways member on the Friends of Battlemead group, and this issue would be taken to the meeting. Dick said whilst Maidenhead had low one-way flow during dry weather, Cookham had a problem of large flood flows in the opposite direction in times of heavy rainfall.

Martin Coker agreed with Dick Scarff and requested to share his correspondence which was circulated to some group members. He said the Borough promised that stakeholders would be kept informed when the land was bought, which did not happen. The report was published without consultation and there was concern that nobody was involved and there was a need to use the expertise in the Group. The Chairman asked if Martin was not informed as the Parish Council Flood Committee, which Martin confirmed.

ACTION: Martin Coker's correspondence to be circulated with the Group.

The Chairman said Councillor Stimson should take away the concerns raised by the Group, to be addressed in the next meeting, with support from the EA to provide input to support Councillor Stimson. Councillor Stimson asked for any documentations that could be sent to her so that she could better understand the concerns.

Brianne said she did not attend the Friends of Battlemead group meeting in her capacity, but another team member from the biodiversity team would attend and feedback any concerns raised. With potential flood risk points to be raised in the September meeting, she was happy to attend the meeting.

The EA was involved in the Battlemead Plan as it was consulted as a statutory consultant for the new planning permission as part of Battlemead Common, who provided feedback as and when they were consulted. The site was also important to EA because it contained raised defences as part of the wider Windsor, Maidenhead and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme. Work within this vicinity required EA's permission and therefore EA was involved in the past and going forward in the Plan.

Councillor Brar asked if written reports could be provided instead of verbal reports for the Battlemead item. The Chairman said this was not always possible in fast-moving and dynamic situations, but written reports would be provided where possible.

ACTION: The flood management of Battlemead to be placed on the agenda, with written reports to be provided in advance of the meeting, where possible.

The Chairman thanked all officers, Members and attendees of the meeting.

The meeting, which began at 6.01 pm, finished at 7.42 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....