

**Minutes of a meeting of the Flooding Scrutiny Review Panel held via Microsoft Team on Monday 26 October 2020.**

PRESENT:

Mrs M Wright CC (Chairman)  
Mr. D. Harrison CC Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC  
Mr. D. Bill CC Mr T. Parton CC

**1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2020 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

**2 Question Time**

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 36.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

There were no declarations.

**Exclusion of Press and Public**

It was agreed that the remaining items would be considered in private session in accordance with the Conduct of Scrutiny Review Panels agreed by the Scrutiny Commission on 1 September 2009.

**4 External Representations**

The Panel received a presentation from the following invited representatives:.

- Environment Agency
- Severn Trent Water
- Local Resilience Forum

**Environment Agency**

The Panel received a presentation from the Environment Agency (EA) outlining their role and context regarding partnership working.

Arising from the presentation the following points were noted:

- i. In July 2020 the EA launched the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England, which set out the role of various authorities and the part they play in flood risk management. Through its 'strategic overview' role the Environment Agency exercised its strategic leadership for all sources of flooding. The Strategy sought to better manage the risks and consequences of flooding from rivers,

the sea, groundwater, reservoirs, ordinary watercourses, surface water and sewers. The Agency worked in conjunction with Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA's), Water Companies, Internal Drainage Boards, Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), district councils, regional flood and coastal committees and highways authorities.

- ii. Within Leicestershire there were 10,486 properties at risk of flooding from flood zone 3, 7,543 from surface water, and there were 4929 defended properties of 1 in 100-year events. The likelihood of a flooding event was expressed as a 'return period' and expressed as 1 in 50 years for example. This could often be confusing and mislead the public into thinking that a 1 in 50 year flood event would only occur every 50 years. Return periods in fact only indicated on average how often a flood event of that magnitude could occur.
- iii. The EA led on bidding for funding for flood works from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee's relevant to Leicestershire. There had been relatively few schemes in Leicestershire as it sat at the top of three catchment areas, but success had been seen in Lubbesthorpe Brook, property level protection for Sharnford, and Cossington Sluices. Such schemes had followed lengthy investigations into the viability and feasibility of such projects.
- iv. Unfortunately, some schemes that appeared viable and necessary did not generate the funding required due to the funding formula used. Where this was the case the EA would work with partners to consider how they could best help communities and ensure they had the protection required, even if that was not part of a capital scheme. While the EA had been reaching national targets for partnership funding it recognised there was room for improvement, especially with encouraging contributions from businesses and private partners; recognising that such schemes were for the benefit for whole communities.
- v. Recently the EA had upgraded its incident hotline to 0800 80 70 60, a 24 hour service, that could provide further assistance or advice to residents during an incident. The EA also issued a range of information available to help homeowners find out if their property was in a flood risk area and also guides on how to protect their home from flooding. There was also a tool that allowed homeowners and businesses to enter their postcode to find out about the level of risk from flooding in a specific area, it provided advice about what to do in the event of a flood, and offered residents/businesses the opportunity to sign up for flood warnings. Such warnings would alert those registered to the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea and groundwater and these would be provided by phone, email or text.
- vi. The EA would look to remove obstructions from the assets and rivers that it was responsible for. This in some cases included dredging, (removal of accumulated silt and sediment). Though such action was appropriate in some cases, such as entrances to culverts or access to key bridges. it was assessed on a case by case basis as in many instances it increased the speed of the flow downstream which could pose a further flooding risk.

### **Severn Trent Water**

The Panel received a presentation from Severn Trent Water outlining their role and

context regarding partnership working.

Arising from the presentation the following points were noted:

- vii. Severn Trent Water (STW) had an obligation to reduce flood risk associated with rainfall overloading the public sewerage network as set out in its five year Asset Management Period agreed with Oftwat which included investment and funding allocated to upgrade networks to alleviate current flood risk and help accommodate future growth.
- viii. STW worked with various partners to deliver solutions with a benefit for wider society and its customers to reduce the risk of flooding. Unfortunately, expectations needed to be managed, as some areas would remain at risk of flooding from sewers and surface water. In such cases the Council would always work with STW to look at individual factors that might have contributed to the flooding in a specific area and how these could be mitigated for the future.
- ix. In recent years the relationship between STW and the County Council had improved and regular network meetings provided an opportunity to coordinate investigations, develop work programmes and identify schemes for joint working. The Panel was pleased to note STW was engaging on a 'Working Together' document to build a holistic process for the next 25 years with partners, including the Council.
- x. STW held a Service Level Agreement with its partners. It would repair defects when made aware and undertake its own investigations on the network. It would also share its capital programme and keep an open line of communication with regard to prioritisation and would look at how partners could align funding streams to enable projects to happen. However, evidently often projects took a long time, such as in Newbold Verdon where it was working with the County Council to mitigate the risk of surface water flooding, the sewer network capacity had been increased alongside further capacity at treatment works to accommodate new developments.
- xi. The Severn Trent Community Fund was set up to give away over £10million over the next five years to support new projects by local charities and community groups. As well as a funding programme to be used on mitigation measures regionally to protect properties by fitting preventative measures.

### **Local Resilience Forum**

The Panel received a presentation from the Local Resilience Forum outlining their role and context regarding partnership working.

Arising from the presentation the following points were noted:

- xii. The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) was a multi-agency partnership arising from the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and made up from representatives of local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS and the Environment Agency which worked together to prepare for, respond to and recover from different emergencies. It was managed by a joint decision model, with 10 separate votes for Leicester City Council, Rutland County Council, Leicestershire County Council and the districts. Each risk management authority worked together

and contributed to its funding to staff the service.

- xiii. From an early stage following an incident recovery plans would be considered given the considerable time it could sometimes take for homes and businesses to be restored following a flooding incident. Following an event partners would review the incident and look at lessons learnt and share knowledge gleaned to improve future responses.
- xiv. Preparing for such events was part of the day to day job and ensured the LRF and partners were ready for emergencies and major events. This involved risk assessments – assessing the type of hazards that might affect the region and preparing plans – together agreeing strategies and process and writing the plans.
- xv. Not all authorities had the resource or numbers of staff to be able to manage resilience. Local Resilience Officers managed it at district levels with coordination, planning and managing key roles such as community flood wardens. Community flood wardens were recognised as a key role within communities at risk due to their links into local authorities and their own communities. Recruitment, however, was a constant struggle and it was acknowledge that some felt limited in what roles they could undertake considering only the County Council and Police could close roads.
- xvi. Members were made aware that the National Flood Forum, an independent charity, was another resource for communities and residents that looked to raise awareness and help prepare for such flooding incidents and encouraged the development of community flood plans and looked to make communities better educated and less reliant on support from flood response partners. Something that was felt could be further promoted and encouraged along with the LRF.
- xvii. There were different numbers to ring, dependent on the type of flooding. It was acknowledged that in the moment it could often be difficult for members of the public to know what type of flood they were experiencing. Ultimately if there was a risk to life residents should always use 999 otherwise the Environment Agency suggested that their incident line would be able to direct members of the public as necessary with its links with partners.

## Written Representations

The Panel considered the representations received from all district and boroughs. Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

- In response to a perception that the County Council held information on where flooding was likely to occur, but districts did not request this, it was clarified that the County Council only became a statutory consultee in 2015. If the Council was aware of issues in an area, or with a development the Council would inform the planning authority that requested its contribution.
- Any new development could not increase flood risk in the area but could be built without improving the risk. Knowledge was constantly evolving. Issues in Stoney Stanton for example were now far more known than in previous years with modelling work and partnership discussions that had been ongoing.
- While Blaby District Council had offered to help with closing roads, which members supported due to concern regarding bow waves, unfortunately, only the County Council and the Police were authorised to do this. To attend these expediently the Council needed to be made aware quickly, something it was felt flood wardens were key in facilitating.
- Flood wardens in particular had good routes into authorities if they thought there was an issue. The Panel felt more needed to be done to advertise for new flood wardens and to build flood resilience within communities such as with community flood plans.
- Some districts provided sandbags. Whilst it was acknowledged that they were often too late in being received and were not that efficient, in a time of emergency this could still be of some use and provided some comfort to residents to have these in place. However, it was felt that better alternatives should be promoted, such as door boards, gates or other property level protection.

The Panel considered representations from residents who had been involved in Flooding. Arising from the discussion the following points were made:

- Members recognised the concerns raised by residents. It was understood that time scales were frustrating for the public when all they wanted was reassurance that they would not be flooded again. Unfortunately such assurance could not be provided by the Council or its partners due to the complex nature and reasons for flooding occurring which could not always be pre-empted.
- The Council were aware residents wanted quick answers from Section 19 investigations. However, this could not always be achieved as investigations took time and the reasons for flooding occurring was not always obvious. Also, the Council had a responsibility ensure blame was directed to any one

party until it was absolutely clear this was correct.

- Where the Council was at fault it would take that responsibility, but the Council needed to manage expectations and be sure it could resolve the issue as it only had limited resources and often if a scheme was necessary it would take time to deliver.
- The letters further highlighted the need for a complete register of assets and drainage within an area to enable the County Council to identify issues and the responsible party sooner.