

WATER MANAGEMENT CYCLE WORKING GROUP - NOTES

MONDAY 5 DECEMBER 2022

5.30 P.M. – 7 P.M. VIA MS TEAMS

<p>Present:</p> <p><u>Members</u> Councillor English (Chairman) Councillor Harwood Councillor Cleator Councillor Garten Councillor Jeffery</p> <p><u>Reserve Member</u> Councillor Springett</p> <p><u>Visiting Member</u> Councillor Perry</p> <p><u>Officers</u> Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement Democratic Services Officer</p>	
Item	Minute
1. Apologies	No apologies were received.
2. Substitute Members	There were no Substitute Members in attendance. Councillor Springett was in attendance as a Reserve Member in accordance with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's previous agreement that Reserve Members would be welcome to attend all Working Group (the Group) Meetings.
3. Technical Briefing – provided by the Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement	<p>The Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement provided a technical briefing based on the briefing note provided to the working group; the actions included were based on the Council's actions and capabilities in relation to the Water Management Cycle. These focused on flood resilience and were generally in response to specific situations rather than as the product of a flood resilience strategy. The group were advised that the current gaps concerned developing feasibility studies, as previous experience had demonstrated that once a scheme has been identified the Council had been successful in obtaining funding.</p> <p><u>Flood Resilience (Actions)</u></p> <p>Following the 2013/24 floods, solutions to prevent reoccurrences were preferred. One large scheme included the expansion of the Leigh Flood Storage Area, although flood barriers were not suitable for all areas including Yalding due to the area's geography, so micro-measures were considered.</p> <p>The Environment Agency (EA) led on the Middle Medway Flood Resilience Scheme, which involved providing flood resilience equipment to homeowners that were likely to be affected by flooding, such as window and doorway covers. This included providing training</p>

to ensure that the equipment was used effectively. Whilst positive, the equipment could not be used within older properties.

The actions taken within Mote Park Lake were outlined, with the project having cost £1.5 million. These actions gave additional protection to the town centre; if the dam failed the affects would be significant. The EA had since certified the safety of the dam.

The Medway Street Flood Barrier Scheme was still progressing, which was originally part of the large Bridges Gyratory Scheme. The issue's background was highlighted, with the flood barrier to be built across the landward side of the subway to prevent the latter's closure at times where flooding was likely and/or had taken place. The scheme's management was positively referenced, as the East Kent Business Partnership had supported the Council in obtaining an additional £100,000 in funding for the project. The project remained on schedule to be completed in 2023.

Flood Resilience (Maintenance, Management & Resilience)

The Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement outlined the Council's actions in maintaining privately owned watercourses to supplement Kent County Council's (KCC) overarching work on the matter. KCC provided the Council with the funding to undertake this responsibility.

The group were advised that there had been increasing interest in natural flood management measures, which included working with the landscape to increase resilience. This included the installation of leaky dams and riverbank restoration. Given the previous interest in undertaking large scale schemes, a line had been included in the Council's capital budget that could facilitate smaller, natural measures moving forward. Examples give included the progress towards achieving a wetland in Staplehurst and the work facilitated by the Southeast Rivers Trust.

The importance of community resilience and the Council's role in supporting this were highlighted. The actions taken by the Council with Parish Councils, particularly Collier Street and Yalding in particular, were outlined. The example given was that the previous work undertaken helped the Council to assist Ulcombe Parish in developing community flood plans, as the area had experienced flooding expectedly.

The Council's role in the Medway Flood Partnership was reiterated, which met twice annually and provided a forum for the Council to work collaboratively with the relevant agencies.

Emergency Planning

The Council was a member of the Kent Resilience Forum, facilitated by Kent County Council, and worked closely during emergency situations.

Development Management

The Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement stated that the as a Local Planning Authority, the Council had significant

involvement in facilitating new developments and the supply of water to those developments. The importance of consulting the relevant officers as part of the group's evidence collection process was reiterated.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

The Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan contained actions across flood management, to mitigate climate change, protect communities and enhance biodiversity. The Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager worked closely with the Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement to ensure that, whilst related, their areas of work were not duplicated.

The group thanked the Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement for the information and briefing provided, which was felt to be extremely helpful.

During the discussion, the group highlighted the following points:

- The importance of the Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document Regulation 18 consultation, with attendees encouraged to respond before the consultation's end.
- The importance of natural flood mitigations, particularly in rural areas. This included reiterating the importance of tree cover, which acted as both a natural flood prevention and climate change mitigation measure.

An example given was the natural flood solutions on the River Len, whereby the area that flooded significantly in 2000 reconfigured to woodland and wetland. Consequently, no properties were flooded during the flooding of 2013/24 as mentioned above. The flood water was able to be pumped through the existing drainage systems into the River Len.

The small financial cost against the scheme's impact was highlighted. It was stated that the Council's urban tree cover was lower than other towns within the UK, which could have been impacted by town centre development. The importance of finding suitable solutions was reiterated.

- The significance of highway and surface water flooding across the borough this autumn, particularly when considering that fluvial flooding has been less common. The impact to properties could potentially be mitigated through the Council's role as a Local Planning Authority, particularly when the use of combined systems led to the mixing of foul and surface water. The role of KCC as highway authority was highlighted, with the agreement of drop-curbs given as an example.

The mixing of foul and surface water was felt to be significant issue to be examined by the group, to find a resolution. The need for involvement of partner agencies in this was referenced.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council’s role in development management was highlighted. Specific reference was made to the use of delegated powers on planning applications, landscaping conditions, consideration of water management cycle related matters, i.e. through the planning report template. • In relation to surface water, the group highlighted that this would have been affected by changes in land use and agriculture. <p>In response, the Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement suggested that a representative of a landowner’s association be interviewed by the group. This was due to ongoing discussions with the Southeast Rivers Trust on how the latter have been developing flood management from engagement with landowners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the investment into suitable systems by water companies. The example given was the special are of conservation in Stodmarsh, which prevented wastewater from being discharged to the water treatment plants. The potential to lobby central government on widely enforcement water neutrality was highlighted. Southern Water were also lobbying central government for this purpose.
<p>4. Lines of Enquiry</p>	<p>The group wished to explore the following within the lines of enquiry:</p> <p>a) <u>Supply of Water</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Mitigating effects of increased rainfall, including capacity b. General supply of water: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. (Consultation with Environment Agency and Water companies on the supply of water) ii. (Southeast water had suggested providing information on supply issues to loose & Coxheath, alongside drought management and communications in extreme weather). <p>b) <u>Disposal of Water</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Importance and influence of development management (including considerations at planning committee) b. Flooding mitigation Mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. To effectively control water ii. Natural flood mitigation measures; (ditches, hedging, additional tree cover, wetlands, etc.) c. Management of highway and surface water flooding d. Working with partners, including interviewing landowner associations/representatives.

	<p>c) <u>Disposal of Sewage in Water Courses</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Combined systems (also relevant to point b) and link to foul and surface water mixing. b. Council powers and partnership Working, e.g. development management, planning and lobbying. c. Working with partners d. Water neutrality and planning (lobbying as a possibility) <p>The actions within the Council’s Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan that related to the above lines of enquiry would be collated for the group. The power point presented provided by Cllr Val Springett would also be distributed to the group.</p>
<p>5. Next Steps – Officer Consultation Meetings</p>	<p>The Democratic Services Officer outlined the changes proposed to the reserve meeting dates & times for officer consultation. The group were asked to confirm their availability for the dates.</p> <p>Confirmation would be given at a later date on whether the meetings would be held in-person or virtually, depending on Member and officer availability.</p>
<p>6. Any Other Business.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>7. Summary of Agreed Actions</p>	<p>Actions: That the Democratic Services Officer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compile the information relevant to the Lines of Enquiry, in accordance with the working group’s areas of interest, including highlighting the relevant aspects of the biodiversity and climate change action plan. 2. Organise the officer consultation meetings and inform the group.
<p>8. Duration of Meeting</p>	<p>5.30 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.</p>