

minutes



Meeting	FLOODING (DRAINAGE AND WATERCOURSES) SELECT COMMITTEE
Date	Monday, 28 January 2008 (commencing at 2.00 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

Yvonne Davidson (Chair)
Andy Stewart (Vice-Chair)

	John Carter	Sue Saddington
A	John Clarke	Dave Shaw
	Tom Pettengell	Yvonne Woodhead
	Ken Rigby	

NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Councillor Michael Bennett - Bassetlaw District Council
Councillor Melvyn Shaw - Newark and Sherwood District Council
Vacancy - Gedling Borough Council

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Jim Creamer
Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The appointment by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 December 2007 of Councillor Yvonne Davidson as Chair and Councillor Andy Stewart as Vice-Chair of the Committee was noted.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Committee, as set out above, was noted.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor John Clarke.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Carter declared a personal interest by virtue of his position as County Council representative on the Midlands Regional Flood Defence Committee. Councillors Brandon-Bravo and Saddington declared personal interests as their homes were at risk of flooding.

SCOPE AND DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

After introductions, Councillor Davidson reminded members that the review was looking at the localised flooding from drains and watercourses which had occurred in summer 2007, as distinct from the fluvial flooding which had been scrutinised by the previous Flooding Select Committee.

John McGuigan, Emergency Planning Manager, Communities Department gave a presentation on the floods in Nottinghamshire during June-July 2007, the nature of the damage caused, the response from the County Council and other agencies, and the reviews carried out subsequently.

Councillor Saddington opened the discussion, referring to the impact on the people affected, the consequences of building on flood land and of poorly maintained drains, and how parish councils were contacting land owners and asking them to clean their dikes.

Councillor Stewart asked about member involvement in the debriefing sessions. Mr McGuigan stated that members had been involved in some of the district debriefings. He offered to provide copies of the notes of the debriefing meetings. Councillor Carter believed that action could be taken to alleviate the effects of the flooding, for example the Flood Defence Committee was raising a levy for floodbanks in Lowdham, towards which the county and district councils would be asked to contribute. He suggested that the committee visit some of the affected areas.

In response to Councillor Shaw, Mr McGuigan stated that Severn Trent had been much criticised, as the sewage system had been unable to cope with the amount of water. He explained that Severn Trent were consulted about proposed new housing, but only where this was more than ten dwellings. He referred to the problem of people putting fat down drains. He said that the county council did not charge for sandbags, and that a sandbag policy needed to be devised with the district councils. Councillor Saddington pointed out that small housing developments could put pressure on the sewage system. Mr McGuigan drew attention to Sir Michael Pitt's review of the flooding, and to his interim report available on the Defra website.

Councillor Pettengell asked how many sewers and drains Severn Trent were now saying were not their responsibility. Mr McGuigan was not aware of this. Andy Wallace, Drainage Manager, Communities Department indicated that Severn Trent would discuss any changes affecting the highway with his department.

Councillor Carter observed that the River Trent was no longer dredged, and contrasted this with plans to dredge the River Meden at Pleasley. Mr McGuigan said that his team were in daily contact with the Environment Agency, who argued that it was natural for silt to accumulate at certain points. Councillor Rigby wondered when any authority had last served a notice on a riparian owner. Mr McGuigan pointed out

that Newark and Sherwood District Council, alongside parish councils, had been very active in recent months. Councillor Brandon-Bravo gave delay in raising the flood bank in Barton-in-Fabis as an example of bureaucracy hindering remedial work. Councillor Stewart referred to the forthcoming requirement for Severn Trent to adopt unadopted drains.

Councillor Saddington asked why the review was limited to five months. Councillor Davidson replied that the select committee could ask for an extension. Bob Hart, Service Director, Highways indicated his willingness to contribute to the review. He said that the cost of repairing last summer's flood damaged highways was approximately £2 million.

There was discussion about the work programme. It was agreed to invite evidence from or about:

- Severn Trent
- British Waterways
- Environment Agency
- Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) about their policy on dredging
- Emergency Planning, including notes of debriefing meetings and public meetings
- Location of flooded properties and reasons for the flooding
- Watercourses maintained by the Environment Agency
- Drains and watercourses on county council land
- Sandbag policies
- District council policies for clearing street drains

There was also discussion about which areas would be most valuable for the select committee to visit. Lowdham and North Leverton were suggested as having a range of experience. Councillor Stewart strongly advocated Lowdham, as a village where agencies had subsequently worked together on remedial measures. It was agreed to visit Lowdham towards the end of the review.

It was also agreed that the Select Committee meet on the following dates (all at 10.30 am): 25 February, 31 March, 28 April, 19 May and 30 June. The committee would receive further evidence from Emergency Planning on 25 February.

The meeting closed at 3.20 pm.

CHAIR

Ref: flooding d&w/m_28jan08