



Communities
Overview Committee

16 July 2018

2.00 pm

Item

Public

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 JULY 2018, 2PM – 4PM

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak
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Present

Councillor Cecilia Motley (Leader)
Councillors Nick Hignett (Vice Chairman), Ted Clarke, Rob Gittins, Nigel Hartin,
Roger Hughes, Vivienne Parry, Keith Roberts and Tina Woodward

11 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor Les Winwood.

12 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate or vote on any item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest and must leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

13 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

14 Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public.

15 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

16 Flood Risk Management

The Chair welcomed Tim Sneddon – Operations Manager, Environmental Maintenance, Rhian Townsend – Assistant Engineer, WSP - Interim Flood and Water Commissioning Manager, Luke Neil – Rivers Officer, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Hugh Disley – Culmington Flood Action Group to the meeting.

The Chair explained that the Committee was keen to look at the Council's role in flood risk management, its responsibilities, how it mitigated flood risk and how it responded when there was a flooding incident. Members were particularly interested in road diversion issues and the role of flood risk management when it came to place shaping and planning.

The Operations Manager and Interim Flood and Water Commissioning Manager had provided a report (copy attached to signed minutes) and gave a presentation (also attached to signed minutes). The presentation covered the strategic context and legal requirements for the Council and how it went about developing a strategic understanding of flood risk from all sources. It also covered the Council's role in:

- promoting effective management of drainage and flood defence systems;
- supporting communities to understand flood risk and become more resilient to flooding;
- managing local flood risk and new development in a sustainable manner;
- achieving results through partnership and collaboration;
- being better prepared for flood events and
- securing and managing funding for flood risk management in a challenging financial climate.

During the course of the presentation members asked questions in relation to both investigations carried out following flooding events and new land drainage enquiries. Officers explained that investigations would involve the Council, Severn Trent Water, the Environment Agency, and landowners as necessary. It was important to explain in the aftermath of a flood event that it was not affordable to design for a 1 in a 1000 year event and to encourage all parties to take their responsibilities seriously.

Questions were also raised by Members in relation to:

- Surface water run off;
- The responsibilities of landowners and relationships with the farming community;
- Work with the Environment Agency on risk assessment and funding and supporting schemes;
- The extent and location of flood action groups across the county and the support the Council could provide to them;
- The role of the Council in drainage and new developments;

The Operations Manager explained that landowners had a duty upon them to take water from up stream and should not take any action that would cause detriment to further parties down river. The NFU Environmental representative was keen to get that message to farmers and engaged very well with the Council.

A risk based approach was possible for highway gully maintenance through new software which was able to identify the percentage of silt present following a visit by a gully tanker. This system allowed areas to be targeted ahead of predicted heavy rainfall. The Environment Agency did not just focus on main or larger rivers or rivers prone to flooding, when it came to funding, the support was also there to fund and promote schemes which reduced flood risk to any residential property, be it from smaller watercourse or from surface water runoff.

There were seven active flood groups supported by the Council and it was hoped that following events in May and June 2018 that groups would also be established in Craven

Arms and Albrighton. The National Flood Forum held charitable status which helped secure funding for local forums and it also helped spread the understanding that there was a limited amount of resources available to solve flooding issues. Flood groups were predominantly established in the south of the county, attempts to set them up in the north of the county had met with less success. The Council was able to offer free property flood protection assessments and provide information on measures that could be taken to be better prepared for flood events.

Officers explained that the Council was a statutory consultee for developments of 10 properties or more but as many applications were smaller than this, where there was a drainage consideration within a flood risk area, the team also provided site specific comments. A Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Handbook was planned and it was hoped that this would encourage developers to not look at drainage as an add on but to consider it at an early stage as part of pre-application work.

The Council had been able to help lever a significant amount of money through a modest contribution through working in partnership with the Environment Agency and local Flood Action Groups, for example in completion of Much Wenlock Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The Chairman then invited Mr Disley to talk about the Culmington Flood Action Plan. In making his presentation to the Committee, Mr Disley highlighted that it had been accepted in Culmington that there was a need for self-help and to work closely with partner agencies, rather than taking no action and then complaining. Action taken had included: looking into how to protect properties; developing an understanding of riparian responsibilities; accessing grants to protect properties; identifying who the most vulnerable were in times of flood; identifying skills within the community; mapping and numbering every drain; undertaking drain checks twice a year; reporting on condition of trenches; meeting regularly with the Council and Environment Agency; securing 'river status' for the stream running through the village; development of an emergency plan with the emergency services and developing a continual programme of clearing drains and ditches.

Mr Disley thanked the Council for its support and said that working in partnership and establishing good relationships with officers was a key to success. Lessons learnt over the last five years had included:

- Positive relationships with landowners were critical;
- There had been some telephone delay contacting the Council during the last flood event when authorisation had been urgently required to close a flooded road;
- The Flood Action Group needed to be prepared to take on responsibility and communicate well;
- Prevention not reaction was key
- Confidence and trust was needed between all parties.

The Chair thanked Mr Disley for the valuable insights he had provided into a successful Group. She went on to ask Mr Neal from the Wildlife Trust to explain the 'Slow the Flow' scheme. He explained that conversations with farmers and landowners tended to be more positive through Shropshire Wildlife Trust as it was not a statutory body and all measures were introduced as a result of negotiation.

Evidence to date was that leaky dams were cost effective, held back significant amounts of water and did not impact on productive land. It was hoped that research underway through the University of Cardiff would result in a model allowing more precise predictions.

He also reported had it had been very helpful that Culmington Flood Action Group had mapped out the ownership of local land and this had accelerated the work of the Wildlife Trust in introducing leaky dams and other measures. Support of local members was also very helpful in providing local knowledge and encouraging local engagement.

In response to further questions, officers confirmed that cross border working was positive, although this was complicated over the Welsh border due to different funding regimes.

The Chair expressed the Committee’s gratitude to all present for attending the meeting and sharing valuable experience and expertise. She observed the importance of the work, the need for involvement from local members, and the financial and human cost savings that could be made by proactive action. She urged that once the Interim Flood and Water Commissioning Manager returned to her substantive post that a replacement be found for her.

17 Community Transport

The Transport Commissioning Manager reported on further guidance received from the Department of Transport since the Committee last considered Community Transport. Members agreed that a Task and Finish Group of 7 Members be established to be run over two half day sessions in September and October with the aim of reporting back to the 26 November meeting of the Committee.

18 Local Joint Committees

The Chair reported that she had met with the Chair of the Place Overview Committee to consider how an LJC Task and Finish Group might be addressed by the two Committees and take into account boundaries of Place Plan Areas. They had felt that this work should be kept in abeyance pending the outcome of a review of the Community Enablement Team and this view was agreed by members of the Committee.

19 Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer explained the plans for future meetings and encouraged members with suggested items to make contact with him. The Committee agreed the proposals set out.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: