

Wednesday, 21 August 2024

FLOOD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH PANEL

A meeting of the Flood Management Strategy Task and Finish Panel was held on Wednesday, 21 August 2024 via Teams.

PRESENT Councillor J Joy (Chair)
Councillors B Hunt (Vice-Chair), C Cawley,
M Fairley, D Powlay and P Thomson.

OFFICIALS R Asadi, C Fraser, A Lynch-Brown and R Wren.

18 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Quartermain, V Rider and P Salvin.

19 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JULY 2024**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Flood Management Strategy Task and Finish Group held on Wednesday, 31 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the previous meeting:

- Flooding has been included in the audit programme. The specification is being written and will include timescale for completion. The audit is due to commence at the end of October 2024. The recommendation is to reconvene this group at an appropriate time to review the audit report.
- Flood management to be added to the work programme for the Climate and Environment Scrutiny & Improvement Committee.

20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest; **NOTED**.

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21 **OBJECTIVE 5: DELIVERING WIDER BENEFITS**

Promote water sensitive urban design

- There is a need to be more stringent with developers regarding drainage and flood prevention.
- As the Lead Local Flood Authority, the council reviews planning applications in respect of managing surface water and can also take action if necessary when there are obstructions in the waterway. Landowners are responsible for managing drainage on their land.
- Property owners are reducing permeable surfaces, and this has an impact when driveways are laid, patios and decking installed.

Promote Water Quality

- Disposal of waste products into gutters such as chemicals and paint can lead to watercourses becoming contaminated and therefore harmful to the environment.
- Recent report in the Guardian that Tees Estuary one of the most polluted in the country has identified a need to promote water quality and engage with the Environment Agency (EA) and Northumbria Water. It is beyond the scope of RCBC to regulate although Ofwat can.
- National highways also been criticised for lack of management of water runoff.
- A member stated that clean water campaigner Feargal Sharkey warned that all of Britain's rivers are polluted. Officers advised the cost nationally to put this right would cost billions of pounds.

Urban Drainage Design

- Use of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) to benefit the environment.
- A member asked if planning requirements changed to reflect climate change. Officers advised that changes have been made and are reflected in modelling. The EA have redefined storm frequency and intensity.
- There is currently a lack of capacity in Northumbria Water's system although as an authority RCBS is well served to have the required infrastructure for new development.

Strategic Prioritisation

- Enhanced through partnerships.
- Strategic improvements to the Northumbria Water network to meet benefit cost ratio.

Promote Partnership Working

- Members identified the need to engage with Beyond Housing, EA, Northumbria Water, landowners, TVCA, NYCC, and local industry.
- Develop broader conversations across stakeholder groups/

Develop Community Engagement

- Members and officers acknowledged that a lot of work is being done that is not being well communicated to the general public.
- Some issues that have been identified and subsequently acknowledged may not be promptly resolved owing to resource constraints.

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- The current funding focus is on preventing the flooding of homes.
- Members asked if there was a process that flags where there are recurring problems. Officers advised that the system was being built and a hotspot map to support the case to justify an action.
- Members reminded that issues arise through weather cycles and not necessarily climate change.
- Officers advised that dredging was very bad for water quality and damaged ecosystems. The aim is to slow water and not stop it and the EA favour catchment-based methods, e.g. storage in open land.

The following actions were identified:

1. Develop communications to inform public of the need for care when disposing waste, regulations around installation of paving at properties.
2. Promote work that has been done by council to include the importance of reed beds and catch pits, the timely clean out of watercourses to preserve the ecosystem, avoiding use of chemicals.
3. Members asked for better clarification to understand better who is responsible for what.
4. Foreshore update at next meeting.
5. Explore what is being done at the Wilton International site in respect of protecting water quality.
6. Members asked for work to be done on providing supporting material which would enable them to respond effectively to queries and concerns.
7. Members were invited to document evidence using time stamped photographs and descriptions of issues.