

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Special Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 8 February 2016 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor B Graham (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, D Bell, E Bell, J Clare, J Clark, J Gray, I Jewell, P May, A Liversidge, O Milburn, S Morrison, J Shuttleworth, P Stradling and L Taylor

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Spurrell

Also Present:

Councillor K Shaw

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors D Hall and S Zair.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

5 Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided Members with background information on the role and responsibilities of the committee as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Committee for County Durham and how it engages with the Flood Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) for County Durham. The report also informed the committee that representatives from the RMAs would attend the meeting to provide members with detail of various flood mitigation projects and schemes

they had undertaken, access to funding, any future projects and any issues or challenges within the county (for copy of report and slides of presentations, see file of minutes).

Mr S Reed and Mr S Longstaff gave a presentation that provided information on the key schemes for 2015/16 and a review for 2015/16.

Going Forward there were 17 schemes in the Environment Agency 6 year programme 2015/21 for funding - £2.4m Local Levy and £1.8m Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid, they were currently reviewing schemes to put forward for 2021/27 programme selecting top 40 schemes from 4,000 properties shown at risk. The Local Flood Risk Management Plan was currently in draft and was due to go to public consultation.

Members were provided with information on the Medium Term Investment Plan 2015-2021 and an update on the progress of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The Committee was advised that schedule 3 of the Flood Water Management Act 2010 had not been enacted and this had resulted in changes to the National Planning Policy framework to cover SuDS in new developments and this had resulted in the Drainage Team receiving 361 applications to assess drainage design. In relation to going forward the SuDS adoption policy had been developed and a payment method had been established for residents of new developments containing SuDS who would pay Durham County Council for maintenance works. So far two developments had signed up to SuDS agreements.

Members were also provided with photographs of schemes which had been completed which were Seaham North Pier, Witton Gilbert, 'O' Cobbles Hall and the A167 Honest Lawyer. Members were also shown a video of the completed works at Witton Gilbert.

The Chairman thanked the Officer's for their presentation and commented that the works on the A167 Honest Lawyer had made a significant improvement. Members were also advised that arrangements had been made for Members to visit the Witton Gilbert scheme on 31 March 2016.

Councillor Armstrong referred to the scheme at Witton Gilbert and commented that the work of the team was tremendous from the design to the execution. He had visited the site over the Christmas period and it was working well.

Councillor Clare sought clarification if the gullies were automatic and congratulated the Drainage team on the response to an incident in his ward where a brick had got into the hydro however the issue was resolved very quickly. The Officer responded that the gullies at the Witton Gilbert were automatic.

Councillor May asked if there were provisions for continuous maintenance at the Witton Gilbert site. The Officer responded that it was designed to be maintenance free but it was on a three month schedule to be checked. They did receive a phone call on Christmas Day regarding the site and a cleanse was carried out. It was confirmed by Officers that if the scheme at Witton Gilbert had not been undertaken then 12 properties would have flooded in the recent flooding incidents in the County.

Ms E Furlong, Assistant Sustainable Sewerage Manager at Northumbrian Water continued by providing an update on schemes which had been completed by Northumbrian Water

within County Durham. The update included detail of: sewer flooding alleviation at Salisbury Road; Newton Hall; The Villas, Harelaw; Thirlmere Road, Ferryhill and Central Exchange, Chester-le-Street. The provision of additional storage projects at sewer pumping stations were also completed at: The Willows, Coxhoe; Jubilee Fields, Shildon; Copeland Row, Evenwood and Hummerbeck, West Auckland at a cost of £0.5m.

Members were also provided with an update on current and future schemes within County Durham.

The Asset Management Plan 6 investment within County Durham sewerage networks contained £109.5 million for sewer flooding projects across the region including:-

- Conventional sewer flooding projects
- Strategic projects
- Local flood risk management partnership opportunities
- Property level protection
- Sewer rehabilitation and tree root removal
- Enhancement and verification of models
- New DAS models will be built by exception where need identified
- Proactive risk reduction of sewer flooding before it occurs

Members were then provided with information on drainage area studies and community action plans. They were also provided with details of flood and pollution risk reduction.

Councillor Clare referred to Woodhouse Close Primary School and sought clarification if SuDS ponds had been installed at the school. The Officer responded that they had installed ponds in schools and some water play areas so that children could see how water flowed.

Councillor Clare then asked about health and safety issues with SuDS in schools. The Officer responded that before introducing a scheme into schools, Northumbrian Water would attend the school and talk to children and interact with teachers and parents explaining the purpose of SuDS and explaining that the ponds were designed so that children could safely walk in and walk out of the ponds and if required a barrier could be installed.

Councillor E Bell referred to the North of the County who have flooding issues which resulted in water going into the sea at Whitburn. He had met with the Environment Agency to discuss the amount of sewerage washed up on the beaches at Seaham. The Officer responded that she would speak to the Councillor after the meeting and obtain some further information on this issue.

Councillor Milburn referred to the Community Action Plans and sought clarification if the list would be extended. The Officer responded that the Community Action Plans are new and Northumbrian Water are still understanding how they will work. If benefits are realised through Community Action Plans the list would be extended as it would form part of the investment programme.

Mr S Merrett, Team Leader Partnership and Strategic Overview from the Environment Agency provided Members with an update on the flood alleviation schemes in County

Durham and an update on the six year Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Investment Programme aimed at identifying and reducing potential flood risk.

Members were advised that the overall capital programme for 2016/17 was £22m which consisted of £11.8m from Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid, £3.3m Local Levy, £4.2m public contributions, £2.3m private contributions and £0.4m from other sources.

In relation to completed schemes the Stanhope flood defence scheme had reduced flood risk to 98 properties with work consisting of earth embankment at the Butts, rebuilding/improving a number of existing walls and new defences around the properties at Unthank Mill.

Other completed schemes were temporary works at Chester-le-Street, computer modelling at Staindrop and West Auckland, emergency repairs and works to improve flow conveyance at the Dam at Spring Gardens and improvements to the Bayhorse culvert entrance at Wolsingham.

The Environment Agency also undertakes frequent maintenance works in relation to defence walls, land drainage pumping stations and channels. The Environment Agency's schemes for County Durham included in the six year Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management investment programme were as follows:-

- Staindrop Flood Alleviation Scheme
- Tindale Beck Flood Alleviation Scheme
- Wolsingham Culvert improvements
- Chester-le-Street scheme and flood warning for Chester Burn
- Barnard Castle
- Howden Le Wear PLP
- Pennine Peat Partnership Project
- Rural Skerne
- Lanchester

Councillor Clare referred to the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management funding for the region and that County Durham received approximately 40% but Northumbria received 50% and what were the reasons for this in view of County Durham being one of the poorest economies in the region.

The Officer responded that funding was provided on an individual project basis and was dependent on the risk, outcomes and cost of the scheme.

Councillor Clare commented that County Durham schemes did not qualify for as much funding from the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management. The Officer responded that the methodology used was the same across the country and was based on cost and how many properties would be protected by the scheme.

Councillor Adam referred to the dredging of rivers and what were the Environment Agency's thoughts on this. The Officer responded that they looked at dredging to reduce flood risk in certain places and they had gravel management in place. There were no locations in County Durham for gravel management but if it became an issue they would

investigate. He commented that dredging was considered to have a negative impact on fish breeding.

Councillor E Bell commented on work being undertaken by the Environment Agency in the North of County and further up the coast at Sunderland concerning outflows and asked if Durham County Council would be a statutory consultee.

The Officer responded that such works as identified above would be subject to consultation and went through the planning process.

Councillor Stradling indicated that Sunderland City Council would be informed as it was in their area but the beaches affected were in County Durham.

The Officer responded that he would take further detail from the Member following the meeting and would consult with colleagues and respond accordingly.

Councillor May referred to insurance policies for those properties affected by flooding and would the defence schemes have an impact on the cost of policies for these properties.

The Officer responded that they updated maps to show flood defence schemes which showed the properties which were now at reduced risk of flooding. The maps were openly available and some insurance companies did use the data to reduce premiums but not all companies used the data. The Environment Agency could supply a letter to show that they were now at a reduced risk but his advice would be to shop around insurance providers.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their presentations and asked Members to agree the recommendations outlined in the report.

Resolved: (i) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its role as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Committee for County Durham note the information provided in the presentations.

(ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its role as the Flood and Coastal Erosion Management Committee for County Durham receive further presentations from the Risk Management Authorities at a future special meeting of the committee in February 2017.