

**Minutes from
Multi-Agency Flood Working Group
Thursday 17th January 2008**

Present: Delwyn Burbidge (DB) – Chief Executive, NWDC
Steve Scothern (SSc) – Engineer, NWDC
Councillor Bob Causer (Cllr BC) – Community & Wellbeing Portfolio, NWDC
James Whittleton (JW) – Democratic Services Assistant, NWDC
Danny Everett (DE) – Area Highways Engineer, WCC
Paul Gerrard (PG) – Highway Project Manager, WCC
Sarah Burchard – Thames Water
Nick Buller – Wessex Water
Peter Weston (PW) – Wessex Water

Apologies: Richard Symonds - Environment Agency (EA)

Minutes: Sharon Smith (SSm)

1. Introduction

DB provided a brief explanation of the rationale behind the Flood Working Group and how the involvement of a number of bodies causes confusion to the general public who are unsure of the different responsibilities. The ethos behind the meeting is to provide a central point where all flooding issues can be discussed, appropriate action taken and duplication avoided.

2. Current position in North Wiltshire

DB, using the Crudwell flooding issues as an example, explained again how there is a general misconception of the powers held by NWDC. DB referred to the GMTV news report featured this week where Swill Brook in Crudwell was discussed and where NWDC had, again, been targeted as the responsible party for resolving any flooding issues.

DE pointed out that following a conversation with the EA some time ago he understood the EA were due to widen Swill Brook but, due to conservation issues, the fact that the area is a low risk area and budget restrictions, plans have subsequently been halted and available monies diverted to more pressing flooding issues.

SSc confirmed that he had also written to the EA to request the widening of the brook but had not received a response.

DB's attention had been drawn to the storm drain issues in Purton. Investigations have subsequently been passed to PG for appropriate action by WCC.

PG and Cllr BC are due to attend the Malmesbury Area 1 Committee Meeting on Wednesday 23rd January 2008 and will provide an update to the public on the current flooding situation throughout Area 1.

DE confirmed that the stones causing partial blockage at Goosey Corner had now been removed.

DE also confirmed that the blockage caused by redirected piping via an outlet at York House had been removed.

The open section of ditch next to the A429 has now been cleared.

DE confirmed that Tetbury Lane had been cleared. Old Ridgeway (Turners Lane) had been cleared but a blockage was still present.

The problems surround Hedgehogs were discussed. NWDC representative will chase EA for an update. ACTION: Steve Scothern.

PG confirmed that the watercourses downstream also need work.

PG confirmed that investigative cameras had been used in many areas (although as yet awaiting check on Goosey Corner) to check the condition of underground pipes but that this could only be done in public drains and not private. It is still the responsibility of the individual landowners to ensure appropriate maintenance is undertaken for drainage on their property.

PW confirmed that work had now been undertaken to protect the Crudwell pumping station following June/July floods.

NWDC Communications team will be invited to the next Group meeting to help with a media approach to emphasise private landlord responsibility to keep ditches/watercourses clear. ACTION: Sharon Smith

3. Terms of Reference and frequency of meeting

PG discussed the working group for Salisbury District Council, chaired by a senior Salisbury member. The basis of this group is to provide an open forum where all parties can talk honestly and without recrimination on current issues. All issues are brought to the table and prioritised.

All future administration could be dealt with by NWDC Democratic Services team. James Whittleton, as Area 1 Democratic Services representative, could be the initial administration support.

The following Terms of Reference for the Working Group and set out in the 'invitation' letter were discussed and agreed as follows:

- To be a central point where all flooding issues in the North Wiltshire District can be discussed by all agencies involved and appropriate action agreed and then taken;
- To investigate areas prone to flooding and assess which agency could deal with the issues (including sewage problems) ensuring cooperation between the agencies thus making the most effective use of resources available to them; and
- For all agencies to contribute to the collation of a district wide map, highlighting where flooding issues are present assisting with the prioritisation process.

It was agreed by all present that the Group should meet monthly for the next quarter whereby the frequency of the meetings would be reviewed. ACTION: Sharon Smith

It was agreed by all that two additional NWDC Members would be invited to attend the Group Meetings. Cllr Howard Greenman and Cllr Jackie Lay were suggested. Cllr Bob Causer will liaise with both Councillors. ACTION: Cllr Bob Causer

Following general discussion it was agreed that as Network Rail had some involvement on some of the flooding issues that they should be invited to attend future meetings. DB to invite the appropriate officer. ACTION: Delwyn Burbidge

4. The Impact of Unitary on the Flood Working Group

DB explained that NWDC would no longer exist from April 2009 following the amalgamation of all Councils in Wiltshire. It was agreed that Cllr Bob Causer would chair the current group forward through the transition.

PG confirmed that he envisaged the Group continuing indefinitely.

5. Composition and Lead Authority

Items (3) and (4) cover this to some degree but it was agreed, in addition, that:

- In view of the emerging Unitary Council a lead officer should be identified, preferably from the Wiltshire County Council in view of highway and emergency planning functions and additional capacity. SSc, PG and Steve Ibbottson (Kennet District Council) to discuss and report back to the next meeting. (PG to also gain the views of George Batten and PG's line manager): ACTION: Paul Gerrard
- Similarly PG to discuss with George Batten the possible creation of a Land Drainage team within the Wiltshire County Council to gain an early amalgamation of WCC/DC capacity: ACTION: Paul Gerrard
- DB to also discuss NWDC's capacity issues re service of notices with Kennet DC: ACTION: Delwyn Burbidge

6. Flood mapping to enable prioritisation of action

All present provided details of areas prone to flooding as detailed below:

Minety
Dauntsey (Village and Green)
Christian Malford
Crudwell
Hankerton
Yatesbury
Marston Meysey
Coleston Wellington
Ashton Keynes
Grittleton
Great Somerford
Little Somerford
Brinkworth
Kingsway Bridge

7. Links with Local Resilience Forum

PG envisaged both the Resilience Group and Flood Working Group working side by side as this would be useful to both Groups.

8. James Gray

MP James Gray has offered his support for the NW Flood Working Group and his assistance where required. Cllr Bob Causer will liaise with James Gray to enlist his assistance on the Central Government Funding issues. ACTION: Cllr Bob Causer

9. AOB

DE raised Frog Lane, Great Somerford and requested the use of Wessex Water drains to help with any flood overflow. Wessex Water were unable to assist with this request as the drains would be unable to cope with the extra capacity.

DB raised the issue of alternative solutions such as the use of more ponds. After discussion it was agreed that this would solve some flooding issues as flood water would be able to drain into the ponds at peak time. SSc to look at possible areas. ACTION: Steve Scothern

It was noted that the Environment Agency is split into two separate areas, Wallingford and Bridgewater. Both areas had been invited to the meeting. PG to investigate whether both areas should be represented. ACTION: Paul Gerrard

Cllr Bob Causer asked all present whether there was an awareness of the new 'aquasacks' for use in flooding situations instead of sandbags. PG suggested the resilience form was perhaps the best place to raise this.

Cllr Bob Causer would like a leaflet provided by the Council for all households within Wiltshire containing emergency information on flooding. It was agreed that this could be discussed further at the next meeting when a representative from the Communications Team would be present.

SSm to request Jackie Tavener (NWDC) to outline for the next meeting how 'out of hours' emergency service operates at NWDC. ACTION: Sharon Smith

10. Date of Next Flood Working Group meeting:

Thursday 14th February 2008 at 2:00pm.