

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

Councillors Present: Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Roger Hunneman, Mike Johnston, Alan Macro, Garth Simpson, Quentin Webb and Laszlo Zverko

Also Present: Nick Carter (Chief Executive) and Carolyn Richardson (Civil Contingencies Manager), David Lowe (Scrutiny & Partnerships Manager) and Charlene Myers (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeff Brooks, Councillor Sheila Ellison, Councillor Dave Goff, Councillor Virginia von Celsing and Councillor Emma Webster

PART I

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

2. **Agreement of the Severe Weather Scrutiny recommendations**

Councillor Quentin Webb proposed that the minutes of the meetings conducted on 1 September 2014, 5 September 2014 and 11 September 2014 be considered in advance of the discussion. Councillor Brian Bedwell presented the proposal to the Commission. The Commission concluded that the order of discussion would be altered to enable consideration of the points mentioned within the minutes.

The minutes were signed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

Minutes from 1 September 2014

Page 19, 5th paragraph: *Councillor Jeff Brooks asked whether the new RBFRS Head Quarters at Theale could be considered as an alternative EOC/TCG should circumstances dictate. Carolyn Richardson advised that discussions were underway to explore the feasibility of using the building.*

Minutes from 5 September 2014

Page 43, 1st Paragraph: Councillor Alan Macro wished to clarify that he suggested it would be useful to have a localised list of various resources.

Minutes from 11 September 2014

Page 49: Aliceby Court would be corrected to Alice Bye Court.

The Commission considered the draft recommendations (Agenda item 3). Councillor Paul Bryant stated that the tone of the recommendations suggested that the response was less than satisfactory. He stressed that the response overall was managed effectively although it was recognised that improvements could be made. David Lowe reassured the Commission that the report, considered at the meeting on 1 September 2014, would be updated to incorporate the evidence received during the review. The report would subsequently reflect key messages regarding the response and the positive feedback received.

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Members of the Commission highlighted that the recommendations failed to include the need to review the Sandbag Policy which had been a reoccurring focus of discussion throughout the review. David Lowe advised that the recommendations would be updated to include the proposal.

Councillor Bedwell stated that the recommendations would be considered in order of the report and Members would be invited to provide their feedback.

Item 1: Councillor Bedwell advised that the Communication Strategy would consider the methodology and means regarding the distribution of messages.

It was suggested that consideration should be given to the repeating communications, to address the gaps in knowledge of local flood risk arising from people moving into and out of the district.

Item 2: Councillor Webb suggested that further advice could be obtained from the Association of British Insurers (ABI).

Item 3: Councillor Webb proposed that a link to Floodline could be added on the Council website to encourage residents to register. Carolyn Richardson advised that the Communication Strategy would consider this as an option.

Item 5: Councillor Mike Johntson suggested that consideration be given to adapting existing systems instead of procuring a new management system. Carolyn Richardson advised that some consideration had been given to the need for a management system already. In conclusion it was possible that a number of solutions could be suitable but more detailed reviews were required.

David Lowe advised that the recommendation would state that a new system would be selected 'if necessary' to indicate that existing options should be considered first.

Councillor Bryant advised that the introduction of a new system would entail training and regular use to ensure Officers were confident using it. Carolyn Richardson stated that the usability of the system would be a key factor in the decision making process.

Item 6: Councillor Webb stressed that he was not in favour of the recommendation. He stated that the proposal was impracticable and focused on flood events alone.

Councillor Bryant stated that the recommendation was reasonable and required further consideration before being discounted. He supported the suggestion that the facility could be extended to include other events.

The Commission supported the recommendation as it had been identified that residents had difficulty contacting the correct agencies. Councillor Webb requested that his objection was recorded.

Item 8: Councillor Laszlo Zverko asked whether Carolyn Richardson was happy with the recommendation. Carolyn Richardson advised that agencies were jointly developing a form of communication to provide necessary updates. The Commission heard that Carolyn Richardson was not necessarily the appropriate person to which the action should be assigned. She would confirm the contact and report back to the Commission.

Item 10: Councillor Bryant queried the source of funding for Parish Councils and in response it was stated that some of the funding would be provided by the Council.

Councillor George Chandler stated that the provision of pumps in communities was futile if residents lacked the necessary training on how they should be operated and maintained. The Commission heard that larger water pumps required supervision by skilled operators and it was therefore questionable whether they were a realistic option.

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David Lowe reinforced the rationale behind the recommendation: the Commission had identified the need to enhance community resilience and responsibility for community flood protection by procuring their own resources.

It was recommended that the wording was altered to reflect that Parish Councils were encouraged to consider localised needs for resources and consideration should be given to all suitable forms of protection. It was concluded that the Commission could not insist that every community purchased resources as the need varied across the district.

Item 17: Carolyn Richardson confirmed that she was happy with the proposal but suggested that the responsibility should be assigned to the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TV LRF)

Item 19: Councillor Bryant suggested that the activity could be an opportunity to engage school children and educate them on the procedures for future events.

The Commission noted that the wording reflected the current level of influence the Head of Education had on Academies therefore, the recommendation was advisory.

Item 23: Councillor Garth Simpson asked whether the Council would be susceptible to compensation requests if private land was used in as an option to alleviate flood risk. David Lowe advised the option was considered during recent flooding but clarity was required in order to understand the implications.

Item 24: The audit would include a RAG status to clarify the level of preparedness.

Item 28: Councillor Bedwell advised that a large proportion of Parish Councils had emergency plans however it was not clear whether the plans were adequate. It was agreed that an audit would be beneficial in order to ascertain the frequency at which plans should be exercised and reviewed.

David Lowe advised the Commission that Town Councils had vision groups in place which would act as the mechanism for the introduction of a Flood Forum.

Item 29: Councillor Webb suggested that it would be beneficial if the Environment Agency simplified the information and procedures for riparian owners to avoid obstacles and delays.

Item 33: The wording would be altered to include all forms of support to minimise the pressure on Council staff alone.

Item 35: The Commission collectively expressed the urgent need for Thames Water to address the recommendation. Nick Carter suggested that the Commission could request visibility of the Thames Water Programme of Capital Works to confirm the organisation's commitments.

Item 37: In response to concerns raised by the Commission David Lowe emphasised that the recommendation asked the Head of Highways and Transport to consider the feasibility of providing keys, whilst giving thought to the possible consequences and how it would be managed.

Item 41: Councillor Webb stated that he did not support the recommendation and questioned the value it would add. It was agreed that adverse weather was occurring more frequently. It was not intended that the cause of severe weather would be considered but it would consider the implications and how they could be minimised in the long term.

Nick Carter advised that the Commission had adequate authority to agree the review. The recommendation would be amended accordingly.

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Councillor Macro proposed that a recommendation should be included to request regular maintenance of medium term flood alleviation measures such as the one in place at Pingewood, adjacent to the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Commission supported the proposal and the report would be amended accordingly.

Councillor Bedwell concluded the meeting by expressing the Commission’s appreciation for the support and contribution towards the review provided by residents, officers and external agencies.

Councillor Bedwell gave specific thanks to Carolyn Richardson, Civil Contingency Manager, for her effort and commitment during the recent severe weather and the course of the review. Carolyn Richardson thanked the Commission for their support and stated that the recommendations were extremely valuable although some would take a longer period of time to complete due to their complexity.

Resolved that the recommendations would be amended in accordance with the points raised during the debate and would be issued to the Executive for consideration.

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(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature