

**SCRUTINY PANEL: What preparations are now in place to deal with the next incident of serious flooding in the Borough?**

**FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL  
MONDAY, 31ST MARCH 2014 AT 6 PM  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, SOUTHFIELDS, LOUGHBOROUGH**

**AGENDA**

1. APOLOGIES
2. ACTION NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26TH FEBRUARY 2014 AND UPDATED SCOPE DOCUMENT

To agree the notes of actions agreed by the Panel at its meeting held on 6th February 2014 and an updated Scrutiny Review Scope Document. These documents are included within the Panel's draft report at page 40 and page 10.

3. DRAFT SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT

To consider the draft report of the Panel, attached at page 3.

Membership of this Panel:

Cllrs Harper-Davies (Chair), Grimley, K. Jones, Ranson, Shepherd, Smidowicz and Sutherland



**REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL: What preparations are now in place to deal with the next incident of serious flooding in the Borough?**

**Foreword by Councillor Harper-Davies, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel**

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Flooding Scrutiny Panel.

*To be completed following the final meeting.*

## 1. Background

At its meeting on 19th June 2013, Scrutiny Management Board resolved that a Scrutiny Panel with a focus on flood prevention be formed, to be chaired by Councillor Harper-Davies. In agreeing the Scope Document for the Panel the Scrutiny Management Board set out the title of the Panel's work as the following question: What preparations are now in place to deal with the next incident of serious flooding in the Borough?. The Panel held an informal meeting on 31st July 2013, with the first formal meeting being held on 28th August 2013. The Panel concluded its business at its final meeting on **31st March 2014**.

## 2. Panel Membership

The original Panel membership consisted of Councillors Harper-Davies (Chair), Gaskell, Grimley, K. Jones, Newton, Ranson, Shepherd, Smidowicz and Sutherland. However, after its second formal meeting, Councillor Gaskell could no longer be a member of the Panel due to his appointment as a Cabinet Support Member and Councillor Newton had to resign as a member of the Panel as she was unable to attend meetings.

## 3. Terms of Reference and Reason for Scrutiny

The Panel's Terms of Reference, agreed by the Scrutiny Management Board, were as follows:

Flooding has a significant impact on many of the Borough's residents and the Borough Council plays its role as part of a partnership approach to flooding issues. The review will therefore focus on the liaison between the different agencies involved and the information provided to residents. In particular the panel will consider:

- are agencies working together effectively?
- are early warning procedures in place?
- is information conveyed to residents in a timely manner?
- are diversion routes for road users adequately signed?
- what lessons have been learned from recent incidents of flooding?

The Scope Document for the scrutiny review undertaken by the Panel is attached at Appendix 1. This sets out the above Terms of Reference and Reason for Scrutiny. The document outlines the position at the conclusion of the Panel's work (**to be updated following this meeting**) and, therefore, includes additional stakeholders and resources identified by the Panel as its work progressed, notes added to assist the Panel and a summary of the progress made by the Panel which was reported to meetings of the Policy Scrutiny Group.

#### **4. Evidence, Stakeholders and Witnesses**

The Panel received information from the following stakeholders and witnesses:

- Kevin Roberts, Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council and Ian Smith, Leicestershire County Council, representing the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Local Resilience Forum
- Jonathan McGuinness, Leicestershire County Council
- Caroline Watson and David Towle, Environment Agency
- Jonathan Hale, Loughborough BID
- Brenda Snape, Town Clerk and Councillors Christine Radford and Joan Tassell, Shepshed Town Council
- Richard White, Kingfisher Area Residents Group and a Flood Warden
- Steve Lewis-Roberts, Group Leader Development Management, Charnwood Borough Council
- Tim Smith, Infrastructure Strategy, Wastewater, Severn Trent
- Andrew Lorimer, Team Manager, Highways, Leicestershire County Council
- Alex Mortlock, Infrastructure Capacity Strategy Manager, Waste Water, Severn Trent
- Survey responses from Parish and Town Councils in the Borough

Copies of the following were also made available to the Panel:

- Local Government Association First Articles – ‘Flood Insurance’ and ‘Dealing With The Deluge’.
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Resilience Forum Multi-agency Flood Plan
- Somerset County Council Flooding Scrutiny - Complete Final Report
- Charnwood Main River Flooding Map
- Wood Brook and Burleigh Brook - Simulated 100 Year Flooding Extents Demonstration
- Leicestershire County Council Highways Forum Drainage and Flooding Report
- Environment Agency - Briefing from Nicky Morgan MP

Technical Support was provided to the Panel by Michael Hopkins, Democratic Services Manager.

The Panel wishes to thank all stakeholders, witnesses and officers for the assistance provided with its work.

#### **5. Summaries of Panel Meetings**

Summaries of the work undertaken at each meeting of the Panel are set out in the “Progress of Panel Work” section of the Scope Document at Appendix 1.

Full details of the information provided by witnesses and the issues considered by the Panel are detailed in the action notes of the Panel's meetings listed in Background Papers section of this report, also attached at Appendix 2.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

The Improvement & Organisational Development Manager stated that the need for an Equality Impact Assessment would be considered following the final submission of the report.

## **7. Key Findings**

The Panel obtained evidence from a range of sources, both internal and external as described in section 4, above, and the Panel's Scope Document, attached as Appendix 1.

Based on this evidence the Panel has made a number of findings in relation to its terms of reference.

*Are agencies working together effectively?*

The Panel heard evidence of examples of effective co-operation within the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Local Resilience Forum. The Panel found that the processes in place were working well. The Panel found that there were some areas where further improvement could be made, particularly in developing the ways in which communication from the public was handled and responded to.

The Panel identified an issue in relation to the liaison between the Environment Agency and the Council's Development Management service which it hopes is being addressed.

*Are early warning procedures in place? and Is information conveyed to residents in a timely manner?*

The Panel heard evidence of the effectiveness of a comprehensive and robust network of volunteer flood wardens based in their local communities and would wish to see this network further supported and expanded. The Panel would also like to see options explored to make more use of mobile technology and social media to develop fast and effective means for the public to report incidents and for the public to be informed of incidents.

*Are diversion routes for road users adequately signed?*

The Panel continues to have concerns about the effectiveness of signage for road closures and diversions caused by flooding. The Panel would like to see options for empowering Flood Wardens or similar individuals in local communities to erect and remove signs.

*What lessons have been learned from recent incidents of flooding?*

The Panel welcomed the action taken following recent incidents of flooding to improve monitoring of watercourses in Loughborough and support Flood Wardens on the Kingfisher estate. The Panel believes that the experiences of recent incidents of flooding support its recommendations.

## **9 Panel Recommendations**

Having reached the above key findings, the Panel makes the following recommendations:

***Feedback on the draft Panel recommendations which is received from Resilience Forum partners will be relayed at the meeting.***

### *Flood Wardens*

1. That the Resilience Forum partners devise and maintain a job specification for volunteer Flood Wardens and that the Forum be proactive in promoting the role. Essential to encouraging volunteers would be for the partners to confirm that they retained overall responsibility and that Wardens would not be held liable for any issues arising from incidences of flooding.
2. That a single list of all Flood Wardens in Charnwood and of flood risk areas not covered by wardens be compiled and maintained.
3. Currently, Flood Wardens only cover around 50% of the Borough. The Resilience Forum should prioritise increasing this, possibly through proactively approaching parishes and towns that don't have Wardens.
4. That further work is undertaken with Parish and Town Councils and residents groups in Loughborough to develop the Flood Warden scheme including holding regular network meetings to update Flood Wardens, give Flood Wardens the opportunity to share experiences and to generally promote the scheme.

### *Communication*

5. That an information leaflet be produced providing details of which authority to contact in any given flooding situation and explaining the responsibilities of agencies and individuals. This would require a commitment from all responsible bodies to promote it and ensure that details are kept up to date. If possible, the leaflet would provide named contacts to ensure that the

correct officers at the correct agencies receive reports of flooding in a timely manner.

6. That agencies involved in responding to flooding incidents develop a common practice that seeks to provide a prompt acknowledgement of information received by the public, whatever the means of communication used, which includes an explanation of what has been done with the information.
7. That agencies involved in responding to flooding incidents develop a common practice to accept and pass on to the appropriate agency information that does not relate to their specific role.
8. That the Resilience Forum look into the development of a single contact number for reporting flooding incidents and the use of IT, such as mobile apps, to keep the public informed about flooding incidents.

*Signage in relation to flooding incidents*

9. That, should the scheme being trialed on the Warwickshire border which enabled local residents to deploy flood warning signs be successful, such a scheme be rolled out to other areas across Leicestershire which were prone to flooding.
10. That agencies responsible for temporary signage during flooding incidents consider the following options for providing a more responsive approach to their deployment:
  - a) making use of a greater variety of wording to describe the situation, for example including 'please take an alternative route' rather than simply road closed
  - b) making use of automatic or remotely activated signs in areas prone to flooding which would not require staff resources to deploy and collect on each occasion they were required
  - c) placing signs at the last feasible junction where drivers could take an alternative route
  - d) advising of alternative routes where good quality information was held and seeking to develop that information where it was not held
  - e) making use of the knowledge of local residents through the Flood Warden scheme.

### *Planning Issues*

11. That it be a priority for Charnwood Borough Council's Planning department to implement procedures to ensure that its GIS flood mapping information is updated at the earliest opportunity following receipt of amended maps from the Environment Agency and that the Lead Member for Planning & Sustainability monitor the matter on a continual basis.
12. That to provide greater clarity in planning application reports, Charnwood Borough Council Planners cite flood risk as a percentage chance in a given year in brackets after the industry practice one in a 100 year or one in 50 year etc. probability is stated.
13. That statutory consultees be required to demonstrate how they have taken local knowledge into account when considering and responding to planning applications.

### *Other*

14. That attention be drawn to the nationwide issue of responsibility for the maintenance of balancing tanks whilst acknowledging that it would require the law to be amended to require water companies to assume responsibility for maintenance once developers had ensured that tanks were fit for purpose.
15. That clarification be provided with regard to the effectiveness of sandbags and gel bags and the arrangements that were in place locally regarding their availability.

## **10. Background Papers**

Agendas and notes of Panel meetings are available on the Council's website at: [http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/committees/flooding\\_scrutiny\\_panel](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/committees/flooding_scrutiny_panel)

- Meeting 1 - 28th August 2013
- Meeting 2 - 25th September 2013
- Meeting 3 – 31st October 2013
- Meeting 4 – 27th November 2013
- Meeting 5 – 23rd January 2014
- Meeting 6 – 6th February 2014
- Meeting 7 – 31st March 2014 (**to be added**)

Notes of above Panel meetings are also attached as Appendix 2.



## SCRUTINY REVIEW: SCOPE

**REVIEW TITLE: What preparations are now in place to deal with the next incident of serious flooding in the Borough?**

### SCOPE OF ITEM / TERMS OF REFERENCE

Flooding has a significant impact on many of the Borough's residents and the Borough Council plays its role as part of a partnership approach to flooding issues. The review will therefore focus on the liaison between the different agencies involved and the information provided to residents. In particular the panel will consider:

- are agencies working together effectively?
- are early warning procedures in place?
- is information conveyed to residents in a timely manner?
- are diversion routes for road users adequately signed?
- what lessons have been learned from recent incidents of flooding?

### REASON FOR SCRUTINY

To consider concerns raised by the incidents of flooding which took place in summer 2012.

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

Councillor Harper-Davies (Chair)

Councillors Gaskell, Grimley, K. Jones, Newton, Ranson, Shepherd, Smidowicz and Sutherland.

### WHAT WILL BE INCLUDED

The Panel will consider the roles of Leicestershire County Council as the lead local flood authority and the Borough Council. However the work of the Panel will be focussed on the partnership working between all agencies involved in the Local Resilience Forum in terms of the lessons learnt from the flooding in summer 2012, preparedness to respond to future flooding events and what forms responding to future flooding events would take.

**WHAT WILL BE EXCLUDED**

The Panel will not deal with issues relating to the infrastructure for flood prevention but will focus on what would be considered good practice in terms of preparedness.

**KEY TASKS** \* \* including consideration of efficiency savings

- To receive a multi-agency briefing setting out the approach to responding to flooding events
- To obtain evidence from those affected by the flooding in summer 2012
- To obtain evidence in relation to the issues set out in the terms of reference from members of the Local Resilience Forum and volunteer Flood Wardens

**STAKEHOLDERS, OUTSIDE AGENCIES, OTHER ORGANISATIONS** \*

- Charnwood Borough Council officers with responsibility for preparing for and responding to flooding events
- Other partners involved in the Local Resilience Forum: Leicestershire County Council, Environment Agency (category 1), Severn Trent Water and Canals and Waterways Trust (category 2)
- Volunteer Flood Wardens
- Representatives from affected communities (e.g. Kingfisher Way, Loughborough) and town centre businesses in Loughborough

**EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

**Is an impact needs assessment required?** (to be considered at the Panel's penultimate meeting)

**LINKS/OVERLAPS TO OTHER REVIEWS**

None

**RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

The Panel will require the co-operation of the external agencies described above.

**REPORT REQUIREMENTS (Officer information)**

<b>REVIEW COMMENCEMENT DATE</b>	<b>COMPLETION DATE FOR DRAFT REPORT</b>
31st July 2013	Early 2014

\* Key tasks and stakeholders may be subject to change as the review progresses.

## **PROGRESS OF PANEL WORK**

<b>MEETING DATE</b>	<b>PROGRESS TO DATE</b>
31st July 2013 (informal meeting)	Considered the Review process, background information and the timetable for the Review.  Agreed upon key areas and means of questioning, potential witnesses and further information to aid the Review.
Meeting 1: 28th August 2013	Representatives of the following attended to give evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charnwood Borough Council</li> <li>• Leicestershire County Council</li> <li>• The Environment Agency</li> <li>• The Leicester, Leicestershire &amp; Rutland Local Resilience Forum</li> </ul>
Meeting 2: 25th September 2013	The following attended to give evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kingfisher Area Residents Group (as representatives of a community affected by flooding)</li> <li>• Loughborough BID (as representatives of businesses affected by flooding)</li> </ul>
Meeting 3: 31st October 2013	Feedback was provided by the relevant authorities on all issues previously raised and actions agreed by the Panel.  Severn Trent, having been invited to attend, provided evidence via a written submission.
Meeting 4: 27th November 2013	A representative of Severn Trent attended to give evidence to the Panel.  The Panel considered responses from the relevant authorities to the issues raised at its 31st October 2013 meeting.
Meeting 5: 23rd January 2014	An officer from Leicestershire County Council attended to discuss flood warning and diversion signage in greater detail.
Meeting 6: 6th February 2014	The Panel agreed draft recommendations and that key partners be invited to comment upon them prior to final recommendations being agreed.
Meeting 7: 31st March 2014	To consider key partner comments and to agree the Panel's final report and recommendations.

<b>REPORT SUBMITTED TO SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD</b>
23rd April 2014

**NOTES OF ACTIONS AGREED BY THE FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**MEETING 1:** 28th August 2013

**ATTENDED BY: Councillors:** Harper-Davies (Chair), Gaskell, Grimley, K. Jones, Newton, Shepherd and Smidowicz

**Officers:** M. Hooper and M. Hopkins

**APOLOGIES: Councillors:** Ranson and Sutherland

**CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:**

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTIONS AGREED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Review process and the Panel’s Scope Document/Terms of Reference</li> <li>• Disclosures of Personal Interests</li> </ul>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Councillors Newton and Shepherd declared Personal Interests as Leicestershire County Councillors in any information received from Leicestershire County Council.</p>
<p>Powerpoint presentations were received from the following witnesses:</p> <p>Kevin Roberts, Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council and Ian Smith, Leicestershire County Council, representing the Leicester, Leicestershire &amp; Rutland Local Resilience Forum</p> <p>Jonathan McGuinness, Leicestershire County Council</p> <p>Caroline Watson and David Towle, Environment Agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the information presented by witnesses be noted.</li> <li>• That the Powerpoint presentations received by the Panel be added to the Panel’s workspace on the Council intranet.</li> <li>• That Jonathan McGuinness investigate the possibility of automated responses being sent out to acknowledge receipt of reports of flooding received from the public via the Leicestershire County Council website.</li> <li>• That Charnwood Borough Council Planning Officers be invited to provide a response to the Panel on the Environment Agency and Leicestershire County Council officers statements that they use out of date flood risk maps when determining planning applications.</li> </ul>

Timetable for Review	Next meeting to be held on Wednesday 25th September 2013 – to consider evidence from town centre businesses and communities affected by flooding.
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**INFORMATION PROVIDED BY KEVIN ROBERTS, CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL (CBC) AND LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (LCC) AND IAN SMITH, LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, REPRESENTING THE LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM**

Kevin Roberts and Ian Smith gave a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the Local Resilience Forum, the Resilience Partnership and how partner agencies worked together (a copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes). The key points focussed on the following:

- The role and make-up of the Local Resilience Forum.
- The duties of Category 1 Responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- The three types of flood risks included on the national Community Risk Register – local fluvial flooding, local/urban flooding (pluvial or surface run-off) and severe inland flooding affecting more than two UK regions.
- The contributors to the Multi-Agency Flood Plan, its objectives and its key components.
- The matrix used by the Forum to collate both national and local information and to identify levels of risk.
- The agencies involved in responding to predicted flooding or incidences of flooding.

Through discussion with the Panel, in addition to the information contained within their presentation, Kevin Roberts and Ian Smith stated the following:

- It was essential that businesses were advised on how they could continue to operate during incidences of flooding.
- Two key aims were to identify ways in which the public and businesses could limit flood risks and recover from the problems caused by flooding.
- The sections contained within the CBC Flood Plan had been agreed following advice from the Environment Agency.
- There was both a Charnwood Co-ordination Group and a Tactical Co-ordination Group. Cross-border co-ordination with other counties was often necessary.
- Leicester City Council had received a grant of £250,000 towards its Surface Water Study. A Loughborough study in conjunction with the Environment Agency would commence soon. The aim of it was to look at the relationships between rainfall, watercourses and drainage systems.

Bids for funds could be made once specific problems had been identified.

- The main problem faced in Loughborough was the unpredictability of surface water flooding.
- Retaining and recruiting Flood Wardens had proven to be difficult, with take up generally increasing following incidences of flooding rather than through advertising. However, seven people from the Kingfisher Estate had been trained in July. Events had also been held to which all Parish and Town Councils were invited and an officer meeting to discuss retention and recruitment was to be held the next day.
- Ideally, all villages in the Borough would have flood plans. The problems experienced with surface water since 2005 had encouraged most to develop such plans but there were six that still didn't have one.
- Whilst Councils had the authority to erect road closure signage, only the Police had the authority to enforce a closure.
- Devolved powers for residents to erect flood warning and road closure signage was being trialled on the Warwickshire border. Should it prove successful the scheme could be rolled out to any communities willing to participate.

Jonathan McGuinness added the following:

- LCC officers had recently held an event to which CBC Planning officers were invited that focussed upon mitigating risks for future developments.
- When flooding occurs, the authorities are often reliant upon Flood Wardens informing them of issues in their areas.
- When major unexpected incidences of flooding occur, road closures and the protection of properties are considered key priorities.
- LCC was currently looking into the possibility of devolving powers for the closure of roads to Flood Wardens.
- LCC was currently looking at the possibility of erecting permanent signage that could be folded open and shut as necessary.

Caroline Watson added the following:

- With regard to encouraging people to become Flood Wardens, it was advisable not to recruit those whose own homes were affected by flooding. However, as previously stated, interest in the role often came about following incidences of flooding so they were the most likely people to put themselves forward.
- The Environment Agency view was that wider community plans provided greater longevity than plans specific to flooding.

**INFORMATION PROVIDED BY JONATHAN MCGUINNESS,  
LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Jonathan McGuinness gave a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the role of Leicestershire County Council as the lead local flood authority (a copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes). The key points focussed on the following:

- The outcomes from the Pitt Review and the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which enhanced the responsibilities of local authorities with regard to the co-ordination of flood risk management.
- The authorities responsible for each type of flooding.
- The new and transferred powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991.
- The types of works that require consent and those that don't.
- An overview of the Local Strategy for Flood Risk.
- The draft proposals for a Surface Water Management Plan for Loughborough.
- Flood investigations functions.
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- Where to find information about flood management on the LCC website ([www.leics.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.leics.gov.uk/flooding)).

Through discussion with the Panel, in addition to the information contained within his presentation, Jonathan McGuinness stated the following:

- There had been no incidences of groundwater flooding in Leicestershire.
- LCC held powers to serve notice for work to be undertaken on watercourses but CBC were responsible for carrying out maintenance work.
- Land searches now contained records of notices served for the removal of incorrect drainage systems.
- Severn Trent was obliged to share details of reports of flooding with its partner agencies.
- Surface water flooding was unpredictable. Areas could flood on multiple occasions with different effects each time.
- It was hoped that the Local Strategy would help to align public expectations with actual risk levels and provide public agencies with clarification of what the public perceive to be priorities.
- The Local Strategy had to be consistent with the priorities prescribed by the Environment Agency's National Strategy.
- During late 2012, a number of Area Forums received a joint presentation from CBC and LCC detailing the agencies responsible for each type of flooding. From this it became clear that public understanding of this and of flood risk was lacking.
- CBC were not required to consult LCC in respect of flooding issues on

planning applications received as they were not a statutory consultee on these matters. However, officers from the two authorities regularly met to discuss issues arising from applications.

- Until the Local Strategy was agreed, an interim policy was being followed which gave priority to investigating incidences of flooding that had or could lead to loss of life or flooding of homes.
- LCC had provided £10,000 of funds to CBC to shield properties adjoining public open spaces.
- The implementation of SuDS was not yet a legal requirement for new developments.
- Automated responses were not sent out to acknowledge receipt of reports of flooding received from the public via the LCC website.
- An Area Forum event focussed upon flooding was currently being arranged with a view to it being held in Loughborough in January 2014.
- It was hoped that responses to the Local Strategy questionnaire would allow the authorities to gain a better perspective of how public perceptions of flooding measured against reality.

Caroline Watson added the following:

- The probability of flooding was presented as, e.g., 1 in 100 years chance of flooding, to aid public understanding of the likelihood of flooding in a particular area but this could also be described as a 1% chance in any given year.
- It was the intention of the Environment Agency to incorporate greater detail in its Flood Zone maps than was currently provided.

#### **INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CAROLINE WATSON AND DAVID TOWLE, ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

Caroline Watson and David Towle gave a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the role of the Environment Agency (EA) as the leading public body for protecting and improving the Environment in England (a copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes). The key points focussed on the following:

- The remit of the EA covered environment management and flood risk management (before flooding occurs and during flooding). These areas incorporated working with businesses to reduce pollution of waterways.
- The main rivers and those most prone to flooding in the Borough. Flood risk outlines for major rivers were available on the EA website ([www.environment-agency.gov.uk/](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/)).
- The type of EA/multi-agency activity recently carried out in Loughborough, including incident response, debris screens, maintenance, flood warnings and working with communities.

Through discussion with the Panel, in addition to the information contained within their presentation, Caroline Watson and David Towle stated the following:

- The Government had encouraged the EA to develop its website. An example of how this had begun was the addition of road closure information.
- The EA used flood maps to help decide upon flood defence priorities.
- Following the flooding of populated areas, EA officers would often hold community events and, where necessary, acknowledge accountability for the problems.
- Officers were on-call daily.
- The EA worked closely with the Met Office, who provided valuable information regarding rainfall patterns.
- Flood alerts would be made when properties could be affected, although they only covered areas affected by main river flooding. They were published on the EA website and sent via email and text message to those that had signed up for them. It was acknowledged that they were issued late during the 2012 floods.
- Following complaints about its responses to reported incidences of flooding, the threshold to determine when it was necessary to investigate reports had been reduced.
- Cameras had been installed at some drainage screens, including at Forest Road, Loughborough, to monitor the build up of debris (*following the meeting, Caroline confirmed that the cost of installing a camera was approximately £4000*). Drainage screens without cameras and other areas liable to blocking contained signs detailing a telephone number to call if they were in need of clearing.
- A river modelling exercise had been extended to cover assessments of blockages of culverts.
- The results of a study of risks were expected later this year.
- It was possible that flood alerts could be sent out based upon rainfall levels. This could provide the public with more time to react and prepare.
- Work was being carried out to measure the number of properties in Loughborough at risk of flooding against the costs of implementing holistic defence schemes. It was hoped that the findings would enable bids for national funding to be made to use alongside partnership funding.
- The EA was a statutory consultee in the planning process. Objections would be made to any applications that couldn't demonstrate that water run-off would be less or of the same level as prior to development.
- CBC Planning Officers used older versions of flood risk assessment maps than those used by its partner agencies. It was thought that this was because the Charnwood Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) issued by Charnwood planners was a more technical document that would require in-depth consultancy work to update. Michael Hopkins

clarified that the SFRA was used to inform the Core Strategy, which was unrelated to the processes followed to determine individual planning applications.

Ian Smith added the following:

- In order to build up their knowledge of private properties affected by flooding, the authorities were reliant upon people informing them when their homes had flooded. However, this often didn't happen as the focus of homeowners was usually to liaise with their insurers.
- A pilot public engagement scheme undertaken in Leicester was to be rolled out in Loughborough. It would involve a door-knocking campaign and a library event and the involvement of Councillors would be welcomed. To maximise publicity it was likely that the scheme would tie in with the Area Forums event in January 2014.

#### **OTHER ISSUES RAISED/DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING:**

- The Panel thought that when flood warnings were received or when flooding occurred unexpectedly, a priority measure should be the erection of diversion signage in high risk areas.
- Members suggested that all flood authorities should publicly provide named contacts to ensure that the correct officers at the correct agencies receive reports of flooding in a timely manner.
- Currently, Flood Wardens only covered around 50% of the Borough. One of the Panel's final recommendations could be to prioritise increasing this, possibly through proactively approaching parishes and towns that don't have Wardens.
- Whether or not to invite Severn Trent to provide evidence to the Panel. Consensus was that currently no value would be added.
- Following EA and LCC officers reporting that CBC Planning Officers used out of date flood risk maps when determining planning applications, Planning Officers were invited to provide a response to the Panel.

**NOTES OF ACTIONS AGREED BY THE FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**MEETING 2:** 25th September 2013

**ATTENDED BY:** **Councillors:** Gaskell, Grimley, K. Jones, Ranson (in the Chair), Shepherd, Smidowicz and Sutherland

**Officers:** M. Hooper and M. Hopkins

**APOLOGIES:** **Councillor:** Harper-Davies

**CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:**

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTIONS AGREED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Notes of the Meeting Held on 28th August 2013 and Updated Scope Document</li> <li>• Disclosures of Personal Interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted.</li> <li>• That the response of Charnwood Borough Council Planning Officers to the Environment Agency officers' statements that they use out of date flood risk maps when determining planning applications be relayed to the Environment Agency and the Panel.</li> <li>• Councillor Shepherd declared a Personal Interest as a Leicestershire County Councillor in any information received from Leicestershire County Council.</li> </ul>
<p>Evidence was received from the following witnesses:</p> <p>Jonathan Hale, Loughborough BID</p> <p>Brenda Snape, Town Clerk and Councillors Christine Radford and Joan Tassell will attend on behalf of Shepshed Town Council</p> <p>Richard White, Kingfisher Area Residents Group and a Flood Warden</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the information presented by witnesses be noted and that they be thanked for assisting the Panel.</li> <li>• That complete copies of the ten questionnaire responses received from Parish and Town Councils be circulated to Panel Members.</li> <li>• That Panel members and Shepshed Town Council be informed of the process for the Appointment of Flood Wardens.</li> <li>• That the Panel receive information regarding the efficiency of flood alarm systems currently in place (such as the one at Black Brook, Shepshed), the regularity at which they are tested and the organisation responsible for their maintenance.</li> <li>• That the possibility of a flood alarm system being implemented in Oakley Road,</li> </ul>

	<p>Shepshed be proposed to the relevant authority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the view of the Panel that it would be preferable for Charnwood Borough Council Planners to cite flood risk as a percentage, rather than the 100 years probability, be relayed to officers.</li> <li>• That the Panel be provided with details of when brooks known to be prone to flooding were last dredged.</li> <li>• That Severn Trent be invited to attend a future meeting to give evidence to the Panel.</li> </ul>
<p>Timetable for Review</p>	<p>Next meeting to be held on Thursday 31st October 2013 – to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responses to the actions agreed at this meeting, detailed above.</li> <li>• evidence from Severn Trent.</li> </ul> <p>Future meeting dates to be agreed in consultation with the Chair.</p>

**INFORMATION PROVIDED BY JONATHAN HALE, LOUGHBOROUGH BID, ON BEHALF OF TOWN CENTRE BUSINESSES**

As a number of town centre businesses were affected by the 2012 floods, Jonathan Hale of the Loughborough Business Improvement District had consulted them on behalf of the Panel to invite them to give evidence. Unfortunately, no responses were received.

Jonathan was unable to attend but, following the meeting, he stated that some businesses had been affected by the flooding but they viewed it as a one-off event rather than an example of an on-going problem.

**INFORMATION PROVIDED BY PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS**

A questionnaire had been circulated to all Parish and Town Councils and Parish Meetings to request details of their experiences of flooding, their views on how the authorities responded and where improvements could be made to improve responses to future incidences of flooding.

The Panel considered the ten responses were received, which had been detailed in an anonymous format as agenda item 3b, filed with these minutes. It was agreed that the responses be circulated to Panel Members.

Brenda Snape, Town Clerk and Councillors Christine Radford and Joan Tassell, Shepshed Town Council had requested to attend the meeting and provided the following views and information:

- There were concerns regarding the capacity of existing sewerage systems to deal with the additional waste and rain water run off emanating from proposed new developments.
- It was strongly felt that Planning Officers did not utilise the knowledge of local residents when determining planning permissions.
- Gulleys in areas known to be prone to flooding needed to be cleaned on a more regular basis.
- No action had been taken to appoint a new Flood Warden in Shepshed following the passing of the previous postholder and no agency had invited nominations.
- There were concerns that the requirement for developers to include their own flood risk assessments with any major planning applications could lead to flooding problems being exacerbated in the future (*following the meeting, Steve Lewis-Roberts, Group Leader – Development Management, Charnwood Borough Council, said that the Council would continue to consult the Environment Agency when considering major planning applications and that determination would be based upon their advice rather than that of the developer*).
- Only Charnwood Borough Council provided the Town Council with sandbags to protect against flooding. They also operated an alarm system in the brook next to Glenmore Park which, based upon response times, appeared to work.

#### **INFORMATION PROVIDED BY RICHARD WHITE, KINGFISHER AREA RESIDENTS GROUP AND A FLOOD WARDEN**

The following information and views, in italic font, was submitted in written form by Richard White as a local resident with experience of his home flooding and as a member of the Kingfisher Area Residents Group:

1. *On the afternoon of November 21<sup>st</sup> and in the early hours of November 25<sup>th</sup> 2012 our home on Moorhen Way was flooded. The second time the water was over a foot deep in the house. Nearly 50 homes in the area were flooded.*
2. *The flooding was caused by heavy rain channelled into Woodbrook but*

*blocked at grills in two places (Holt Drive and at the junction of Wallace Road with Forest Road). The blockage was caused by debris (trees/branches/leaves/rubbish) caught in the grills. This debris should have been cleared by the company contracted by the Environment Agency (EA).*

*3. Meetings have since taken place between residents affected and the EA, Borough and County councillors and officials, and Nicky Morgan MP. Action has been taken:*

- Grills are cleared more systematically by the EA contractor.*
- Notices have been placed at the two grills with the emergency EA incident room phone number. This system has been used several times since last November by local residents. On all occasions the resulting action has prevented significant flooding even when rainfall has been very heavy and flood warnings are in place.*
- A camera has been installed at the Wallace junction grill so the EA can remotely monitor.*
- The threshold for the EA to issue a flood warning based on data at the water level monitoring station on Forest Road has been reduced.*
- A Flood Warden scheme with local residents involved has been implemented.*
- New grills are scheduled to be installed at both locations that will be more effective in blocking debris (and enabling more efficient clearing) but allow water to flow back into Woodbrook.*
- Further maintenance work (eg clearing vegetation along Woodbrook) is scheduled by the EA for this Autumn. It is essential this is completed.*
- A Leicestershire County Council research report on Surface Water drainage is to be published shortly.*

*4. A number of residents affected by flooding have had insurance renewal issues. This has included increased premiums (up to 50%) and excess for flooding (eg £5000). The EA have provided helpful information to send to insurers explaining flood risks and Nicky Morgan has made representations.*

*5. Given evidence at the last Flooding Scrutiny meeting and our own experience, the various agencies/councils are seeking to work together. One issue for Charnwood Council is to clarify for residents how and when sandbags can be obtained.*

In discussing the above with the Panel, Mr White provided further information as follows:

- The type of flooding experienced on the Kingfisher estate was flash flooding,*

with water subsiding from properties in a matter of hours. However, most properties took weeks or even months to dry out.

- It was estimated that insurance claims for flooding in Loughborough in 2012 totalled approximately £1.1 million.
- The general view of residents of the Kingfisher estate was that the floods were avoidable. This had been proven on many occasions since then as the measures implemented had successfully prevented flooding despite there having been equally heavy rainfall.
- The Environment Agency had conceded that contractors had not cleared grills appropriately prior to the 2012 floods.
- New grills to be installed in the area would have drainage holes on the top as well as the front.
- The Woodbrook had been de-silted and there were plans to clear vegetation. Residents felt that the latter was essential maintenance which was not carried out often enough.
- Minor flooding in 2007 was the only flooding in recent history, prior to 2012.
- Immediately prior to the 2012 floods, the lowest level flood risk notification was issued. Flood alerts were then issued after the flooding had taken place.
- Experiences of the Environment Agency's emergency telephone number were positive. The call-back facility worked well and officers provided sound information and reassurances.
- There were many problems with regard to sandbags and gel bags. They were supplied to individual properties but too few were provided and they arrived too late to be effective in minimising flooding. Some were totally ineffective as they floated. It was felt that rather than being provided to properties, a more effective tactic would be to strategically place them at the entrance to the estate so as to divert the water away from homes. It was, however, acknowledged that this could lead to potential flooding elsewhere.

Through discussion with the Panel, Mr White provided the following information in his capacity as a Flood Warden:

- Environment Agency officers had met with local residents and Nicky Morgan MP to discuss the issues surrounding the 2012 floods. Following this a number of measures were taken to minimise future risk. This included improved debris screens and maintenance, better flood warning systems and closer relations with the community. Following the meeting, Panel Members were provided with a copy of a briefing note to Nicky Morgan MP from the Environment Agency which included full details of the proposed actions.
- The Environment Agency, assisted by Charnwood Borough Council, had provided Flood Warden training in July 2013. Self-regulated groups following the training guidelines had then been formed by local residents. A benefit of this was the local knowledge of volunteers, both in terms of their knowledge of the key problem areas in the locality and their relationships with vulnerable residents. Some Parishes in the Borough had also set up such groups.

## **OTHER ISSUES RAISED/DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING:**

- The processes followed in the appointment of Flood Wardens.
- The efficiency of the flood alarm systems currently in place, the regularity at which they were tested and the organisation responsible for their maintenance.
- The possibility of a flood alarm system being implemented in Oakley Road, Shepshed.
- There was a general consensus that it would be preferable for Charnwood Borough Council Planners to cite flood risk as a percentage, rather than the 100 years probability, in reports.
- Concerns were raised about the Council not receiving images of flooding submitted by the public due to its firewall prohibiting the receipt of emails with attachments over a certain size.
- The importance of members of the public reporting incidences of flooding to the authorities.
- The possibility that the Panel could recommend that an information leaflet be produced providing details of which authority to contact in any given flooding situation. This would require a commitment from all responsible bodies to promote it and ensure that details are kept up to date.
- The regularity at which brooks known to be prone to flooding were dredged.
- The value to be gained from inviting Severn Trent and the Canal and River Trust (formerly British Waterways) to give evidence to the Panel.
- Differing experiences of Severn Trent responses to incidences of flooding.
- The Panel recognised that it was likely that many of the recommendations that would eventually be formed by the Panel would require a multi-agency approach and that it may be therefore be beneficial to take a consensual approach when formulating them.
- The value in writing to the Environment Agency to cite the actions taken in response to the 2012 Kingfisher estate floods as an example of good practise and to request that they sign up to a commitment to ensure that all similarly affected areas receive the same level of attention.

## NOTES OF ACTIONS AGREED BY THE FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL

**MEETING 3:** 31st October 2013

**ATTENDED BY:** **Councillors:** Grimley, Harper-Davies (Chair), K. Jones, Ranson, Shepherd, Smidowicz and Sutherland

**Officers:** M. Hooper and M. Hopkins

### CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTIONS AGREED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to Panel membership</li>   <li>• Action Notes of the Meeting Held on 25th September 2013 and Updated Scope Document</li>   <li>• Disclosures of Personal Interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted that Councillor Gaskell could no longer be a member of the Panel due to his appointment as a Cabinet Support Member and that Councillor Newton had resigned as a member of the Panel as she was unable to attend meetings.</li>   <li>• Noted.</li>   <li>• Councillor Shepherd declared a Personal Interest as a Leicestershire County Councillor in any information received from Leicestershire County Council.</li> </ul>
<p>Written evidence was received from the following witnesses in response to issues previously raised by the Panel:</p>	<p>That written information (agenda items 3 and 4, filed with these minutes) received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jonathan McGuiness, Senior Engineer, Leicestershire County Council</li> <li>• Steve Lewis-Roberts, Group Leader Development Management, Charnwood Borough Council</li> <li>• Ian Smith, Resilience Manager, Resilience Partnership</li> <li>• Caroline Watson, Flood Resilience Team Leader, East Area Midlands, Environment Agency</li> <li>• Tim Smith, Infrastructure Strategy, Wastewater, Severn Trent</li> </ul> <p>be noted and that they be thanked for assisting the Panel.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That Severn Trent be invited to attend to give evidence to the next meeting of the Panel and that responses to the following issues be sought:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As a partner agency on the Resilience Forum, do Severn Trent feel, as a Category 2 responder, that the level and form of interaction that it has with Category 1 responders is sufficient? If not, please suggest ways in which it could be improved.</li><li>• Please provide examples of works undertaken in Charnwood in relation to flooding in the last 12 months and details of any planned preventative measures to be implemented.</li><li>• The briefing note stated that some investigations into sewer flooding can be complicated and take some time. Please provide examples of potential complications and details of how works are prioritised.</li></ul></li><li>• That clarification be sought from Jonathan McGuinness as to whether email acknowledgements of reports of flooding are provided by Leicestershire County Council's Customer Services department or its Flood Management team and whether or not acknowledgements come from named officers.</li><li>• That Steve Lewis-Roberts provide an update to the next meeting of the Panel detailing the progress made in ensuring that GIS flood mapping updates are made in a timely manner when received from the Environment Agency.</li><li>• Investigate whether the assistance that residents of the Kingfisher estate received from the EA to recruit Flood Wardens was as a direct result of the flooding in the area or if it was available to communities upon request and obtain more detail about the nature of the support that was offered.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That clarity be sought with regard to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 provisions for the responsibility for and maintenance of balancing tanks.</li> <li>• That the following information be sought from Leicestershire County Council in relation to flood warning and diversion signage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The processes for ensuring that signage is erected and removed in a timely manner and specifically the 'trigger point' for the erection of signage.</li> <li>• Guidelines for the positioning of flood warning signage.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Prior to the meeting, Cllr Harper-Davies had asked what the trigger point was for putting flood diversions in place, whose responsibility it was and how information was cascaded down to the operatives that put the signage on place.</p> <p>Jonathan McGuinness, Senior Engineer, Leicestershire County Council had provided the following response: <i>'The decision to close a road usually lies with the Police and is carried out under their Road Traffic Act powers.</i></p> <p><i>In normal office hours the Highways team will close the road and this can be reported via our customer services centre 0116 3050001. Out of normal office hours this would normally be reported to the duty officer on 07860 569136. Upon report, a response crew will be dispatched and depending on resources we would look to respond within 2 hours.'</i></p>	<p>That further information be sought from Jonathan McGuinness with regard to Leicestershire County Council's plans to trial improvements to the processes for the installation of flood warning and diversion signage in the Soar Valley.</p>

Jonathan also said that the County Council were looking at ways to ensure the timely installation of flood signage through trials in the Soar Valley. It was, however, unlikely that schemes would be rolled out before 2015.	
Timetable for Review	<p>Future meetings to be held on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wednesday 27th November 2013 – Severn Trent are invited to attend to give evidence.</li> <li>• Thursday 23rd January 2013 – to consider the draft final report of the Panel.</li> </ul>

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4 – KEY WITNESSES – SEVERN TRENT**

In addition to the actions detailed in the table above, the following matters were raised and comments made by the Panel in its consideration of the evidence submitted by Severn Trent:

- It would be helpful to receive a glossary of the technical terminology used within the report.
- The key to understanding of the role of Severn Trent would be to learn what its supportive role, as a category 2 responder, consisted of.
- As a Waste and Sewerage Company (WaSC), Severn Trent had no duties in relation to highways drainage but responsibilities could be taken on through agreements with the Highways Authority.
- The requirement for developers to gain agreements from WaSCs for new developments to use their drainage and sewerage systems.

#### **OTHER ISSUES RAISED/DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING:**

In addition to the actions detailed in the table above, the following matters were raised and comments made by the Panel:

- Cllr Smidowicz highlighted concerns raised by a resident in her Ward with regard to the rights held by public bodies and utilities companies to access and undertake flood prevention works on privately owned land.
- It was likely that the majority of recommendations that would be formed by the Panel would directly affect a number of agencies. It would therefore be essential for the Panel to gain the consensus of the Resilience Forum partner agencies if its recommendations were to be adopted and for formal agreements to be made to ensure that all partners adhered to them.

- It was essential that processes were put in place to ensure that the implementation of agreed actions was monitored.
- Councillor Grimley circulated a copy of a letter sent by the Environment Agency to Charnwood Borough Council's Development Control service. It requested that the Council reconsider its decision not to undertake the Sequential Test for a development due to it being outside of the area covered by the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The letter stated that since the SFRA was conducted in 2008 there had been a number of other assessments carried out that indicated that the area was at risk of flooding. It also highlighted how important it was that the Council updated its GIS flood risk maps when it was informed of amendments.
- Councillor Ranson said that developers had approached Barrow Parish Council with a view to it assuming responsibility for the balancing tanks on a new housing development site. Upon seeking professional opinions on whether or not it would be prudent to do so, the Parish Council were advised that responsibility should be retained by the developer.
- It was disappointing that the Environment Agency had not provided information regarding the efficiency of specific flood alarm systems as had been requested by the Panel.

## **PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSION IN THE PANEL'S FINAL REPORT**

Members suggested that the following recommendations be considered for inclusion in the Panel's final report:

- That, when appropriate, Charnwood Borough Council Planning officers consult both the Environment Agency and Severn Trent when considering planning applications.
- That it be a priority for Charnwood Borough Council's Planning department to implement procedures to ensure that its GIS flood mapping information is updated at the earliest opportunity following receipt of amended maps from the Environment Agency and that the Lead Member for Planning & Sustainability monitor the matter on a continual basis.
- That the Resilience Forum partners devise and maintain a job specification for volunteer Flood Wardens and that Area Forums be used to promote the role. Essential to encouraging volunteers would be for the partners to confirm that they retained overall responsibility and that Wardens would not be held liable for any issues arising from incidences of flooding.
- That attention be drawn to the nationwide issue of responsibility for the maintenance of balancing tanks but that it would require the law to be amended to require water companies to assume responsibility for maintenance once developers had ensured that tanks were fit for purpose.
- That to provide greater clarity in planning application reports, Charnwood Borough Council Planners cite flood risk as a percentage in brackets after the industry practise 100 year probability is stated.

The Panel would revisit the proposed recommendations at a future meeting.

## NOTES OF ACTIONS AGREED BY THE FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL

**MEETING 4:** 27th November 2013

**ATTENDED BY:** **Councillors:** Harper-Davies (Chair), K. Jones, Ranson, Smidowicz and Sutherland

**Officers:** M. Hooper and M. Hopkins

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Shepherd

**CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:**

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTIONS AGREED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Notes of the Meeting Held on 31st October 2013 and Updated Scope Document</li> <li>• Disclosures of Personal Interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted.</li> <li>• Councillors Ranson and Smidowicz declared Personal Interests as representatives of the Frosts Charity.</li> </ul>
<p>Written evidence was received from the following witnesses in response to issues previously raised by the Panel:</p>	<p>That written information (agenda item 4, filed with these minutes) received from Jonathan McGuiness, Senior Engineer, Leicestershire County Council and Caroline Watson, Flood Resilience Team Leader, East Area Midlands, Environment Agency be noted.</p> <p>That information received from Andrew Lorimer, Team Manager, Highways, Leicestershire County Council, be noted and that senior officers from Leicestershire County Council be requested to attend the next meeting of the Panel to discuss flood warning and diversion signage in greater detail.</p>

Evidence was received from Alex Mortlock, Infrastructure Capacity Strategy Manager, Waste Water, Severn Trent	That the information presented in the handout, filed with these notes, and through discussion with the Panel be noted and that Alex be thanked for assisting the Panel.
Timetable for Review	<p>Next meeting to be held on Thursday 23rd January 2013, start time to be confirmed.</p> <p>Panel to invite witnesses from Leicestershire County Council Highways Department</p> <p>Panel to agree draft recommendations with a view to discussing them with key partners.</p>

### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – KEY WITNESSES – SEVERN TRENT**

In addition to the information provided in his handout, Alex Mortlock stated the following through discussions with the Panel:

- From 1st October 2011, responsibility for sewers outside of private property boundaries and sewers shared with other properties was transferred from homeowners to Severn Trent. This included storm drains only if the run-off from domestic properties ran into Severn Trent sewers, otherwise, riparian responsibilities would apply to landowners.
- The level and form of interaction between Category 2 and Category 1 responders varied greatly from area to area. However, it was felt that Severn Trent’s relationships with Leicestershire County Council and the Environment Agency were good.
- Although it was a member of the Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, it was acknowledged that it would be preferable for Severn Trent to contribute more. The large area and the number of local authority areas covered by Severn Trent had, at times, reduced its capacity to communicate with partner agencies.

*(Note: These regional committees were established by the Environment Agency under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 with the aim of bringing together members appointed by Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) and independent members with relevant experience for three purposes:*

- *To ensure there were coherent plans for identifying, communicating and managing flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines.*

- *To promote efficient, targeted and risk-based investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management, optimising value for money and benefits for local communities.*
- *To provide a link between the Environment Agency, LLFAs, other risk management authorities, and other relevant bodies to engender mutual understanding of flood and coastal erosion risks in its area.)*
- Members of the public should call Floodline to report incidences of flooding. Operators would ask callers questions to determine the location and the type of flooding. Investigations would then be undertaken at the site to determine the cause and if responsibility did not lie with Severn Trent the responsible body would be notified.
- At the planning application stage of a new development, Severn Trent would often encourage the local planning authority and the developer to incorporate natural sustainable drainage systems into the design and/or request that conditions be placed on the development to prevent it from progressing until the capacity of the sewerage network was increased. New builds would lead to higher water levels if there were no means for controlling the rate at which surface water entered sewers. If measures to minimise surface water run-off were not taken the problem was exacerbated further.
- Severn Trent aimed to respond to reports of flooding within two hours. If they were caused by blockages, they would be cleared as quickly as possible. If blockages were man-made, advice leaflets would be distributed accordingly. If blockages were due to silting, works would be included on the planned maintenance programme.
- The entire sewer network was covered by modelling designed to predict potential problems that could lead to flooding and allow preventative measures to be taken. However, it was impossible to predict every incident so when unexpected flooding occurred, extensive investigations and monitoring would be undertaken to determine flow rates and causes.
- Permanent monitors were strategically placed in sewers to ensure that they were pumped out as required.
- Underground storage tanks were often the preferred sustainable urban drainage system for developers.
- Work was being undertaken in partnership with Highways with a view to installing SuDS in the Holt Drive/Beacon Road area.
- Work was being undertaken in partnership with the Environment Agency to identify solutions for the homes in Bottleacre Lane affected by the lack of drainage there.

- The Flood Risk Assessments carried out in partnership with the Environment Agency were used to advise local planning authorities.
- Severn Trent were active members of the Resilience Forum, attending Flood Warden events and the Flooding Fair to educate the public on the causes of flooding.

#### **OTHER ISSUES RAISED/DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING:**

In addition to the actions detailed in the table above, the following matters were raised and comments made by the Panel:

- Authorities should liaise with Ward Members to gain local level knowledge and guidance with regard to changes in watercourses and the nature of flooding in specific areas.

#### **PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSION IN THE PANEL'S FINAL REPORT**

Members made the following comment in relation to potential recommendations of the Panel:

- It was important for the Panel to ensure that recommendations focussed upon desired outcomes rather than the delivery mechanisms for achieving them.

Members suggested that the following recommendation be considered for inclusion in the Panel's final report:

- That a single list of all Flood Wardens in Charnwood and of flood risk areas not covered by wardens be compiled and maintained.

The Panel would revisit proposed recommendations at a future meeting.

**NOTES OF ACTIONS AGREED BY THE FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**MEETING 5:** 23rd January 2014

**ATTENDED BY:** **Councillors:** Harper-Davies (Chair), K. Jones, Ranson, Shepherd and Smidowicz

**Officers:** M. Hooper and M. Hopkins

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Sutherland

**CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:**

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTIONS AGREED
<p>Action Notes of the Meeting Held on 27th November 2013 and Updated Scope Document</p> <p>Disclosures of Personal Interests</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Councillor Shepherd declared a personal interest as a Leicestershire County Councillor in any matters relating to the work of Leicestershire County Council.</p>
<p>Timetable for Review</p>	<p>The dates of the next two meetings of the Panel were agreed in consultation with the Chair following the meeting:</p> <p>Thursday, 6th February 2014 at 6 pm in Meeting Room 13 – Panel to agree draft recommendations for inclusion in its final report. Resilience Forum partners would then be consulted for their views on the recommendations prior to the report being agreed for submission to Scrutiny Management Board.</p> <p>Monday, 31st March 2014 at 6 pm in Committee Room 1 – Panel to consider and agree its final report, to be submitted to Scrutiny Management Board on 23rd April 2014.</p>

### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – KEY WITNESSES – LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Andrew Lorimer, Team Manager, Highways, Leicestershire County Council, attended to give evidence to the Panel in relation to flood warning and diversion signage. The following was stated through discussions with the Panel:

- A flood patrol scheme was in operation in Charnwood, including the Slash Lane area. Officers would inspect water levels at the site of a flood twice a day. Charnwood was the only district that Leicestershire County Council provided such a service in.
- If Slash Lane was expected to flood, Highways officers would liaise with one another or, if necessary, the Highways Agency to try to ensure that diversion routes were not affected by non-urgent roadworks. This practise was followed during the flooding of January 2013. However, road closures for the purpose of maintenance were planned six to eight weeks in advances of the works taking place and if they had already started prior to floods being predicted it was not always feasible to open the affected road again. Public safety was always the priority.
- Highways officers would drive along proposed diversion routes, usually with the operatives that would erect the signage, to ensure that they were appropriate. It was preferable for diversions to be able to accommodate all modes of transport, including heavy goods vehicles.
- Reasons why Highways did not sign diversion routes:
  - The unpredictability of flooding meant that it was possible that diversion routes could themselves be subject to flooding.
  - Directing traffic through villages was very unpopular with residents and could potentially lead to permanent increases in traffic as motorists became familiar with such a route.
- Guidance on what members of the public should do were lost had been written but it was unclear as to whether or not it would be published.
- Construction staff, usually permanent staff but sometimes contractors, were trained in how and where to erect flood warning signage and they were given some leeway that allowed them to use their experience to decide upon the best positioning. However, it was acknowledged that signs could be erected in the wrong places and for that reason a second check was carried out twelve hours later.
- The safety of the staff erecting signage was paramount. They faced many dangers, including crossing busy high speed roads whilst carrying heavy signs, often in adverse weather conditions, and the dangers posed by the flood itself.
- The trigger point for action to be taken when a flood occurred was the initial reporting of it to the County Council's Customer Services department. If the report was made outside of office hours an answerphone message provided the emergency number to call. Highways would expect to receive notice of the report straight away to enable officers to visit the site, monitor the seriousness of the flooding and prepare the appropriate signage.

- Due to the unpredictability of flooding, Highways did not take the potential of certain areas to flood at particular times of the year into account when programming maintenance works.
- Following up on reports of flooding, oil spills or potholes was prioritised by Highways.
- Flood warning signage was often left in position for longer than some members of the public may expect it to be. This was to enable safety checks to be carried out in relation to the chances of further flooding occurring and any damage to the road that could result in potholes.
- It was understood that the Resilience Forum were investigating ways in which Flood Warden schemes could be improved upon and promoted.
- When scheduled roadworks were undertaken, Highways aimed to position signs at the nearest junction to prevent motorists from turning into the road, although it was not always possible on minor roads.
- When emergency road closures were required, Highways would follow the closure guidance of the Police.
- Experience showed that motorists often ignored permanent flood warning signage and Highways had moved away from utilising hinged signs that allowed warnings to be displayed only when necessary.
- 'Road liable to flooding' signs were intended to indicate to motorists that extra caution should be applied when driving down that road.
- Highways did liaise with the Resilience Forum but not on a regular basis.

#### **OTHER ISSUES RAISED/DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING:**

In addition to the actions detailed in the table above, the following matters were discussed:

- The hope that Highways made full use of advancements in technology to improve its service i.e. providing smart phone apps to provide timely details of road closures.
- If signage was not taken in in a timely manner following flooding it was often vandalised.
- The possibility of raising Slash Lane to prevent flooding was investigated around 15-20 years ago. The Environment Agency were unable to prove that by doing so the capacity for flooding would be reduced or that flooding wouldn't simply be displaced elsewhere. It was also shown that it would be a very expensive exercise to undertake.
- A number of years ago the County Council undertook the 'Across the Soar Valley Flood Free Scheme'. Mr Lorimer was unsure of the findings but suspected that they had shown that such a scheme would be very expensive.

Andrew Lorimer undertook to investigate the following matters outside of the meeting and liaise directly with the Councillors that raised them:

- Councillor Ranson, on behalf of Barrow Parish Council, asked if the County Council had committed money towards the installation of permanent flashing flood warning signs at the top of Barrow Road towards the A6. She also suggested that the installation of such signs should be a requirement when agreeing future development.
- Councillor Harper-Davies requested that Highways adopt a policy of ensuring that flood warning and road closure signage is placed at the nearest junctions to ensure that motorists don't turn into the affected road.

## **PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSION IN THE PANEL'S FINAL REPORT**

Members made the following comments in relation to potential recommendations of the Panel:

- The correct placement of signage was all-important. If possible, this would be at least half a mile in advance of the flood and/or at the nearest junction to the affected road. Flood Wardens could be key to ensuring it happened.
- It could be more customer friendly for signs to state 'Please take another route'.
- The Panel needed to form a view on whether or not Highways should suggest alternative routes.

The Panel would agree recommendations for inclusion in its draft report at its next meeting. It intended to circulate them to the Resilience Forum for comment prior to agreeing its final report.

**NOTES OF ACTIONS AGREED BY THE FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**MEETING 6:** 6th February 2014

**ATTENDED BY:** **Councillors:** Harper-Davies (Chair), K. Jones, Shepherd and Smidowicz

**Officers:** M. Hooper and M. Hopkins

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Grimley, Ranson and Sutherland

**CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:**

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTIONS AGREED
<p>Action Notes of the Meeting Held on 23rd January 2014</p> <p>Disclosures of Personal Interests</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Councillor Shepherd declared a personal interest as a Leicestershire County Councillor in any matters relating to the work of Leicestershire County Council.</p>
<p>Proposed Panel Recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the draft recommendations detailed later on in these notes be circulated to the Resilience Forum for comment and that members of the Resilience Forum be invited to attend the next meeting of the Panel.</li> <li>• That any comments received be relayed at the next meeting of the Panel alongside consideration of the draft Panel report.</li> </ul>
<p>Timetable for Review</p>	<p>Monday, 31st March 2014 at 6 pm in Committee Room 1 – Panel to consider and agree its final report, to be submitted to Scrutiny Management Board on 23rd April 2014.</p>

### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – PROPOSED PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Michael Hopkins, Democratic Services Manager discussed with the Panel the conclusions it had reached at previous meetings and the form that its recommendations should take. The Panel agreed that the following recommendations be included in its draft report:

#### *Overview*

The Panel concluded that more could be done to promote a comprehensive network of appropriately trained Flood Wardens to provide greater resilience and flexibility in responding to future incidents of flooding.

The Panel concluded that more could be done to promote communication with communities affected by flooding building on the good practice of the engagement with the community following the flooding on the Kingfisher estate in 2012.

#### *Flood Wardens*

- That the Resilience Forum partners devise and maintain a job specification for volunteer Flood Wardens and that the Forum be proactive in promoting the role. Essential to encouraging volunteers would be for the partners to confirm that they retained overall responsibility and that Wardens would not be held liable for any issues arising from incidences of flooding.
- That a single list of all Flood Wardens in Charnwood and of flood risk areas not covered by wardens be compiled and maintained.
- Currently, Flood Wardens only cover around 50% of the Borough. The Resilience Forum should prioritise increasing this, possibly through proactively approaching parishes and towns that don't have Wardens.
- That further work is undertaken with Parish and Town Councils and residents groups in Loughborough to develop the Flood Warden scheme including holding regular network meetings to update Flood Wardens, give Flood Wardens the opportunity to share experiences and to generally promote the scheme.

#### *Communication*

- That an information leaflet be produced providing details of which authority to contact in any given flooding situation and explaining the responsibilities of agencies and individuals. This would require a commitment from all responsible bodies to promote it and ensure that details are kept up to date. If

possible, the leaflet would provide named contacts to ensure that the correct officers at the correct agencies receive reports of flooding in a timely manner.

- That agencies involved in responding to flooding incidents develop a common practice that seeks to provide a prompt acknowledgement of information received by the public, whatever the means of communication used, which includes an explanation of what has been done with the information.
- That agencies involved in responding to flooding incidents develop a common practice to accept and pass on to the appropriate agency information that does not relate to their specific role.
- That the Resilience Forum look into the development of a single contact number for reporting flooding incidents and the use of IT, such as mobile apps, to keep the public informed about flooding incidents.

#### *Signage in relation to flooding incidents*

- That, should the scheme being trialed on the Warwickshire border which enabled local residents to deploy flood warning signs be successful, such a scheme be rolled out to other areas across Leicestershire which were prone to flooding.
- That agencies responsible for temporary signage during flooding incidents consider the following options for providing a more responsive approach to their deployment:
  - a) making use of a greater variety of wording to describe the situation, for example including 'please take an alternative route' rather than simply road closed
  - b) making use of automatic or remotely activated signs in areas prone to flooding which would not require staff resources to deploy and collect on each occasion they were required
  - c) placing signs at the last feasible junction where drivers could take an alternative route
  - d) advising of alternative routes where good quality information was held and seeking to develop that information where it was not held
  - e) making use of the knowledge of local residents through the Flood Warden scheme.

#### *Planning Issues*

- That it be a priority for Charnwood Borough Council's Planning department to implement procedures to ensure that its GIS flood mapping information is

updated at the earliest opportunity following receipt of amended maps from the Environment Agency and that the Lead Member for Planning & Sustainability monitor the matter on a continual basis.

- That to provide greater clarity in planning application reports, Charnwood Borough Council Planners cite flood risk as a percentage in brackets after the industry practise 100 year probability is stated.
- That statutory consultees be required to demonstrate how they have taken local knowledge into account when considering and responding to planning applications.

*Other*

- That attention be drawn to the nationwide issue of responsibility for the maintenance of balancing tanks whilst acknowledging that it would require the law to be amended to require water companies to assume responsibility for maintenance once developers had ensured that tanks were fit for purpose.
- That clarification be provided with regard to the effectiveness of sandbags and gel bags and the arrangements that were in place locally regarding their availability.

**Insert action notes of meeting held on 31st March 2014 here**