

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL

Minutes from the Meeting of the Environment and Community Panel held on Tuesday, 21st February, 2023 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillors C Sampson (Chair), C Bower, A Bubbs, A Bullen, S Collop, M de Whalley and T Parish.

PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34: Councillors I Devereux (on Zoom) and A Kemp.

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor P Kunes – Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change.

OFFICERS:

Martin Chisholm – Assistant Director

BY INVITATION:

Andrew Newton – Ely Drainage Boards

Phil Hulme – Environment Agency

Anne-Marie Quibell – Environment Agency

EC62: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kirk and Wilkinson.

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Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Devereux, Kirk and Wilkinson.

EC63: MINUTES

RESOLVED: The Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC64: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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Councillors Devereux, Kunes and Sampson declared interests in item EC68: Update from Ely Drainage Boards as Internal Drainage Board Members.

Councillor Devereux declared an interest in EC69: Roadmap for the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England as a Member of the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

EC65: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

EC66: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Kemp.

EC67: **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

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The Chair informed the Panel that he had received correspondence from Friends of Horsey Seals who had produced some posters which could be distributed as appropriate.

EC68: **UPDATE FROM ELY DRAINAGE BOARDS**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

Andrew Newton from Ely Drainage Boards provided the Panel with an update. A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Chair thanked Andrew Newton for the update and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from the Chair, Andrew Newton explained that the equipment used to keep waterways clear was expensive, therefore it was important to have funds available for replacements and repairs. Costs of equipment were also increasing, an excavator could cost between £160,000 and £250,000, and the Pumping Station at Downham Market and Stow had cost £2 million.

Councillor de Whalley referred to wetland improvements and asked what the challenges were, whilst acknowledging the benefits such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity. Andrew Newton explained that it was a challenge in that rewetting had to take place over a large scale area and could not be done field by field. The balance of what was needed was also a challenge and decisions needed to be made on whether to store or release water.

In response to a question from Councillor de Whalley it was explained that pumping stations were designed for a certain capacity and there could be issues if the systems could not cope, especially the older stations.

In response to a question from Councillor Devereux, Andrew Newton confirmed that he did work with the Environment Agency.

Councillor Bullen asked if the Drainage Board had taken on any Apprentices and if they had any issues with recruitment. Andrew Newton explained that succession planning was being looked at and he was looking into an Apprentice, but the offices were in a remote location unserved by public transport. He explained that some new enthusiastic members of staff had been employed and were being trained up as required.

In response to a question from Councillor Bullen, it was confirmed that the Fens were shrinking and the challenge was that people who were unaffected by floods did not often appreciate the importance of the Internal Drainage Board networks to protect inland areas.

In response to a question from Councillor Bower regarding environmentally friendly sources of power, Andrew Newton explained that the electric used was on a green tariff, but unfortunately wind and solar power would not be enough to power the stations and often the sites were not big enough to house PV panels. Opportunities were being looked at for the future, such as Hydrogen.

Councillor Bower asked about contaminates in the water and Andrew Newton explained that this was not within the remit of the Internal Drainage Board, however it was an issue if water was being used for irrigation and the Internal Drainage Board worked with the Environment Agency as required. Councillor Parish asked if any monitoring was carried out and Andrew Newton explained that it wasn't but the Internal Drainage Board were reactive to any issues with contamination and could shut off pumps as required.

Councillor Bubb asked about the Reservoirs proposed for Ely and Andrew Newton confirmed that they were outside of Ely Drainage Boards remit.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the update.

EC69: **ROADMAP FOR THE NATIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on You Tube.](#)

Representatives from Environment Agency provided the Panel with an update, as attached.

The Chair thanked officers for the update and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

The Chair was pleased to see that integration had been included in the Strategy as there were so many organisations involved in water management and it was important that there was co-ordination to avoid duplication.

Councillor Bullen referred to the 1953 floods and asked what would happen if these levels were reached today. It was explained that there were no warning systems in place back then. There was also better technology available for forecasting and monitoring and better evacuation plans in place. It was explained that the levels in 2013 had been higher than 1953, but better defences and systems were in place. Councillor Devereux explained that additional warning systems, such as live alerts to phones, were also being looked at.

Councillor Kemp addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. She referred to flood risk areas in King's Lynn, particularly South Quay and Hardings Way. She asked officers from the Environment Agency for their view on development on flood zones and referred to the Local Plan examination. Phil Hulme from the Environment Agency explained that this would be a matter for her colleagues in the Planning Department at the Environment Agency to comment on and they could perhaps attend a future meeting of the Panel to provide information. In response to a further question from Councillor Kemp, it was explained that the Environment Agency supplied, on their website, a list of insurers who specialised in flood risk areas.

Councillor de Whalley commented that it would be good for the Local Plan Task Group to receive information from the Environment Agency Planning Department.

Councillor de Whalley referred to sea level rises and that the current status of SMP4 was to hold the line. He asked if managed retreat should now be looked at. Phil Hulme explained that all policy options would be looked at going forward.

Councillor Devereux referred to the Wash East Coast Management Strategy Stakeholder Forum which met to keep Stakeholders and Elected Members up to date on the Shoreline Management Plans and he explained that nationally, all Shoreline Management Plans had been reviewed and would be uploaded onto a central system which would be made available on the internet.

The Chair commented that it was important to get information on the Strategy out to Parishes and communities and suggested that a flyer could be included in the Annual Council Tax Bills.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the update.

EC70: **WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET FORWARD DECISION LIST**

Councillor Bubb informed the Panel that the Climate Change Informal Working Group had recently met and would like an item to be considered at the next Environment and Community Panel on the advantages and disadvantages of being part of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and what would be the consequences should the Council leave the Partnership. The Chair agreed that this could be added to the Agenda for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Decisions List was noted.

EC71: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel was scheduled to take place on 4th April 2023 at 4.30pm in the Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm