

Flood Risk Action Group (FRAG)
4 October 2021 @ 4pm - Virtual Meeting via Teams

Meeting Minutes

Present

Councillor Karen Shore – Chair
Councillor Hugo Deynam
Councillor Paul Roberts
Councillor Sam Naylor
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Margret Parker
Councillor Paul Williams
Councillor Lynn Gibbon
Mr William Briggs (BB) – Briggs and Partners & Northwich Flood Protection Group (NFPG)
Kieran Collins (KC) – Highways Commissioner
Jim Gibbins (JG) – Place Area Commissioner
David Brown (DB) – Environment Agency
Claire Nichols (CN) – Environment Agency
Phil Coghlan (PC) – Media and Communication Officer
Andrew Coward (AC) – Major Flood Event Management Engineer

Apologies

No apologies were given

1. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of meeting 5 held on the 6 July were accepted as a true and accurate record.

2. Approval of Actions Matrix, 3 Member discussion and 4 Questions.

KC updated the group on progress against the action points:

FRAG 1: The next Cheshire Mid-Mersey Strategic Partnership meeting for Officer and Member is to be held on 18 October 2021 that Kieran Collins is attending. At a previous FRAG meeting, KC agreed to speak directly to Cllr Matt Bryan with regards to the issues of resources and will provide an update in due course.

FRAG 7: The Request for Quotation (RFQ) is nearly finalised and would go on The CHEST once the third-party funding has been agreed between the 3 RMAs. Cllr Williams asked if the study would look both up and down stream. KC – it was basin wide and would consider the catchment.

FRAG 8: A works programme is being developed based on the most serious defect found on the CCTV surveys.

FRAG 9: London Road sumps. KC had met design team on site and the design was being finalised. The position was being moved slightly to move the sump away from the EA flood defence mounting points.

FRAG 12: Additional CCTV works were now complete.

Cllr Gibbon asked about the timeframes for FRAG 7. KC said that once out on the Chest for 3-4 weeks with then a period of around 28 days to assess the returned tenders. FRAG 9 was this on the Forward Plan? Was there a delay? KC unable to check regarding the Forward Plan but there were no delays in the process he was aware of.

Cllr Cooper in relation to FRAG 12 reported that the United utilities CSO overflowed onto the fields on Whalley Road. UU attended but were a bit vague. Recommended we catch up with Chris from the Town Council to discuss what had happened.

Cllr Naylor – Why did the school flood? Would this be concluded in the Section 19 report? KC – flooding linked to their own drains, a series of slot drains at the doorways which made sandbagging difficult. From the CCTV work it was clear that highways were not the cause. The school's insurers had agreed that no liability rested with the Highway Authority.

BB – FRAG 12 the CCTV was to inform a comprehensive plan of the drainage in the town centre. KC – this was wider than FRAG 12 which was concentrated around further CCTV work to other affected roads.

Cllr Gibbon – how is it working with other agencies? KC – the various agencies were working well together and were all feeding into fortnightly Northwich Resilience meetings. The Emergency Plan would be published in the Autumn with a high level of working together with all feeding into the plan. The recent flooding in Shrewsbury had resulted in one action plan. Cllr Shore – the Emergency Plan was not on the forward plan as it was circulated in a different way once Management Board had approved the content.

FRAG 13: The CRT had responded to the sluice question, but more detail was required. Cllr Gibbon – was there a set number that should be open and in use? Cllr Cooper – CRT say 6 were 'operating' what does that mean? KC was to go back to the CRT with follow up questions. DB commented that it was the sluices that had the greatest impact on river levels. Cllr Shore – there were more questions for the CRT and they were not a RMA but maintained the waterways for navigation. Cllr Williams – if the CRT were responsible for making the situation worse, they should accept it. There was evidence that the locks at Dutton had been extended, what impact has this had? KC to contact CRT with further questions.

FRAG18: It was agreed to close this action as the multi-agency debriefs have been shared with Atkins.

FRAG 19: Is the same as FRAG 13 in relation to sluices. This will be dealt with under FRAG action 13 with that action remaining open. FRAG action 19 can therefore be closed.

Cllr Roberts – there were a lot of other flooding issues across the borough including other properties. Is this the forum to discuss these? KC – the Terms of Reference for the group was to look at the 2019 Section 19 report and any new flooding that met the threshold for a Section 19 investigation following Storm Christoph. An 'Other Flooding' task group could be established. Cllr shore, there would be a lot of information sitting behind the Section 19 reports.

Cllr Gibbon – how confident are we with the number of sumps proposed? Was 3 enough? KC – it has never been 3 sumps with the 2019 report recommending 1. Site investigations have revealed another location that already exists in the Waitrose car park so 2 will be provided. The work to create the new sump would take place in the next 4 to 5 weeks.

BB – a lot of time had been spent discussing the issues, but the real issue was the season and the time it is taking to do work. The Northwich Flood Prevention Group met last week and there were concerns about going into winter with no action plan or specific timings. Cllr Shore – there was an action plan, and this was with the legal teams. BB – there might be another flood between the legal aspects being resolved. KC – the EA and UU were monitoring long range forecasts. BB – critical to know who is doing what by when.

No further comments were made from the group.

5. Winter 2021 – State of Readiness and 6 Member discussion.

KC – presented a PowerPoint presentation.

Cllr Williams – What happens if he gets a call to say residents houses are getting flooded? KC call the Out of office number, duty officers will be aware. In 2021 it was a borough wide event. There will be a dedicated plan for Northwich. Cllr Williams – a briefing note would be useful. **New FRAG Action:** KC to produce a Members briefing on the state of readiness and contact numbers, etc

Cllr Naylor – taken comfort in that meetings had been taking place between the various RMA's and the relationships were more positive than in the past. Short-term looking at additional pumping capacity at known points. KC there was a plan for increased pumping and dedicated muster points for us and the EA. We were weeks away, depending on legal funding agreements, not months with no significant rain so far. Cllr Naylor and his colleagues were under the pressure as the local members. Cllr shore was being kept up to date.

Cllr Deynem – points of contact useful – issues in Ashton Hayes with localised flooding. Had to close a road to prevent bow waves flooding properties. Called the emergency Planning number and help was deployed. KC – the out of hours procedures were joined up so either Emergency Planning or Highways out of hours.

Cllr Gibbon – Pump capacities, were the pumps to be bought or hired? KC stated that the issue was part of the joint arrangements between the three RMA's and it was difficult to comment at this time.

BB – was there a specific date for the publication of the interim S19 report? KC, the interim would be presented to the Councils Cabinet meeting on 24 November and agendas are published 5 days before the meeting. Any specific issues or areas of concern would be acted on prior to the publication of the interim Section 19 report, we won't wait for the publication of the report to get on with things.

Cllr Shore – any further questions. CN – For Acton Bridge it would be worth signing up to the flood alerts as the EA aimed to give 2hrs warning with warnings issued in the days leading up to a potential event. CN was happy to add people to the alert list. Cllr Shore – include in the members briefing. KC to include this within the Members briefing.

Cllr Deynem – preparedness, could sandbags be delivered early to key locations? KC flooding events were dynamic rain/tidal were different. Resource allocation would be linked to the forecast. We needed to manage the use of sandbags through a dynamic approach over 3 - 5 days before any forecast event.

Cllr Gibbon – Was there to be a central point where equipment could be collected, signs/sandbags etc? Cllr Cooper – similar point, Northwich Town Council were doing a better job of closing roads and if they were more local it would have been better without having to go to Winsford. KC – the highways depots where locations that have the sandbags ready. Sandbags have a short shelf life so are not the best to be stored for long periods. Cllr Williams – could polypropylene sandbags be used? KC – the polypropylene ones were much more expensive if talking about the large polypropylene in the order of 50p v £7 each.

**7 & 8. Northwich - Clear street Wednesday – Provisional date w/c 25 October
(Highways/Streetcare/Northwich Town Council)**

Already covered.

9. Outstanding Correspondence.

There was outstanding correspondence to BB and these would be covered in a separate email. BB requested that the content of his latest report could be responded to that would be helpful. KC to provide a response any outstanding correspondence.

10. Forward works programme.

Not issued at time of meeting.

11. Any other Business.

Date for the next meeting prior to the cabinet report on the 24th November. Needed to get the date out due to pressure on people's diaries. The next meeting will be for elected members who form the formal membership of the group. This meeting to be carried out by virtual meetings with elected Members either individually or in email groups, following an email sent by Cllr Shore on 19/10/21 to the elected Members who form the membership of the group. All comments received were to be sent to Mark Averill, the interim Head of Highways who also was available for an individual or group Teams meeting.

Would KC be here for the next FRAG? KC's last working day is 4 November 2021, though he is on leave from the 21 October until 4 November. KC will raise the issue with Mark Averill as part of his handover.

BB – Would Rose McArthur, the new Director of Transport and Highways have any involvement in the FRAG as there would be value in the group meeting her? KC couldn't say if she would be at future FRAG meetings.