



Minutes ANNEX 1:

SCC LOCAL COMMITTEE IN SPELTHORNE – 7 December 2015

AGENDA ITEM 6

MEMBER WRITTEN QUESTION TIME

No member questions were received for this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 7

PUBLIC WRITTEN QUESTION TIME

1. Mr Martin Cherrett will ask the following questions:

“1. Does the Lead Local Flood Authority (Surrey County Council) still accept that it has a duty ‘for developing, maintaining and applying a strategy for local flood risk management’ relating to the Thames Water owned Staines Reservoir Aqueduct?

2. In February 2014 the Environment Agency tried to implement the 2003 River Ash Protocol, the principal aim of which was to prevent floodwater passing down the Thames Water owned Staines Reservoir Aqueduct. They tried to implement this on the 8th, 9th and 10th February.

Only after 10pm on the 10th February were some residents in the affected areas in Staines warned by Police to evacuate their homes. The Lead Local Flood Authority (Surrey County Council) were not informed at all. The flooding of peoples homes started on the 11th February in the early hours of the morning.

Does the Lead Local Flood Authority agree that this situation should be avoided in the future?

3. Does the Lead Local Flood Authority agree that its ‘strategy for local flood risk management’ should include specific undertakings:

a. for the EA to also warn the Lead Local Flood Authority when they advise Thames Water that local water levels have risen to the level that they may trigger the implementation of the new protocol?

b. For Local County Councillors and Borough Councillors to be individually warned by the Lead Local Flood Authority that there is the imminent possibility of implementing the Protocol?

c. For there to be public announcements and information circulated on public social media that there is the imminent possibility of implementing the Protocol?

4. The Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council, the late Mr Robert Watts, several times told the Spelthorne Local Committee during 2014 that "any new protocol should be independently assessed by properly qualified independent engineers" before being approved by the County Council.

Has the Lead Local Flood Authority (Surrey County Council) taken any steps to implement this recommendation?

5. In April 2015, at the express invitation of Councillor Denise Saliagopoulos, I met Doug Hill, the lead officer responsible, to put forward the views of the River Ash Action Group with regard to the proposed new protocol.

Amongst the points raised we said that:

- There should be more background information in the new protocol, so that anyone trying to deal with a similar incident in 10 or 20 year time should be better informed about the history and potential dangers.

- There should be much greater clarity about the objectives of the new protocol 'to prevent floodwater passing down the Thames Water owned Staines Reservoir Aqueduct towards a main residential area of Staines upon Thames'.

- The roles and responsibilities of the different agencies involved should be more explicitly stated in the document.

Has any regard been placed on these considerations?"

Mr John Furey, SCC Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding, Surrey County Councillor - Addlestone, will give the following answer:

"1. The County Council in its capacity as LLFA has a duty for developing, maintaining and applying a flood risk management strategy for Surrey. However, this does not and cannot apply to privately owned assets. As the Staines Reservoir Aqueduct is owned by Thames Water, Surrey County Council does not have a duty for developing a strategy for its management.

The County Council published a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) in December 2014 and this document is publicly available. There is no prescribed format or scope for a LFRMS beyond the legislative requirements contained in the Flood and Water Management Act. Therefore, it is down to the LLFA to determine the scope for its strategy. In Surrey, the LFRMS was developed in full consultation with the Surrey Flood Risk Partnership Board, meaning that it took the views of Districts, Boroughs, the Environment Agency and other partners into account. Surrey's LFRMS fully adheres to the relevant duties under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010).

2. The 'River Ash Protocol' is an operational agreement that is owned by Thames Water and the Environment Agency. As a result, the County Council is not in a position to answer any questions on this subject. We do agree that information sharing and effective communication are paramount during incidents of severe flooding and would expect to work closely with partner risk management authorities to help protect residents in such events.

3. Operational matters based on a protocol owned by other organisations are beyond the scope of the LLFA's flood risk management strategy. Specific actions around implementation and use of the protocol will be agreed between the Environment Agency and Thames Water, with input from the County Council.

4. As the protocol is not owned by the County Council, it is not responsible for deciding whether it is necessary or appropriate for the protocol to be independently assessed by properly qualified independent engineers.

5. As previously advised, the feedback you submitted to Doug Hill has been passed on to Thames Water. We have also been involved in discussions with Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Spelthorne to better understand how the protocol fits with other emergency plans such as Spelthorne's multi-agency flood plan and the EA's flood warning procedures. Thames Water and the Environment Agency have stated that the 'protocol' is an internal operating procedure and as such is not a public document. All future questions relating to the protocol should be addressed to Thames Water and the Environment Agency as the relevant risk management authorities. The County Council will not comment further on this matter."

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