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MEETING	GUILDHALL WARD COMMITTEE
DATE	16 APRIL 2024
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS

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1. **CYC OPERATIONAL RESPONSE TO FLOODING EVENTS**
2. **MINUTES**

### **Guildhall Ward Committee Meeting – Minutes**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Peckitt Street**

### **CYC Operational Response to Flooding Events**

**In attendance:** Cllr Dave Merrett (Chair), Cllr Rachel Melly, Cllr Tony Clarke, Cllr Kate Ravilious. Steve Wragg Head of Highways Asset Management John Putsey Construction Manager (Highways) Nick Massingham Highways Operations Manager Mora Scaife Communities Team Manager, Local Residents.

#### **Welcome and introductions.**

Cllr Dave Merrett welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the ward members, Cllr Kate Ravilious Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency and council officers in attendance.

It was explained that this meeting was a single-issue meeting to talk to residents on site regarding the City of York Council response to local flooding events. Originally had intended to have a meeting in a venue and then include a walkabout so a separate meeting will be organised to follow up on issues raised at this meeting. A report has been published on the council website alongside the notification for this meeting.

There have been requests for the council's operation plan to be published in full. It is important to put some context around the plan on how CYC uses the flood plan for example it's important to understand that trigger levels for action are not solely reliant on the Viking Recorder information but also on in person input from the Environment Agency.

A few residents have asked to talk about a flood plan for Peckitt Street and to understand how and what we deploy in response to flooding events.

Ward Councillors were keen to meet on site in order that exact locations of issues could be seen as well as discussed.

Also, worth noting that when publishing the complete Flood Plan some information may need to be redacted where it refers to people and properties.

The meeting was then opened up to resident questions/comments:

Resident: The cause of the issues is a non-existent or inadequate local flood plan. Our main issue is not triggering levels but having a plan which includes locations, details about what happens where and when. The knowledge in people's heads needs capturing. Every year mistakes are made e.g., Tower Gardens, operatives don't have knowledge of how water pools in areas, use of a small pump at the back requires the main pump to be operational in order to pull the water from the back.

A random assortment of pumps are used each time with different hose lengths which perform differently, and this is a waste of resources.

As residents we must guess our action levels as we don't know what the response will be from CYC.

We need a proper reliable flood plan. The CYC flood risk strategy states that the nature of flooding in York allows a consistent approach.

We don't need a dynamic response we want the same thing every time, we want CYC to build a consistent response.

We want a detailed flood plan to be produced with Cllr Ravillious' agreement.

We want a date for production of a flood plan and adequate notice and time to review the plan.

We want a process which guarantees regular review of plan so that it stays up to date. We need a mechanism to enshrine residents' input/consultation on a plan every time it is reviewed.

Cllr Kate Ravilious: I am taking on board what is being said, there is a lot of additional information which requires review and reflection. I recognise the importance of residents input into the plan.

Steve Wragg: we recognise and respect the knowledge of the residents who live here.

Cllr Kate Ravilious: Steve and I will get together to reflect on the comments made at today's meeting and how best to address the asks.

Steve Wragg: The river is predictable, is very black and white what the river does irrespective of forecast. However, it's not just the river, what isn't predictable is the ground and standing water.

Resident: Sometimes things happen, people are on holiday or arrive with the wrong pump.

Resident: Can we make a change. Can we have regular people to do a regular job? Get something down and get it sorted.

Resident: I'm grateful, I have been here for 25 years, back in the day we had no help whatsoever. These houses do flood, ground water bubbles up through the floor.

Resident: The offer intermediate measures such as barriers and sealing air bricks don't work, they don't address the issue which is ground water.

Resident: I have been here for 2 years. Everyone has a slightly different experience. We have called and this has been handled well, communication was good.

Resident: Are we going to keep repeating we need to learn from past experiences. NM said that we should have a sump in the alley but that is not in the report.

Cllr Merrett: We need a cost benefit scheme. We won't get a bigger scheme funded through the Environment Agency. There

may be a few smaller things that we could see if we could get a contribution for through the flood levy.

Resident: This wall and the private ownership versus council ownership and whether it has been sandbagged previously issue. There have been differing reports. The Environment Agency can't accept it as a flood wall. What can we do as property owners? There is a crack, the wall was built as a flood wall by CYC with Support from the Environment Agency. What is the lifespan of the wall, is it crucial, if so, it should be repointed. If the flood wall collapses water will get in, we need clarity about the strength of the wall.

Resident: There is a lack of joining up between Floodtec work and operational. These properties sink. We want to work with you, not rewrite history, we want to work together. There is a well at number 2 and stairwell to the side.

Nick Massingham: There is seepage on the flags at the front, the flags lift from the water and water bubbles up through the flags. When dealing with a flooding event we are meeting water from both sides, water comes through lots of variants. There is that much back pressure we have to consider the whole dynamics of the area. The biggest pump suitable is put in place.

John Putsey: We utilise feedback to manage the situation. Where there were problems with the pumps we have bought two extra pumps. We undertake training with operatives to pass on the information from experienced staff to retain local knowledge.

Resident: Are they employees or contractors?

Response was given that they are employees.

Steve Wragg: Regarding the comments that the plan used to work, if it did and now doesn't then we need to find out why not. If things have changed is there a better way to pump water away? That is the challenge. The wall is a flood resilience measure not a flood defence. It was made more resilient through use of dowels, raising and repointing.

Resident: The wall is a front-line defence, is the wall going to collapse?

Steve Wragg: I will ask Brian Hebditch to look at the wall.

Resident: How can we get back so that pumping keeps the area dry? keeping the wall maintained would be better for everyone.

Resident: Water came up here this time, is it seeping through the wall, this definitely needs flagging up. The other issue is at the back, all of Friars Terrace flooded this time.

Resident: When the river comes up who am I ringing?

Cllr Kate Ravillious: We are going to have to prepare for more flooding. The flood plan needs to be dynamic. The way that things present differently requires a dynamic response. This time the water didn't soak away like it used to. A dynamic plan is stronger, can have specifics but also has to be dynamic as every flood is different.

Resident: Should do the same things in the short term and then have regular reviews, annual reviews or every six months would capture changes in requirements.

Cllr Dave Merrett: There are merits in the argument for the details in the plan, what is planned where and therefore residents will know what to expect, be ready and prepared.

Cllr R Melly: I'm wondering is that possible or does it have to be flexible because of the demand in other parts of the city? When flooding does happen here ward councillors are available and have access to the officers managing the situation. Communications ought to be part of the plan.

John Putsey: There have been lots of dynamic things. We have had 8 named storms and 6 flooding events recently. As an operational team we have to balance resources. Flooding impacts a big part of York and have to have flexibility.

Resident: Are the pumps owned by the council?

Response was given that the pumps are owned by the council and are kept at Hazel Court. There are different pumps and all need to be rotated and serviced to keep in operational order. They are all diesel pumps, newer pumps are designed to be much quieter. We can hire pumps in if needed but we are trying to be self-sufficient.

We know what pumps to put where and we put people with them. If they break down and if we have to stop to change pumps, then the water comes up.

Steve Wragg: We have been working on our communications ensuring that our call scripts are up to date, both regarding daytime call and out of hours calls which are handled by Goff and Kelly. We can act and consider the situation and details through observation and local intelligence. Dynamic and recorded can exist in the same space.

Resident: Tower place wall leaked like a sieve. The issue of the depth of the crenelations has been raised, there is a need to raise further and for repointing.

Resident: I agree water came through the city wall. I am concerned about the tree outside my house. There is a 4yrly survey done on trees can I have a copy?

Steve Wragg: We will talk to the people who survey the trees.

Resident: Tower Place, when looking in the drain the water looks low, as soon as put a pump on South Esplanade the water goes down.

Resident: I have found on a lot of occasions always new operatives, and I have to point out the back alley on South Esplanade. Operatives need training so that people look at the back alley.

Resident: Regarding parking every time we have flooding, we lose a percentage of the R11 parking area and difficult to find space in alternative car parks. For half of the Winter finding a parking space is really difficult. Request that in times of flood that there are alternative parking arrangements. Where else is available, Friargate and Cumberland Street. We are a good community and work parking out between ourselves but during floods there is added pressure. I have stood and watched 20 cars come down the street and then reverse and leave. They can't see the dead-end sign as they turn. People also park along the double yellow lines. Most of that is related to the driving test centre, we have spoken to them, but it is still happening. We do ring the parking hotline. When there is flooding there should be a sign or a barrier at the top of Peckitt Street.

Resident: The pumps in peoples houses, there are 4 or 5 houses with pumps which are never switched on because they don't work. 1 right at the top in the new development of flats pumps out sewage on to the footpath and past our houses. All of

this funded by the Environment Agency. Who has signed off on pumping of sewage onto footpath and discharge pipes straight out onto pavement?

Resident: Planning applications don't consider piping.

Cllr Dave Merrett, we will take the issue away to consider and respond. We are recording everything.

Resident: Pumping from houses presents a trip hazard.

Resident: The wall is listed; we were told that we can do whatever we want for flood resilience.

Steve Wragg: Property Flood resilience doesn't always recognise community flood resilience.

Resident Sandbagging of 4 doorways and garden walls, the private wall, and South Esplanade right where the river comes in

Steve Wragg: Much better solution to try to get water levels down rather than sandbagging.

Resident: Flood resilience measures, Floodtec having issues with CYC planning application process. Had surveyor to map whole area. Floodtec struggling with council as how to approach application.

Resident Floodtec haven't done anything in 18 months not sure where we are up to.

Resident: A lot of measures are a waste of money. Amount of people have come round from the company. Are you paying or is it the Environment Agency?

Steve Wragg: Environment Agency not CYC. As a group of councillors this can be raised with the Environment Agency.

Cllr D Merrett: Closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming and the officers for their work.

Steve Wragg: There are a whole load of things raised which are within our gift to look at.

Cllr Kate Ravillious: We will go away and look at what can be done. We don't currently have a Flood Risk Manager in post. We will come back.

Resident. Can we have the notes of the meeting with a month.

Annex comments from residents:

Comment from Resident 1:

1. I don't think the comments at the beginning of the report, particularly addressing the raising of the retaining wall in front of the South Esplanade and Friars Terrace properties, fully represent the position. The planning application which was submitted by the Council clearly refers to it being constructed as a flood defence and, as acknowledged in the report, it was partly funded by a committee established by the environment agency. The Council has previously intimated to me that they would repair the crack in the wall in front of 2 Friars Terrace (I have had both verbal and email exchanges with the Council indicating it would be done but some 4 years later it remains unrepaired). The Council has stated that the Environment Agency won't accept responsibility for the wall as a flood defence but considering that it was the Council which designed and constructed the raised flood defence (with support and funding from an EA committee) it does not seem right that neither organisation is willing to give any assurances to residents as to the current and anticipated future stability/efficacy of the wall as a flood defence.

2. The report infers that the wall was not sandbagged after the 2012 flood, which overtopped the wall. That is not accurate and I have photos of the wall being sandbagged as late as February 2020. No explanation/evidence has been given by the Council as to how safe the wall is and there is no clarity as to when the rear access should be used rather than accessing the properties via the front path and/or the extent to which former sandbagging of the wall served the dual purpose of strengthening the wall as well as potentially raising the flood defence level (this was something I had understood to be the case raising questions about the strength of the wall).

3. Having looked again at the planning application for the wall it is clear from a committee report that the stairwell that led up to the front entrance of 3 FT was to be blocked up with a drain installed. It was to receive a "pit containing a pump to assist in absorbing and discharging flood water.." The Council's latest report reviewing the Peckitt Street and Tower Gardens Flood Operations contains a table at the end of the report detailing temporary works and refers to a small pump at the front of 3 FT being provided. We have owned the house since 2011 and I have no recollection of any such pump being provided despite it being clearly intended that one would be used to tie in with the way the Council works to the stairwell were undertaken.

4. The information regarding the January flooding of Friars Terrace properties isn't accurate. It has been established that there were problems with equipment but the back kitchen/yard at our house (we have no decking at our property so the report is not referring to our house) were underwater at a river level lower than that at which these areas would usually flood to such a level (Viking recorder level stated to be 4.37m on 3/1/24). This leads me to assume that the 2 pumps (Peckitt Street and back alley) were of insufficient capacity to deal with the water coming down Peckitt Street which led to pooling in the back alley and yards (with the leaks in the pump pipes compounding the problems).

5. I object also to the inference that the EA through the York Flood Plan flood resilience measures are supporting us individually. The initiative started nearly 2 years ago and we have yet to see any measures being implemented to protect our property. There has been a series of delays with inappropriate measures being put forward and a lack of information as to what the current position is.

Finally, given the detailed nature of the issues being discussed and the length of time we have been waiting for further engagement on these issues, it seems inappropriate to be holding a street meeting. I understand that there may be merit in meeting on the street to be able to discuss specific issues but this should be followed up with a proper meeting at a more suitable venue.

Comment from Resident 2:

Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend this meeting due to work commitments. I would still like to be able to participate in the process of providing feedback on CYC actions during recent flood events. This is quite challenging, as we are still in the dark as to what the operational flood management plans are. I have tried to review the attached email but without the context of the full document I am still left without a clear picture on the following:

- Trigger levels for action (as they relate to forecast and then actual levels –it seems that actual levels were not being monitored by CYC?)
- Temporary defences configuration (there is a lot of reference to when CYC should not provide additional sandbags at Peckitt Street but nothing about when any should be installed in the first place)
- Pump capacity and configuration (“big pump” and “small pump” seems a bit CBeebies, I have observed that pump capacity has been reduced in recent years which has led to the need for additional pumps and an increase in water levels on the street )
- Pump set up, test, monitoring and maintenance in use arrangements –as this seems to have been the cause of some on street flooding over the past winter

I absolutely do not accept that there needs to be a dynamic approach to deploying pumps. I absolutely do not accept that there are minimum water levels at which pumping can be carried out. There may well be minimum water levels at which the random selection of pumps provided can be operated –that is not the same thing.

I agree with the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy document where it states:

<image002.png>

As previously requested, we would like to see the Council's Emergency Flood Plan so that we can review and work with the council to ensure that these predictable and well understood approaches to flood defence can be implemented on a consistent basis.

3.2.2 Although the upstream Yorkshire Dales rivers Swale, Ure and Nidd, which form the Ouse, rise and fall rapidly, by the time the flows reach York the river is meandering and slower flowing. The EA's well established catchment wide monitoring enables warnings for York to be issued approximately 14 hours ahead of the peak flood level through the city. River flood events are therefore predictable, and rises in river levels are relatively slow and always affect the same areas. This allows a consistent and effective multi-agency response to be provided in accordance with the Council's Emergency Flood Plan and also a post event recovery operation targeted at known areas.

, Chair

[The meeting started at Time Not Specified and finished at Time Not Specified].