



Cabinet 29 July 2009

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Call for Action – Stanton Grundle Flooding Remedial Action

1. Cabinet will be aware of the coming into force of Councillor Calls for Action (CCfAs) from 1 April this year, a mechanism by which any member of the Council may refer to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee any local government matter or any crime and disorder matter which affects their ward/division.
2. On 1 June 2009 Councillor Thorndyke submitted a CCfA entitled "Stanton Grundle Flooding Remedial Action" for the consideration of the Committee. Following Councillor Thorndyke's presentation of the issues, the Committee resolved to hold a hearing in respect of this issue, and the hearing was held at the Committee's last meeting on 8 July 2009.
3. The hearing was run along the lines of a call-in hearing, as set out in the Councillor Call for Action Protocol in the Council's Constitution.
4. A number of witnesses either submitted written reports, made presentations or were questioned by the Committee, as follows:-
 - (a) Councillor Thorndyke, as the Member who brought the issue to the Committee's attention;
 - (b) Councillor Joanna Spicer, County Councillor for the Division;
 - (c) Mike Bodell, Flood Defence Officer, Environment Agency;
 - (d) Steve Boor, the Council's Engineer;
 - (e) Ray Radley, and independent drainage engineer who had been working with the Council;
 - (f) Glyn French, West Area Rights of Way Officer, Suffolk County Council;
 - (g) Guy Smith, West Area Assistant Highways Manager, Suffolk County Council;
 - (h) Alan Points, Pitt Review Project Manager, Suffolk County Council; and
 - (i) Gordon Cawthorne and Jamie Maddox, residents affected by the flooding.
5. In addition to the above witnesses, the Chairman allowed members of the public present to contribute to the Committee's information gathering where this was felt appropriate.

6. A wide ranging discussion was held by the Committee, and details of the information provided by each witness will appear in the Committee's minutes. There was a shared understanding by all present that, even if no solutions were found this evening, one valuable outcome from the meeting would be a shared understanding of the problem, and a willingness to take forward discussions on options for resolution.
7. Discussions were held around a number of issues, details of which again will appear in the Committee's minutes, but which included:-
 - (a) the ownership of the Grundle (which could not be established despite extensive investigations);
 - (b) the history to the flooding problem;
 - (c) the legal responsibilities of the local authorities and the role of the Environment Agency;
 - (d) the work of the local authorities in clearing the existing grills and jetting of pipework/gullies;
 - (e) designation of various parts of the Grundle as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a footpath and a bridleway; and
 - (f) changes in responsibility expected in the forthcoming Floods and Water Bill.
8. A number of potential options to resolve the issue had been presented by Councillor Thorndyke in his original presentation to the Committee in June; in the reports from various partners presented today in Report A90; and in the discussions held at the CCfA hearing. The preferred option appeared to be the installation of a full width barrier/screen at a location upstream to be decided, which would need to accommodate a bridleway and footpath, and would be a substantial structure. Construction costs were likely to be high, and in-depth analysis and investigations would need to be carried out before any options could be progressed, including catchment flow study of the run-off from the existing underground pipework, and such investigations would themselves incur costs amounting to thousands of pounds.
9. Due to the number of agencies involved, and the fact that no one agency currently held any legal responsibility with regard to a long term solution to this issue, the Committee felt that in order to make any progress at all, someone needed to take ownership of the problem and lead discussions with partner organisations. The Borough Council officers present agreed to take the lead and progress investigation of any solutions with partners.
10. Having questioned all witnesses and debated the issue in depth, the Committee determined that the issue was too complex for determination at this meeting. There appeared to be agreement across all agencies that viable solutions to the flooding were possible, and that the favoured option appeared to be the removal of the current series of three vertical grills along the waterway (retaining the grill at the bottom of the Grundle where it meets Wyken Road/The Street) and replacement with a single, easy to access grid at a location upstream accommodating a bridleway and footpath. However, this option would be costly, and would also require further investigation into its viability.

11. The Committee recommends to Cabinet that:-

- (1) detailed assessment, including catchment flow study to confirm the adequacy of the underground pipework, and design of the preferred option, of replacement of the current three vertical screens along the length of the Grundle with a single grill at a location to be determined, accommodating a bridleway and footpath, be undertaken by the Council in consultation with relevant partners;**
- (2) agreement to a proposed solution by all agencies involved be sought;**
- (3) capital and revenue funding for the works be investigated, together with identification of ongoing maintenance responsibilities and the necessary funding;**
- (4) Suffolk County Council be requested to carry out more frequent clearing and jetting of the gulleys and culvert; and**
- (5) an update on progress on the above be reported to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 September 2009, together with details of Suffolk County Council's existing Planned Drainage Maintenance Programme.**

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