

West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel



Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel**
held on

Thursday 12 February 2015 at 5.00 pm in the **Council Chamber, Forest Heath District Council Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Jim Thorndyke

Vice Chairman David Bowman

Andy Drummond

Patricia Warby

Substitutes attending:

Patrick Chung

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Trevor Beckwith, Rona Burt, Nigel Roman and Sarah Stamp.

2. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Patrick Chung substituting for Councillor Sarah Stamp.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. **Flooding**

The Chairman welcomed Jane Burch, Flood and Coastal Policy Manager and Guy Smith, Assistant Area Highways Manager from Suffolk County Council, who had been invited to the meeting to help facilitate discussions on various flooding issues across West Suffolk, which had previously been raised by the Panel at its meeting held on 14 November 2014:

- 1) Specific flooding incidents within members wards and difficulties encountered in getting the appropriate authority to take action;
- 2) What works were planned currently in respect of flooding problems both in Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Bough; and

- 3) Who was responsible for keeping rivers and watercourse (including ditches) clear to prevent flooding incidents.

Jane advised the Panel that Suffolk County Council (SCC) was the lead authority on flooding issues in the county. As the lead authority it was responsible for co-ordinating a partnership approach to flood and coastal risk management with all risk management authorities in Suffolk through the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership. The Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership managed significant flooding incidents and targeted areas where properties were flooded internally. The team managed by Jeff Horner was responsible for investigating and finding solutions to significant flooding problems. SCC was also the risk management authority with responsibilities for dealing with flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses.

Guy advised the Panel that SCC as the Highways Authority had a programme of annual maintenance along with a reactive programme to deal with flooding issues as they occurred. The Highways Authority in 2014/15 had a capital programme budget in West Suffolk of £100,000 for drainage improvement schemes. It had also secured through the On-Street Parking Account, £125,000 to be used in West Suffolk specifically for local issues and draining works.

It was reported that SCC had no powers in making organisations carry out flood preventative works, but if necessary could take enforcement action against landowners, but this approach was rarely used as it was a long and costly process.

The Panel asked a number of detailed questions and highlighted several "hotspot" flooding incidents across West Suffolk, to which Jane and Guy provided comprehensive responses. In particular, responses were provided as follows:

- 1) Attached as an addendum to the minutes were the contact details and roles of the various agencies involved in responding to flooding.
- 2) The Suffolk Flood Risk Partnership had produced a Flood Risk Management Strategy, which identified those areas most at risk of flooding, including surface water. Detailed studies were undertaken in flood risk areas, then added to a priority works list.
- 3) SCC had a communications plan and published articles in various farming magazines reminding landowners of their responsibility in clearing ditches and cutting hedgerows. Ditches and watercourses should be maintained by the adjoining landowner and annual letters were about to be sent out reminding them of their responsibilities.

On behalf of the Panel the Chairman thanked Jane and Guy for attending the meeting.

5. **Date of next meeting**

The Joint Panel had previously agreed the following date for its future meeting:

Thursday 22 October 2015 at 5.00pm at West Suffolk House.

The Meeting concluded at 5.44 pm

Signed by:

Chairman

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Addendum

The Roles and Responsibilities of Various Agencies Involved with Flooding

In 2010, Suffolk County Council took on the role of 'Lead Local Flood Authority' as defined in the Flood and Water Management Act. Our key duty is to lead a partnership approach to managing all forms of flooding which we do through the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership.

Suffolk Flood Risk Partnership

[Suffolk's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#) sets out the risk of flooding in Suffolk and the ways in which we, and the other organisations that form the Suffolk Flood Risk Partnership, manage that risk.

The activities identified in the strategy can only manage flood risk. It would not be possible, even if there was unlimited money available, to protect all properties from any flood risk. Instead efforts need to be made by all involved, organisations and householders alike, to reduce flood risk in practical ways. Sometimes this involves focussing not just on decreasing the probability of flooding but also its impact, making sure that properties and households can recover quickly after a serious flood.

The more we know about incidences of localised flooding, the more we can understand about which areas are at risk from this type of flooding and target activities to help accordingly. Anyone wishing to report localised flooding should complete the [online form](#) giving as much detail as possible.

For general information about flooding, visit the [Green Suffolk website](#) or e-mail floods@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk County Council

The county council's Highways service is responsible for maintaining the drainage systems to reduce the risk of standing water on roads, pavements and cycle ways. Gullies are used to collect and drain water off the road or pavement into a piped system or roadside ditch. Gullies are sometimes blocked by a build-up of silt or mud coming off the road or washed off adjoining land.

To reduce the risk of flooding, highway gullies are usually cleaned once a year by a mechanical gully emptying machine. Any gullies which are prone to regular silting or blocking are cleaned more often. Other forms of drainage (catchpits, soakaways, pipes, highway ditches etc.) are checked and cleaned or repaired as required, or when a problem is reported.

Reporting a problem

If there is any danger to life as a result of flooding, always phone 999.

To report flooding from sewers and water pipes contact Anglian Water on 0800 771 881 (24 hours).

Flooding on trunk roads is the responsibility of the Highways Agency. In Suffolk this includes:

- **A11** from Newmarket to Thetford and Norwich
- **A12** (north) from Lowestoft (River Waveney/Bascule lifting bridge) to Great Yarmouth
- **A12** (south) from Ipswich to Colchester and London
- **A14** from the Midlands to Felixstowe

Telephone the Highways Agency Information Line on 0300 123 5000 (24 hours).

Where flooding on any other highway in Suffolk presents an immediate danger, for example a collapsed or damaged manhole cover, the county council's Customer Service Centre should be contacted on **0345 606 6171**, or for outside normal working hours **01473 433444**.

All other maintenance problems with highway drainage should be reported via the [county council's website](#).

When flooding incidents are reported we prioritise them according to the severity and extent of the impact – giving highest priority where homes are flooded internally. We have a duty to investigate (and publish the findings) significant flooding events, identifying possible solutions and indicating where responsible organisations should take action. However, we have no powers to enforce others to act.

For less serious flooding events we will look to identify the reasons for the flooding and provide advice about how they could be resolved to prevent future problems. Unfortunately, many problems are not easily resolved and require the co-operation of many partners including private land/home owners and therefore can take time and funding to resolve.

House/land owners

Drainage from private houses, private roads and on private land (including incoming service, waste/surface water and foul) - are the responsibility of the house/land owner or [Anglian Water](#). Any enquiries relating to sewage problems should also be directed to the sewage authority, which in Suffolk is [Anglian Water](#)

Drainage ditches are usually the responsibility of the adjacent home or land owners, who must not impede water flow and should keep them maintained. For further information see [Living on the Edge](#)

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has a strategic overview for all flooding and coastal erosion, and is the lead agency for matters relating to flooding from rivers and the sea. It provides public information on flood risks and provides warnings for river and sea flooding. Details of flood warnings are listed on [their website](#).

The risk of flooding from rivers or the sea is generally more predictable, with current flood warnings focussed on this risk. The value of these warnings was clearly seen during the December 2013 surge when evacuation prevented any loss of life. To sign up for warnings [click here](#)

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)

The principles below are a *general* guide to SFRS attendance to flooding calls:
In flooding situations SFRS will attend if:

- There is a life at risk
- Your property is severely affected by flooding
- Flooding is affecting electrics or other circumstances that present an additional hazard to the public

In flooding situations SFRS will not *normally* attend if:

- There is no life at risk and flooding has not severely affected a property
- There are no exceptional circumstances

In the event of an emergency, dial 999 and talk to the Fire Control operators – individual circumstances will be taken into account as will the demands on the wider SFRS, for example, if the service is responding to many flooding calls across the county then they will prioritise those that are attended.

Emergency Planning

In the event of severe flooding, the county council's Joint [Emergency Planning Unit](#), will deal with issues such as plans for temporary accommodation and evacuation of houses and helps people and businesses to recover from a devastating event.

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