
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 **5.00pm** 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 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 Management Partnership had produced a Flood Risk 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 5.44pm

Signed by:

Chairman
