

Minutes of the meeting of General scrutiny committee held at Online meeting on Monday 22 March 2021 at 10.15 am

Present: Councillor Jonathan Lester (chairperson)
Councillor Tracy Bowes (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Sebastian Bowen, Barry Durkin, Bob Matthews, Louis Stark and William Wilding

In attendance: Councillors John Harrington (Cabinet Member) and David Hitchiner (Cabinet Member)

Officers: M Lane (Assistant Director Highways & Transport), Clive Hall Acting Expert Adviser (Special Engineering Projects); S Hodges – Directorate Services Team Leader (Economy and Place)

Invitees: (Agenda item 7 – Fownhope Flood Repair Work) Mr K Braybrook (Fownhope Parish Council) and Mr M Slocombe (Woolhope Group PC).
Representatives from Balfour Beatty Living Places: L Lloyd – Contracts Manager and J Reynolds - Design & Build Manager.

Invitees: (Agenda item 8 – Local Flood Management Strategy Action Plan)
From Balfour Beatty Living Places: J Reynolds - Design & Build Manager.
From the Environment Agency D Throup manager for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, R Adams and T Whitehouse.

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hewitt.

(The Monitoring Officer had advised Councillor Hardwick ward member for Backbury ward, that he had a disclosable pecuniary interest in the Fownhope Road (as the joint landowner at Lechmere Ley) and should not therefore participate in the meeting. Accordingly he sent his apologies.)

47. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Bowen substituted for Councillor Hewitt.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2021 be approved.

50. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

None.

52. FOWNHOPE FLOOD REPAIR WORK

The Committee reviewed the delivery of the Fownhope flood repair works and considered any lessons to be learned for the future.

The Chairperson remarked that the Committee had agreed to consider the matter in response to a specific request from Fownhope Parish Council.

It was noted that additional material had been published as a supplement to the agenda papers: a proposed order of business for consideration of the item, a submission by Fownhope Parish Council and photographs of the affected areas..

The Chairman reminded the Committee that, as referred to at Paragraph 45 of the report an independent review of the Fownhope Road repair projects was to be commissioned. There was an opportunity for the Committee to propose matters for inclusion in that review.

A short video was shown showing the damage to the B4224 Fownhope Road and the extent of the flooding that had affected the County.

The Assistant Director and Acting Expert Adviser presented the report.

Representatives of Fownhope and Woolhope Group Parish Councils were then invited to comment.

Councillor John Harrington, Cabinet Member – Infrastructure and Transport then commented.

The Committee then discussed the matter asking a number of questions to which responses were given.

On conclusion of the debate representatives of Fownhope and Woolhope Group Parish Councils were then invited to make any final comments.

RESOLVED to recommend to the executive:

- That**
- (a) the executive support and encourage the delivery by BBLP of projects for the benefit of the Fownhope and Woolhope communities;**
 - (b) repairs to restore roads in the locality damaged by their use as a diversion route during the closure of the Fownhope Road are prioritised;**
 - (c) the executive encourage Fownhope and Woolhope Parish Councils to make representations to local MPs to seek funding for highway maintenance, and highlight shortcomings in the Bellwin scheme that appear to have been revealed, and the need for that scheme to be reviewed and for other funding sources to be provided if it is concluded that the Bellwin Scheme itself does not require revision;**

- (d) the executive make further representations to local MPs to seek additional grant funding for highway maintenance, and highlight shortcomings in the Bellwin scheme that appear to have been revealed, and the need for that scheme to be reviewed and for other funding sources to be provided if it is concluded that the Bellwin Scheme itself does not require revision;
- (e) consideration be given to whether the situation could be presented to Government as a case study highlighting the adverse impact on the local community as a result of lack of funding;
- (f) a robust review of the risks to other lengths of the B4224 of similar topography be conducted to establish if there is a need for preventative measures;
- (g) given the experiences on the B4224 consideration be given to whether there any other sites in the county that could be similarly problematic in the event of flooding with a view to adopting a more preventative approach to maintenance across the county;
- (h) action be taken to progress broadband works in the county delayed as a result of the B4224 works;
- (i) It be ensured that parish councils and communities concerns are recognised and taken into account by the Council and their partners when taking forward repairs to infrastructure;
- (j) the independent review be welcomed; and the following matters be considered for inclusion and if they are not included in the review they be responded to in any event by the executive:
 1. The issues that arose because of the nature of vehicles using the diversion routes;
 2. The potential for weight restrictions on traffic in the locality and other traffic management measures;
 3. Was enough priority given to ongoing repairs needed to the routes forming the diversions;
 4. Pace of decision making particularly from April to August;
 5. The focus be on identifying lessons learned that can be applied generally to future schemes, whilst noting that matters unique to the specific sites also need to be identified;
 6. Fownhope and Woolhope Parish Councils be consulted on matters for inclusion in the review;
 7. Project management and processes, the timeframes involved, for example the time between identifying work needed, specification, commissioning the contract, to commencing work, and the incremental nature of delays. The ability of the council to have oversight of such projects and whether additional technical and project management resource in-house is required;
 8. The time taken to establish whether it was possible to proceed without going to open tender;
 9. Has there been sufficient assessment of the risk of further failure in the highway network in the locality;

10. Were the solutions adopted appropriate and proportionate;
11. Managing working relationships with utility providers such as BT and gas providers and the approach to specifying works for them to undertake, including the potential benefit of a protocol for managing works in particular those of an emergency nature;
12. Clarification as to how the issue with the size of the crane required for the Stone Cottage works arose and assurance measures to avoid such occurrences in the future;
13. Review of the robustness of the effectiveness of the liaison between the Council and BBLP in managing projects;
14. Effectiveness of communication with the local community and speed thereof especially from the outset of an incident; and
15. Review appropriateness of diversion routes and their signing and facilitating of road safety management.

(The Committee adjourned between 13.20 and 13.50 pm)

53. LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered the 2016-22 local flood risk management strategy action plan.

The Directorate Services Team Leader presented the report.

The Committee discussed the matter.

Officers and representatives of the Environment Agency and BBLP responded to a number of questions.

RESOLVED: to recommend to the executive:

- That:**
- (a) prioritisation of actions in the action plan be re-evaluated;
 - (b) the council strengthen efforts with the Environment Agency to focus on flood mitigation measures for all watercourses;
 - (c) further efforts be made to reinforce the message to landowners to emphasise their riparian responsibilities as riparian owners to maintain drainage and make them aware of support and assistance available through the Council;
 - (d) consider how the Council can increase resources to manage drainage issues and invest in the drainage asset;
 - (e) review weighting given to the threshold for action to implement measures to address flooding on lengths of highway known to flood frequently, having regard to the need to ensure access for emergency vehicles;
 - (f) the liaison between the EA and the Council to disseminate flooding information to residents taking advantage of the Council's communication networks be kept under review to ensure that it is as effective as possible, noting the role parish councils and community groups can play;

- (g) consideration be given to whether the website content on flooding is readily accessible and sufficient or can be improved, with consideration given to use of apps and other methods;
- (h) improve information to local residents on respective responsibilities of residents themselves, the Council and the Environment Agency;
- (i) consideration be given to an annual survey of Parish Councils to establish information on their flooding experiences and any suggestions for improvements;
- (j) regard be had to knowledge of local residents and Parish Councils on areas subject to flooding and residents and Parish Councils be invited and encouraged to submit information;
- (k) review highways maintenance plan to see if there should be greater focus on roads subject to flooding;
- (l) consideration be given to raising awareness of the contribution to flooding made by climate change and information available via a link on the council's website; and
- (m) the mechanism for the production of Section 19 reports be reviewed and streamlined to seek to ensure the pace of completion is improved and appropriate resource allocated to support this aim.

54. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

RESOLVED: That the draft work programme as set out at appendix 1 to the report be approved.

55. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 26 April 2021 at 10.15 am.

The meeting ended at 3.21 pm

Chairperson