



City and County of Swansea

Notes of the **Scrutiny Working Group - Local Flood Risk Management**

Room 235 (Councillors Meeting Room) - Guildhall, Swansea

Thursday, 4 April 2019 at 10.30 am

Present: Councillor S Pritchard (Acting Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
S J Gallagher
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)
P Lloyd
G D Walker

Councillor(s)
I E Mann

Other Attendees

Mark Thomas Cabinet Member - Environment & Infrastructure Management

Officer(s)

Liz Jordan Scrutiny Officer
Mike Sweeney Principal Engineer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P K Jones (Chair) and S M Jones

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

No disclosures of interest were made.

2 Letters from previous meeting

Letters from previous meeting on 8 October 2018 received and considered by the Working Group.

3 Public Question Time

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

4 Flood Risk Management Progress Report

Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management attended and went through the conclusions in the convener's letter from the last meeting, updating on progress. Mike Sweeney, Principal Engineer also attended and went through the briefing report.

Discussion points:

- All new developments will have to have strategic planting and enhance biodiversity in future with the introduction of the new statutory duty requiring Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). The nature conservation team are aware that they will need to be involved in SuDS to give advice when applications are received.
- Green Infrastructure projects are going to be undertaken by the Authority and Natural Resources Wales in partnership. One project is currently being consulted on which is for the city centre only.
- CM to be provided with contact details for Sion Brackenbury to arrange to visit a nature based flood risk scheme in NPT. When a visit is arranged working group members interested in attending.
- CM recently went to the opening of a flood defence scheme in Mawr and was very impressed.
- Confirmed Authority cannot legislate on use of non-permeable materials in domestic gardens but the Authority could give advice. The introduction of SuDS will require that any contractors or developers will have to manage run off in the future. Permeable materials would achieve this, so it is likely they will be used by default anyway.
- Approval has been given to the initial staffing structure to undertake the delivery of SuDS. This is for 4 members of staff. One senior engineer is in place, an assistant engineer and administrative support officer will be appointed shortly and a site inspector will be employed at a later date, when sites start to be developed.
- Council's Flood Advice pages on the website do not currently contain a section on 'Help us prevent flooding'. We should be proactive to help prevent flooding in domestic properties. It would be useful to have a link from the Flood Advice pages on the website to a 'Prevention' section, with wording like.....What can I do to minimise the effect of flooding in my own property/local area?....for example, planting of trees, use of permeable materials for drives/patios, retaining grassed areas in the garden. This should be written in straightforward language that everyone can understand.
- Also on the Flood Advice pages Swansea Council's advice and guidance should appear first, followed by the contact information for NRW.
- The Authority does not currently show live local flooding information on its webpages as a 'live banner' or advertise it on Twitter. CM agreed to explore if this can be done and if not if we can have a link to third parties live information.
- Work is ongoing to establish existing maintenance regimes for water courses and gullies across the Authority. Highways, Parks and Housing do have maintenance regimes in place. However some departments are unclear about the levels of flood risk to their assets and therefore the maintenance schedules that need to be assigned. Approaches are not consistent across the Authority. The department will continue to look into the development of a consistent approach. However prevention is far better than cure.
- Under 2.2 (page 7) – reference to the new corporate wellbeing objective for the maintenance and enhancement of natural resources and biodiversity has been omitted.

- Under 6.12 (page 12) – the report should say what is currently happening - that work is progressing, ward members have been contacted etc.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

The Working Group discussed progress and agreed the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. We are pleased to hear the Authority is keen to visit other Authorities that have used nature based solutions to flood risk, to explore further the opportunities for Swansea. We will provide the appropriate contact details to enable a visit to be arranged to a scheme in Neath Port Talbot. Working Group members are also interested in attending the visit and would like to be informed of the date once arranged.
2. We are pleased with the update that 4 members of staff are being employed for the delivery of SuDS. We will want to monitor progress on the delivery of SuDS at future meetings
3. We are interested to hear more about Green Infrastructure projects and would like to have an update on the project that is currently out to consultation at our next meeting.
4. The Working Group feels the Authority needs to move away from a legislative basis to a more advisory role for flood risk management, for example, in respect of use of non-permeable materials. We think this is a better way to engage the public and take best practice forward.
5. We would like to see the Authority better promote prevention of flood risk and feel the Authority should look into having a link to a 'Prevention' section from the Flood Advice pages on the website.
6. We feel the Authority should explore having 'live' information on local flooding on its website, or having it provided by a third party.
7. The Working Group feels the information on the Flood Advice pages should be changed around so that Swansea Council advice and guidance appears first followed by contact details for NRW.
8. We would like to see the Authority explore ways to advertise the work that it has carried out to reduce flood risks locally, in order to get positive messages out. Ward members can be used more to get messages out to the public by distributing this information in their wards.
9. We would like an update at our next meeting on the Local Flood Risk Management plan and progress made.
10. We will recommend to Scrutiny Programme Committee that the LFRM Working Group meets on a twice-yearly basis in future in order to monitor progress, especially on delivery of SuDS, and more generally on delivery of nature based solutions to flood risk.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm



To:
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment and
Infrastructure Management

Please ask for: Scrutiny
Gofynnwch am:
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Date 24 April 2019
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Local Flood Risk Management Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management following the meeting of the Working Group on 4 April 2019. It is about progress on the recommendations made at the last meeting in October 2018.

Dear Cllr Thomas

The Local Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Working Group met on 4 April to receive an update on progress made on the recommendations from the Working Group's last meeting on 8 October 2018. This letter provides you with feedback from that meeting.

We would like to thank you and Mike Sweeney for attending to present the update and to answer our questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

Whilst the Working Group found the meeting informative and interesting, it did have some concerns and we would like to make the following comments.

- We were informed that all new developments will have to have strategic planting and enhance biodiversity in future, with the introduction of the new statutory duty requiring Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). The nature conservation team are aware that they will need to be involved in SuDS to give advice when applications are received.
- We heard that Green Infrastructure projects are going to be undertaken by the Authority and Natural Resources Wales in partnership and that one project is currently being consulted on which is for the city centre only.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

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I dderbyn yr wybodaeth hon mewn fformat arall neu yn Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'r person uchod
To receive this information in alternative format, or in Welsh please contact the above

- We agreed to provide you with contact details for Sion Brackenbury to arrange to visit a nature based flood risk scheme in NPT. When a visit is arranged working group members are interested in attending.
- You informed us that you recently went to the opening of a flood defence scheme in Mawr and was very impressed.
- We received confirmation that the Authority cannot legislate on use of non-permeable materials in domestic gardens but the Authority could give advice. The introduction of SuDS will require that any contractors or developers will have to manage run off in the future. Permeable materials would achieve this, so it is likely they will be used by default anyway.
- We were pleased to hear that approval has been given to the initial staffing structure to undertake the delivery of SuDS. This is for 4 members of staff. One senior engineer is in place, an assistant engineer and administrative support officer will be appointed shortly and a site inspector will be employed at a later date, when sites begin to be developed.
- We were informed that the Council's Flood Advice pages on the website do not currently contain a section on 'Help us prevent flooding'. We feel the Authority needs to be proactive to help prevent flooding in domestic properties. It would be useful to have a link from the Flood Advice pages on the website to a 'Prevention' section, with wording like, 'What can I do to minimise the effect of flooding in my own property/local area?' And giving examples, such as, planting of trees, use of permeable materials for drives/patios, retaining grassed areas in the garden. We would like to see this written in straightforward language that everyone can understand. We also feel that on the Flood Advice pages, Swansea Council's advice and guidance should appear first, followed by the contact information for NRW.
- We heard that the Authority does not currently show 'live' local flooding information on its webpages as a 'live banner' or advertise it on Twitter. You agreed to explore if this can be done and if not if we can have a link to third parties live information.
- We were pleased to hear that work is ongoing to establish existing maintenance regimes for water courses and gullies across the Authority and that Highways, Parks and Housing do have maintenance regimes in place. We also heard however, that some departments are unclear about the levels of flood risk to their assets and therefore the maintenance schedules that need to be put in place and that approaches are not consistent across the Authority. We were pleased to hear that the department will continue to look into the development of a consistent approach. However you feel, and we agree, that prevention is far better than cure.

- We informed you that under section 2.2 of the briefing report (page 7), reference to the new corporate wellbeing objective for the maintenance and enhancement of natural resources and biodiversity has been omitted. You informed us that this was an oversight.
- We informed you that under section 6.12 (page 12), it would be have been useful for the report to state what is currently happening - that work is progressing, ward members have been contacted etc. You agreed with this suggestion.

The Working Group discussed progress and agreed the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. We are pleased to hear the Authority is keen to visit other local authorities that have used nature based solutions to flood risk, to explore further the opportunities for Swansea. We will provide the appropriate contact details to enable a visit to be arranged to a scheme in Neath Port Talbot. Working Group members are also interested in attending the visit and would like to be informed of the date once arranged.
2. We are pleased with the update that 4 members of staff are being employed for the delivery of SuDS. We will want to monitor progress on the delivery of SuDS at future meetings.
3. We are interested to hear more about Green Infrastructure projects and would like to have an update, on the project that is currently out to consultation, at our next meeting.
4. The Working Group feels the Authority needs to move away from a legislative basis to a more advisory role for flood risk management, for example, in respect of use of non-permeable materials. We think this is a better way to engage the public and take best practice forward.
5. We would like to see the Authority better promote prevention of flood risk and feel the Authority should look into having a link to a 'Prevention' section from the Flood Advice pages on the website.
6. We feel the Authority should explore having 'live' information on local flooding on its website, or having it provided by a third party.
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9. We would like an update at our next meeting on the Local Flood Risk Management plan and progress made.
10. We will recommend to Scrutiny Programme Committee that the LFRM Working Group meets on a twice-yearly basis in future in order to monitor progress, especially on delivery of SuDS, and more generally on delivery of nature based solutions to flood risk.

Your Response

We hope that you find this letter useful and informative. We are interested in hearing your thoughts about the issues raised and would ask that you respond to our conclusions and recommendations by Wednesday 15 May 2019.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR SAM PRITCHARD
ACTING CONVENER, LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP
CLLR.SAM.PRITCHARD@SWANSEA.GOV.UK

**Councillor Peter Jones Convener – Local
Flood Risk Management
Scrutiny Working Group**

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas
Direct Line: 01792 63 6926
E-Mail: cllr.mark.thomas@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: MT/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 16th May 2019

Dear Councillor Jones

Thank you for your letter from the Scrutiny working Group held on 4th April 2019.

Firstly, I am pleased to hear that the working group is keen to visit the example of a Natural Flood Risk Management site in Neath Port Talbot. To increase our awareness into the opportunities which can arise in using nature based solutions will allow the Authority to consider where appropriate similar flood mitigation measures in Swansea. I will confirm a date for a site visit and will seek interest from the working group on who wishes to attend.

With regard to the setting up of new staff structure to support the Sustainable Drainage Approval Body, you were informed that whilst there is staff in place to deal with current number of SAB enquiries, staff numbers will increase throughout the year as the demand for resources is needed. I hope the working group were satisfied to hear that the new legislation will not only help in reducing flood risk but also will ensure that all new developments over a 100m² will be able to provide benefits for our Environment and provide better Well Being for our residents in Swansea.

I agree that an update about the Green Infrastructure project and I will seek assurances that an update can be made to the group at the next working group meeting.

In terms for the Authority providing a more advisory role and moving away from legislative basis. I do appreciate your comments regarding more of an advisory role and whilst this does go on between officers and members of public during site visits, the advice can somewhat be limited as to ensure that the Authority is not accountable for any liability. Consequently, the current obligation is to fulfil the statutory requirements but I agree that there is scope to improve the information available by providing general advice on our website to minimize the effects of flooding and to promote best practice and prevention.

I refer to the point raised to having 'live' information on local flooding on the website. I wish to confirm that the Authority currently uses social media such as twitter and facebook as a mechanism to inform the residents of Swansea should major issues be encountered. Consequently, I wish to confirm that if appropriate, significant flooding

events, which cause disruption, will be communicated in the same way, but within normal working hours. Outside of normal working hours the use of live information becomes more difficult to convey, and will rely on the out of hours emergency teams to deliver messages to the local areas affected by flooding. Noting reference to third party updates, I understand that National Media e.g. Wales Online, has the capacity to deal with live updates on flooding and I will enquire if appropriate links to these pages can be set up. Web links to severe weather warnings are currently shown on the flooding advice pages on the council's website to allow residents to prepare for flooding. I would also like to confirm that Natural Resources Wales are equipped to provide advanced flood warnings to areas which are considered to be susceptible to high flood risk from main rivers and sea with residents being encouraged sign up to this free 24hr a day service via their website.

I agree that the flooding advice pages should be amended to reflect that Swansea Council Advice is given priority.

I support your recommendation on using ward members to assist in advertising and disseminating information on work related to reducing flood risk in order to get positive messages out in the ward. I would expect that members are contacted as a matter of course on any potential scheme, which will have a positive impact in their ward.

I will ask for an update at the next meeting on the local Flood Risk Management Plan.

To conclude, I would suggest that the next meeting should be arranged on an annual as opposed to a twice- yearly basis due to limited resources. I also consider that the working group would be provided with a more comprehensive update session into both how the Suds and Flood Risk Management Plan are progressing at the end of a 12month period.

Hope that I have responded to the points you have raised and look forward to meeting up again for the annual update.

Yours sincerely



**COUNCILLOR MARK THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT SERVICES**