



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

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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.

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- 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.
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.

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

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