

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES** held on 25 November 2020.

P R E S E N T

Councillor S Bull (in the Chair)

Councillors K S Athwal, D Charles, L Grooby, J Innes, T Kemp and P Makin.

Also in attendance were J Gould, T Gregory, L Partington and R Ward (Economy, Transport and Environment Department).

12/20 **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

13/20 **MATTERS ARISING** - (a) **Digital Derbyshire Programmed Update (Minute 13/20)** The Chairman informed the Committee that with the support of Derbyshire MP's, he would be lobbying the Government with the aim to increase coverage, especially in the rural area, where 4% of the residents did not have superfast broadband.

Mr Gregory also informed the Committee that a meeting with BT on 28 September 2020 had been postponed. On updating the Committee he said it had been confirmed that no residual money remained.

14/20 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS** There were no public questions.

15/20 **RESPONSE TO TODDBROOK RESERVOIR DAM AND NOVEMBER 2019 FLOODING INCIDENTS** Liz Partington, Emergency Planning Manager, Julian Gould, Head of Network Planning and Richard Ward, Senior Project Engineer attended the meeting to provide a briefing on the response by Derbyshire County Council services to the Toddbrook Reservoir and November 2019 flooding incidents.

Toddbrook Reservoir Dam Incident August 2019

On the evening of 31 July 2020 heavy rain fell in Derbyshire and in particular the High Peak area with significant flooding in Buxton. On 1 August 2019 the emergency services were alerted to the threat of a potential dam breach at Toddbrook reservoir, Whaley Bridge which was owned by The Canal and River Trust.

The Local Resilience Forum's (LRF) Generic Reservoir Off-Site Emergency Plan and Toddbrook Site Specific Reservoir Emergency Plan were implemented and approximately 550 properties were evacuated. A rest centre had been set up at Chapel High School where the following agencies were represented:

- Derbyshire County Council Adult Social Care
- Derbyshire County Council Emergency Planning (including Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers)
- High Peak Borough Council Housing
- British Red Cross
- Derbyshire Police

Those people evacuated who were not able to make other arrangements were accommodated in a hotel or University of Derby student accommodation in Buxton. A helpline had been set up and staffed by Call Derbyshire and High Peak Borough Council. Responding agencies at the site included:

- Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Derbyshire Police
- East Midlands Ambulance Service
- Canal and River Trust
- Environment Agency
- Military

The ETE Highways, Economic and Regeneration and Emergency Planning Teams were heavily involved in the response and recovery elements of the incident.

Residents' meetings were held to ensure that they were kept informed of the latest developments and were a conduit for residents to ask questions and raise concerns. In addition to this a meeting for businesses was similarly held. Within days the County Council had established a Hardship Fund and a public donation telephone line to support residents and businesses affected by the evacuation and in financial hardship.

In order to prevent the dam from failing the RAF had provided Chinooks to drop bags of hard core onto the face of the dam wall to shore it up. Additionally, the reservoir level was drawn down to a safe level over a period of days and the fish stock moved to another location. Following the shoring up of the dam wall and the drawing down of the water level, residents and businesses were allowed to return to their homes/premises after 6 days. Following their return, an information hub was established at Whaley Bridge Primary School to provide residents and businesses with advice and support in the ensuing days.

Ensuring that people were kept away from the area was a difficult task and closed roads and diversion routes were quickly put in place. A highways inspection had been carried out on bridges and retaining walls within the area and it was found that 13 out of 14 bridges required remedial works. Julian Gould had co-ordinated the underpinning of these bridges which was achieved within 24 hours and enabled residents to return home.

Debriefs of the elements of the response and recovery phases had been carried out and a composite report was being produced which would be signed off by the LRF. The LRF site specific reservoir emergency plans were being reviewed as a priority to ensure that lessons learnt from this incident were incorporated.

Following the incident the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) had commissioned an independent review into the cause of the potential dam failure and the outcome of that inquiry was published in February 2020.

The upkeep and maintenance of reservoirs was not a statutory function at this current time, but the Authority along with other agencies were lobbying MHCLG to establish this as a statutory duty onto local authorities across the country for high risk sites.

Members asked what the current safety of the dam was and what the long term plans were for the structure. It was reported that the Canal and River Trust had pumps in place and there were extra pumps if these failed. The situation was being constantly monitored. The Canal and River Trust were investigating whether re-build or repair would provide the most effective long term solution.

November 2019 Floods

On 7 November 2019 severe flooding took place along the Derwent Valley following torrential rain that day and evening. The flooding then proceeded to affect the south of the county particularly along the River Trent in known flooding areas and other parts of Derbyshire, with the incident continuing until 15 November 2019.

Derbyshire had experienced significant fluvial and surface water flooding between August and November 2019. LRF Tactical and Strategic Coordination Groups were activated. 2019 was the seventh wettest summer for the UK since 1910 and saw the highest recorded river levels as well, the river gauge at Chatsworth on the Derwent was the highest ever recorded level.

The first Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG) meeting was held at 2100 hours on 7 November 2019 and these continued throughout the period of flooding and concluded on 15 November 2019. Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (SCGs) were similarly held throughout that period. The emergency planning and highways response continued for several further days. The economy and regeneration work with businesses continued for months through the recovery phase.

The main flooding occurred in communities along the rivers Derwent, Wye and Trent with Derbyshire Dales and South Derbyshire districts being the worst hit. There were concerns that the flood defences protecting the

community of Ambaston may be compromised and overtopping occur, but thankfully this did not happen. Improvements had now been made to the flood barriers around the village.

325 residential properties and 59 businesses were flooded, local authorities worked with these to offer practical and financial assistance as appropriate. Tragically a fatality occurred during the flooding along the River Derwent.

Almost immediately, the County Council agreed to establish a Derbyshire Floods Hardship Fund to support residents and local businesses affected by the financial consequences of evacuations

Since the floods in November 2019 there had been further flooding in February 2020 which had necessitated the holding of TCGs.

Richard Ward informed the Committee of the post flooding event which was a statutory requirement to produce a Section 19 report. This had now been completed and was available to the public.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Liz Partington, Julian Gould and Richard Ward for their attendance and their extremely informative presentations, and also wished to express their gratitude to them, and all the staff and volunteers assisting with both incidents.

RESOLVED to note the council's response to the two major incidents which took place in 2019 and future flood risk management plans.

16/20 **FESTIVAL OF DERBYSHIRE** The Committee were in agreement that discussions took place giving their support to the Festival of Derbyshire taking place in some form or other.