

# Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 12th September, 2016.

**Present:** Cllr Derrick Brown(Chairman), Cllr Sonia Bailey(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Kevin Faulks (sub Cllr Ken Dixon), Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley

**Officers:** Craig Willows (Care For Your Area Service Manager), Robert Burrell (Highways Operations Supervisor), Andie Mackay (Commercial & Technical Services Manager), Jane Salisbury (Principal Engineer - Flood Risk), Simon Milner (Highway Network & Flood Risk Manager), Graham Birtle (Scrutiny Officer), Gayle Nertney (Governance Officer)

**Also in attendance:**

**Apologies:** Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE

## **1 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interests made.

## **3 Minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2016**

AGREED that the minutes be approved.

## **4 Scrutiny Review of Flooding Resilience**

The Committee considered a presentation on Community Services Response to Flooding from the Technical and Commercial Services Manager.

The team had a proactive approach to a number of services including gulley cleansing and maintenance, maintenance of culverts, clearance of becks, grids and water courses, street cleansing, scheduled highway inspections and ditching.

The team also offered a reactive response to flooding incidents, assistance with relocation of residents, rest centre assistance, work with other agencies as required, road closures and traffic re-direction and operational emergency planning.

The current resources were confirmed as including 2 gulley vehicles, human resources predominantly based within Highway Maintenance Team, specialist store of equipment required to deal with emergency situations including 2 x 6" pumps and other specialist equipment, other vehicles as required including mechanical sweepers, community transport vehicles, access to third party vehicles and overlap services including catering team.

The issues and challenges that the Care for Your Area team deal with were discussed, including the reduced resources, and the increasing number of assets that the authority had to maintain from new housing developments.

Members asked what the maintenance schedule was for Lustrum Beck, and

Officers advised that Lustrum Beck was classed as a river and therefore under the Environment Agencies jurisdiction. It was cleared every 3 months of large debris, grass on banks cut 3 times a year, clearance of trash screens every 2 weeks, with tree cutting and pruning completed intermittently, as well as any responsive work needed following reports of blockages.

No dredging was done by the Environment Agency as this would not provide any benefit for flood risk, however they do do work around structure i.e. Bridges, culverts etc.

Members asked if SBC could monitor the work done by the Environment Agency, as there were concerns that the work stated above was not being completed.

The maintenance schedule may reduce following the recent work done to Lustrum Beck.

Members queried the maintenance schedule for Stainsby Beck – Officers weren't aware but would contact the EA and report back.

Officers would request information on which water courses the EA have responsibility for, with the maintenance schedule for each.

Should members have any concerns over lack of maintenance and blockages, the contact number for the Environment Agency is 0800 80 70 60.

Members queried whether any problems were inherited on new build sites, and Officers ensured that assets were well cleaned out before handover of the adopted highway.

Members asked how effective gulley cleaning was, in particular where access couldn't be gained due to parked cars. Officers advised that a form was completed for a vehicle parked over (VPO) and further visits would be made. If unsuccessful, a card would be left with a date and time that the unit will call back. Officers stressed that operatives had a good local knowledge of the areas and knew when the best times to visit certain areas.

Members asked if grass cuttings lying on top of gulley's was a problem. Officers confirmed that they often get called to clear a gulley and it was just cuttings laying across the top, and that the situation was difficult to manage, as the authority don't operate a cut and collect service on grass cuttings. Blowers were used to blow cuttings onto the grass, in order to prevent this problem. Officers advised that should operatives concentrate on moving cars rather than clearing available gulleys, the productivity would decrease, and operatives were already under pressure to complete the required number of gully cleanses per day without spending time trying to locate the owner of a vehicle that was blocking a gulley. Officers also advised that operatives were able to dig out by hand if the gulley was in between two parked cars and unable to get machinery in.

Members questioned what happened when a house or premise was vacant and had blocked drains that were causing flooding. Officers explained that SBC would react to this, and take appropriate steps to rectify in order to avoid

causing further issues.

Members advised of problems in their areas with pinch points – in particular Low Grange Ave, where the land was higher and water pooled before flowing into the drain, and queried whether these could be altered. Officers advised that new designs have since been introduced, where there is a drain either side of the pinch point. Agreed that the exact location to be forwarded to Jane Salisbury to investigate, who advised that there is a possibility that should any resurfacing works be due in the area, alterations could be made to the pinch points to make them more effective.

Members enquired what cuts the service had, and what had been the impact. Officers advised that there were previously seven gulley vehicles (5 in use, and 2 spare), and that this had now reduced to just two. Additional new housing estates being built have also added pressure to the service. Officers advised that they were investigating implementing software that could be used to help prioritise where the units should be targeting. The system would highlight how often each gulley would require cleaning and highlight problem areas, as different designs may require more or less visits per year. Officers have been in contact with Redcar and Cleveland Council who have implemented a similar system, and were awaiting further details including any efficiency savings.

Members asked how many gulley's SBC are responsible for, and Officers confirmed that there were approximately 50,000 within the borough, and the target was to clear each once per year. Operatives were given a target to complete a specific number of gulley's each day.

Members queried whether work could be undertaken with other stakeholders i.e. Thirteen to help address problems in areas where they own housing/land. Officers asked members for specific locations of concern to be forwarded to Simon Milner, who would arrange for site visits during heavy rain, and would follow up with Thirteen where necessary. Officers confirmed that should operatives identify that a problem was on Thirteen land, then they sent a letter advising of the defect asking Thirteen to rectify, and that they follow up to ensure that the problem has been rectified.

Members asked about historic problems with Hilton and standing water. Officers advised that lots of work had been done over a number of years and that they were confident that work is almost complete. Officers will arrange for a site inspection when there is a downpour.

Officers asked whether gulley's on back lanes were cleared, and were advised by Officers that the smaller gully vehicles that used to clear these were no longer in use, but confirmed that these gulley's were cleared by hand on an annual basis.

Members enquired whether surveys would be carried out on the properties that would benefit from the Flooding resilience work on Lustrum Beck, for insurance purposes. Officers advised that residents were able to obtain a letter from the Environment Agency which they could pass to their insurance company confirming the work done, and also that the flood risk had reduced. Officers also stated that they would look at including this contact number in a newsletter/Stockton News so that residents were aware. The contact number

for residents to contact the Environment Agency is 03708 506506.

## **5 Work Programme**

Members considered the work programme, and were advised that the next meeting would discuss the Draft Recommendations for the Scrutiny Review of Flooding Resilience.

Personalisation of cemeteries would be included in a future meeting.

## **6 Chair's Update**

The Chair had nothing to update.