

Kingsbridge Town Council (KTC)

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT & RESILIENCE COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, QUAY HOUSE, AT 6.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2024

Present: Cllr Paul Vann (Chairman)
Cllr Philip Cole
Cllr Barrie Fishman
Cllr Mel Rollinson

In Attendance: One member of public
Martin Johnson (Secretary)

24/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Graham Price, Danielle Rawstron and Julia Wingate.

Public Open Forum

There were no statements from members of public present.

24/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24/12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members received the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2024 which were approved as a correct record.

24/13 FLOODING, SEWAGE DISCHARGES & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

13.1 Recent flooding and/or sewage discharge incidents. There had been no significant flooding or sewage discharges since the previous meeting and recent high tides from week beginning 16 September had passed without incident however, KTC had issued a Facebook alert to the community in readiness.

13.2 Flooding roundtable meeting held on 6 September 2024 – wash up.

Representatives from Devon County Council (DCC), Environment Agency (EA), South Hams District Council (SHDC) and South West Water (SWW) met alongside KTC Members and the local MP to receive a presentation from SWW on information collected in the Kingsbridge area from October 2023 to April 2024 and discussed the same. The salient points were:

- SWW's video footage and photos of various culverts identified that in the period from 2016 to 2024 they had silted up to an extent whereby circa 50% of their capacity had been lost. There had also been collapses, blockages and integrity damaged by loss of bricks from historic culvert walls.
- Moreover, given current data it was anticipated for culvert capacity to reduce by a further 25% within the next 3 years.

- Hotspots were highlighted as Bridge Street, Ilbert Road and Prince of Wales Road.
- Management of culverts belonged to DCC under the highway and riparian ownership elsewhere.
- Dye testing had highlighted that during periods of heavy rainfall/run-off and tidal surges the culverts were effectively locked i.e. slack water. They had also revealed that culverts were intertwined via cross leakage.
- Exceptionally high readings for the Bridge Street combined sewer overflow (CSO) in 2023 were unlikely to relate to the new Applegate housing development off Belle Hill but had been caused by telemetry issues i.e. the readings were incorrect.
- However, attenuation tanks at new developments such as Applegate were managed by internal management companies rather than outside agencies.
- It was a legal requirement for SWW to provide a foul water connection to new developments however, surface water management was managed by the development which had to assure planning authorities of said capability in order to gain planning approval.
- The trash screen opposite the Morrison store off Lime Grove was defective and water was not entering the screen but making its own way around it via a new route.
- The greater frequency of flooding and sewage discharges was likely to be due to climate change factors i.e. more intense rainfall and higher tides which then combined with the above reduced culvert capacity.
- DCC urban culverts were inspected on a 3 yearly rolling basis where the authority was the riparian owner.
- SWW could evidence ongoing maintenance since 2012.
- However, recent resin injections to fix repairs in combined sewer culverts had failed within 10 days.
- Clearance of the culverts would need to be a continual process. There were various methods to action this but all were major engineering tasks, at vast expense, and accompanied with road closures would be a major inconvenience for the town.
- Likewise installation of an independent surface and foul drainage system would alleviate current issues but was a major task etc.
- Mitigation interventions on higher ground surrounding the town would assist.
- SWW was also undertaking investigations in Fosse Road and Wallingford Road.
- At present, water was seeping through the centre tarmac seam of Ilbert Road in the vicinity of the Texaco filling station due to pressure from below. Indeed, there was potential for a major failure in the highway e.g. a large sinkhole.
- SWW was effectively dealing with the consequences of flood events rather than providing solutions.
- Kingsbridge could cope with tides of up to 4.5m however, above this level when combined with other factors (low barometric pressure, strong winds and intense rainfall) then there would always be potential for flooding and sewage discharges.
- SWW tankers continued to operate when heavy rainfall was scheduled in order to relieve pressure on the combined system.
- Sealing manholes would lead to infiltration within commercial and residential properties.
- Yellow fish symbols on surface water drains (signposting that any waste entering them may enter the estuary causing pollution and potentially killing wildlife) had vanished over time and the project required re-invention.
- SHDC officers could conduct Environmental Health inspections of businesses via the Food Safety Act to ensure correct practices were being followed.

- In summary, it was deemed essential for all agencies to build relationships and work together to consider a permanent solution for Kingsbridge's flooding issues. For example, a multi-agency flood protection scheme for Falmouth had been agreed.
- The MP would need to lobby for funding from central government for any such schemes.
- SWW had contracted a new report from Pell Frischmann (hydraulic modellers) to examine the impacts of the above climate change factors upon the town to 2055 which was anticipated by end September. The report would provide solutions for SWW working independently. SWW was willing to share the report with all attendees upon receipt.
- It had been agreed for DCC, EA, SHDC and SWW to arrange an independent meeting and to work-up some potential options to deliver flood alleviation projects for Kingsbridge.

13.3 Suggested comments on Resilience matters for the NPPF reform consultation response. The Planning Committee had previously reviewed the National Planning Policy Framework and earmarked responses to government's proposed amendments and Members now received draft responses to amendments regarding Chapter 9 "Supporting Green Energy and the Environment". It was **RESOLVED** for KTC to provide overall support for large onshore wind and solar projects within its feedback to the NPPF reform consultation.

24/14 ENVIRONMENT

14.1 Quay House PV project – update. Further to the previous meeting, Cllr Vann had met with SHDC's heritage officer on 13 August. SHDC had not supported the project and the meeting focused initially on the front roof of Quay House which had conversely gained online public support from the Kingsbridge community (50 in support and 0 against the proposals). The special quality of the front facing roof with its curved/swept profile was agreed which could be viewed from some distance away. Moreover, the technical, practical and costs of installation issues and the related age, quality and fragility of the tiles and supporting timber structure were brought up. However, a potential way forward was to:

- Carry out a whole building assessment of Quay House's energy related infrastructure and use to identify further potential energy efficiency measures.
- Explore the installation of solar PV above the chimney stacks on the less visually, historically important and structurally complex south west facing roof area of the extension to the original Quay House.
- Combine, alongside Solar PV, battery storage of electricity when generation was greater than use e.g. bank holidays and weekends.

Members then discussed:

- The rationale for the Quay House PV project i.e. was it driven by environmental reasons? Or would it produce meaningful savings in electricity charges?
- It was difficult to estimate cost savings and/or the payback period for PV panels at present. KTC had commenced a new electricity supply contract with effect from 1 July 2024 with a new provider. Moreover, old night storage heaters were being replaced with modern electric radiators throughout the building. On completion of phase 2 (1st and 2nd floors) only 6 night storage heaters (off-peak rates) would remain with 14 modern radiators (day rates) installed. Therefore, actual usage and costs could not be accurately determined until summer 2025.

- Total costs of a building assessment, supply and installation of PV panels and batteries were required and how much electricity could be generated vis a vis whole building electricity usage.

It was **RECOMMENDED** for all Members to consider the Quay House PV project at a full council meeting.

14.2 Kingsbridge community EV car hire – update. Further to the previous meeting, Cllr Vann had liaised with DCC and SHDC officers on the proposal. DCC feedback was awaited however, SHDC had been positive. A radical solution to provide funding for the project may have to be explored. It was noted that the town's sole car showroom was a Suzuki franchise and the company was likely to produce an electric vehicle in 2025. It was **RECOMMENDED** to note progress to date on the EV car hire project.

14.3 Kingsbridge thermal imaging camera – borrowing arrangements for 2024/25 in hand. Feedback from previous borrowers needed to be explored and in particular what remedies local residents had introduced to mitigate their heating leaks. The camera also needed to be used in Quay House to dovetail with agenda item 14.1 above. It was **RECOMMENDED** to promote the borrowing arrangements for the thermal imaging camera via social media and a press release.

14.4 Tree planting – further potential in Kingsbridge/potential in neighbouring parishes? Members discussed if there were opportunities to plant more trees in town or via liaison with surrounding parishes e.g. around the southern end of the leisure centre. Or indeed to promote to local residents planting of single trees in residential gardens. It was **RECOMMENDED** to consider a £1,000 budget in financial year 2025/26 for small tree planting projects within the town.

14.5 Water Restoration fund bid – update. There had been no news on the bid to date which related to the Kingsbridge-Salcombe Estuary and 2 local rivers.

24/15 TRANSPORT

Further to the previous meeting DCC had not expanded the free Sunday bus travel provided in North Devon during June 2024. The Kingsbridge vintage bus day on Saturday 21 September had promoted public transport. Members agreed that KTC's partial funding of the 160 town bus service at circa £550 should be retained in the next financial year 2025/26. All other local bus services were running satisfactorily particularly the 164 Kingsbridge-Totnes service which linked with rail travel. It remained a long term ambition to introduce a community bus service for the area.

24/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.30 p.m. on Tuesday 25 February 2025.

The meeting closed at 7.48 p.m.