

**NOTES FROM THE ASHDON FLOOD EVENT MEETING, FRIDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JULY 2007.**  
**9.30am. ASHDON VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT.**

Cllr. Mrs. Gail. Skillings (Chairman Ashdon Parish Council)  
Iain Hurwood (Essex C.C. Highways Engineer)  
Robin Wallbank (Essex C.C. Highways Footpaths & Bridleways)  
Cllr. Rod Chamberlain (Uttlesford District Council, Ashdon Ward)  
Mr. Dave Gillett (Environment Agency- Asset System Management Team Leader, Ely)  
Mr. Gary Morgan ( “ “ “ “ “ “ Officer, Ely)  
Mr. Phil Hunt (Uttlesford District Council Engineer)  
Mr. Darren Riddell (Essex County Fire & Rescue Service)  
Mr. Murray Hardy ( Uttlesford District Council Deputy Emergency Planning Officer)  
Cllr. Michael O'Malley (Ashdon Parish Council)  
Inspector Kevin Wakefield (Essex Police, Saffron Walden)  
Mr. David Green (Clerk, Ashdon Parish Council)

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Sir Alan Haselhurst M.P.  
Cllr. Simon Walsh (Essex County Council)  
Matt Rolfe (Anglian Water)

Cllr. Mrs. Skillings welcomed delegates to the meeting. Following introductions the Chairman invited comments and observations from delegates on the background to the flood on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

- **Seven families had moved out of their properties whilst restoration was carried out.**
- Approximately 273mm rain had been measured in Ashdon from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 to date. This was some 50% of the average rainfall for the country
- Approximately 76mm of rain had fallen in the 24 hours preceding the flood
- The water level had risen at an alarming rate and had been uncontrollable. It had subsided equally quickly.
- The Bourne valley constituted a flash catchment area of well drained chalky boulder clay with main streams rising at the Bourne Farm, rising land towards Swards End and Hales Wood all up stream of the village. A further tributary rising towards Camps End joined the Bourne below the bridge on Crown Hill
- An automatic warning system was available via the Environment Agency to indicate a 25mm rise of level of the river. This was designed to give 6 hours warning. It was noted that this would have been of no specific value in this instance as the river rose at an extremely fast rate.
- There are two categories of watercourse - main rivers and ordinary watercourses - and the “operating authorities” are the Environment Agency and the District Council respectively. The Bourne is an ordinary watercourse.
- All functions under the Land Drainage Act are permissive and there is no duty on any authority to carry out such functions
- Riparian owners (the owners of the watercourse or owners/occupiers of the adjoining land) are responsible for maintaining the watercourse so that the proper flow of water is not impeded. A riparian owner is not responsible for improving the watercourse.
- The operating authority has powers to enforce maintenance which it may back-up by serving notice and in default carry out the work and recharge the riparian owner. It may also carry out works itself.
- The E.A. has the same permissive powers as the local authority but focuses on main rivers.

- Highways are not a riparian owner with the highway boundary being the top of the bank of the watercourse on the highway side. In general Highways do not own the land over which the highway runs.
- After the 2001 floods the Bourne was defined as a Critical Ordinary Watercourse having the potential to flood a significant number of properties but was later removed from that category.
- Mathematical modelling of the river from below Knox End to source including a topographical survey would cost in excess of £20K. This could be used to predict flood events and investigate potential flood management options.
- Sandbags were of little use in this instance as the increase in water levels were too fast and too great.
- Householders along the river had installed flood prevention measures following the 2001 incident.
- There were no flood gates at Linton that would affect the flow of the Bourne through Ashdon

### **CARDINAL POINTS AND ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE DISCUSSIONS**

- **Highways** would carry out a survey of the bridges that they have responsibility for including bridleway bridges at The Wilderness upstream from the Village Museum. Work on replacing the bridges should be delayed until after any computer modelling of the watercourse has been undertaken. In the meantime Highways should investigate the opportunities to divert footpaths/bridleways where practicable to do away with the need for so many bridges. Any new bridges will need consent from the District Council and possibly the EA.
- **The Parish Council** would compose an information letter and/or leaflet to be distributed to every house in the parish to keep residents up to date. This would be done as soon as practicable.
- **The Parish Council** would write to Bartlow Estate and Thurlow Estates informing them of the situation regarding the river and seeking their cooperation in removing any obstructions to the watercourse on their land
- **Highways** would seek out records to determine ownership of the culvert at the Allotments. (It was noted that the cross-sectional area of the culvert was greatly reduced)
- **Anglian Water** were aware of the problems with the sewer surcharging. They had recently jettied the sewer at Crown Hill and were investigating the reasons why the sewer had blocked at this point. They were also looking into the need for vented manhole covers on the main sewer down from Church End. A survey into the capacity of the foul drainage system in the village could be requested to reassure residents that it is sufficient. Phil Hunt will liaise with AW
- **The District Council** offered to arrange hydraulic modelling of the river from below Knox End to Water End. This could be completed within a twelve week time scale. Normally the council would seek matched funding for such works but has in the past looked favourably on important projects. Committee approval will be necessary for this expenditure although much of the preparatory work can be carried out in advance. Subject to progress the findings and recommendations of the survey to be discussed at the next meeting. (The next Environment Committee is on 4 September).
- **The District Council** will investigate whether any form of flood warning is appropriate for Ashdon.
- **Essex Police** were aware of problems relating to a vehicle abandoned in the flood at Plumtree Grove on the Radwinter Road. Despite the Police and Fire Brigade attending the scene it was left there for approximately 12 hours causing a danger to traffic once the flood subsided.
- **Essex Police** were aware of looting in Steeple Bumpstead and would monitor the situation in Ashdon regarding those residents that had been forced to leave their homes whilst repairs were being carried out. They would monitor the situation regarding the elderly residents at Water End. One elderly couple had been found temporary accommodation in Saffron Walden, a second couple were living upstairs in their property with the intention of moving into a mobile home on site during restoration. The "village" would also monitor the situation and report any problems to the police.

## **THE WAY FORWARD.**

Phil Hunt (UDC 01799 510521, phunt@uttlesford.gov.uk) would act as liaison for the flood action team. All queries responses to be directed through him.

The next meeting was fixed for Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007, 9.30am. Ashdon Village Hall. When the above action points should have been completed.

The meeting was closed at 11.20am.