

**NOTE OF PUBLIC MEETING WITH THAMES WATER AND RESIDENTS – FLOODING SCRUTINY REVIEW- BUSINESS DESIGN CENTRE – MONDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2017 – 6.30P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Richard Greening, Una O'Halloran, Alice Perry and Caroline Russell  
Thames Water : Bob Collingham, Chris Davis, Matthew Hackshaw, Cecilia Larkin, Simon Hughes, James Kingston  
Residents of flooded area and Christine Lovett and Jackie Ambrosini – Business Improvement District

**Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair**

The Chair outlined the proposed format of the meeting and it was noted that Thames Water loss adjusters and insurers were available following the meeting if residents wished to raise individual concerns with them.

It was noted that a separate meeting with businesses had been arranged for 13 February at the Business Design Centre.

Thames Water made a presentation to the Committee details of the flooding incident and Thames response It was noted that Thames had arrived on site at 7.45a.m. and that the valves that needed to be shut off had finally been shut off at 9.15a.m. 4 men were needed to shut off each of the 4 valves as these were complex to shut down. It was noted that Thames took 4 hours 20 mins from when the leak was first reported to closing down the mains.

It was noted that the burst pipe was laid in approximately 1850-1875 and that an 800 metre section of the pipe that had burst is being relined. However pipe replacement did come with the implications of disruption for residents and businesses and road closures and planning will need to take place with TfL, the Council and residents and businesses.

An independent review into all the recent major bursts is taking place led by Paul Cutill OBE who is an industry expert.

Thames apologised to residents and businesses for the flood and that they would need to submit a case to OFWAT for increased funding for pipe replacement and it was hoped that the independent review would support this.

It was noted that the burst pipe in Upper Street is currently not back in operation until pipe relining is completed. Thames reported that to reline  $\frac{3}{4}$  km of piping will take 4 months at an estimated cost of £5m, High tech sensors had been installed.

Thames stated that they did not want to see residents or businesses to be massively out of pocket due to the flooding and already had made a goodwill payment of £1000 and a meeting was taking place with the Chief Executive to look at other measures and he would report back on the outcome. In addition residents and businesses will not have to pay water bills until the situation is resolved.

In response to a question it was stated that to replace the piping concerned in the last 8 major bursts would cost in the region of £55m and this was far in excess of any compensation/insurance payments made as a result and a case has to be made to the economic regulator to increase investment in the 5 year plan for pipe replacement.

It was stated that Thames had made a £300m profit in the last financial year and had reinvested 80% of its profits and had not paid a dividend to shareholders. Pipe replacement was based on risk and whilst leak detections measures are deployed these do not detect all risks, such as in Upper Street, where one wall of the pipe had got thinner and had led to the eventual burst. In some locations the detection method used is difficult to use and can take time. Other new technology techniques were being looked at.

In response to a question it was stated that the water had been re-routed to the Essex Road mains, however residents expressed concern that this section of pipe had had a history of previous bursts. Thames undertook to survey both the Essex Road and Upper Street main pipes to assess risks of bursts within the next 2 weeks and residents would be updated with the results.

Thames stated that extensive damage has been caused to seven neighbouring streets as a result of the flood. Around 54 residential and 44 commercial properties had been affected. Eighteen residents had been accommodated on the first night and 10 tenants are still in temporary accommodation. Staff on site had included

technicians and out of hours co-ordinator, senior local management team, loss adjustors, customer liaison, a clean up team and repair team on 24/7 rota.

A resident stated that it had taken a long time to turn the valves off to stop the leak and enquired whether this timescale could be improved. Thames stated that operatives had to turn the valves off manually and that if they were not turned off properly this could cause a hydraulic shock wave and cause further bursts along the pipe and each valve closing took approximately an hour. The system would be looked at but there is no 'magic wand' to reduce the time taken. Any automatic solution would be a long process and would need approval from the economic regulator and involve severe disruption to install.

Discussion took place as to the emotional stress that has been caused to residents and businesses and that discussions had taken place at Thames with a view to providing such services if future events occurred.

It was stated that the leak had first been reported to Thames at 5.07a.m. although CCTV had picked up the first leak at 4.00a.m. Thames stated that as part of the review of the incident they would be looking at how co-operation with other agencies could be improved.

Residents expressed the view that it was good fortune that no residents were killed in the flood and that where there are basement properties there should be a special response in place to deal with these situations. Thames responded that they were looking at this however local knowledge of properties would be needed for this. The view was expressed that the information could be found on flood maps and Thames stated that they would be doing this as part of their modelling process. In addition residents were informed that the Council's consultation on the flood plan was taking place and residents were welcome to contribute to this.

Reference was made to the fact that there had been 3 previous floods in the Upper Street area in recent years and the future risks needed to be assessed.

In response to a question it was stated that the Emergency Services would always respond faster to events like this than Thames and they liaised with them to get appropriate information to enable them to respond. Thames do have sandbags stocks, however they arrived too late to be effective in this instance.

Thames stated that they had visited properties in Devonia Road on the day of the flood.

Thames stated that in regard to whether they had a compensation policy that Thames had a range of policies and one that covered flooding situations, however this did not always provide sufficient recompense and he would be discussing the flood in Upper Street with Thames Chief Executive given the individual circumstances.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.