

**Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 18 January 2017**

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 18 January 2017 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:**           **Councillors:**       Greening (Chair), Jeapes (Vice-Chair), Chowdhury,  
Debono, Gantly, Klute, O'Halloran, O'Sullivan, Russell,  
Wayne and Heather  
**Also**               **Councillors:**       L.B.Hackney – Sharon Patrick  
**Present:**

**Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair**

**292        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**

Councillors Doolan. and Gantly for lateness

**293        DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**

None

**294        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**

None

**295        TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 December 2016 be confirmed as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them

**296        MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)**

None

**297        PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions and filming and recording of meetings

**298        CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 7)**

The Chair stated that the following meetings had provisionally been arranged in connection with the Flooding scrutiny and a copy of these had been circulated for Members;

The Chair welcomed Members and officers from L.B.Hackney and representatives of Thames Water and TfL who were also present that evening. In addition he welcomed Jennette Arnold the GLA Member representing the area.

Members and officers introduced themselves to the residents and businesses present.

The Chair informed the meeting that Thames Water had organised a meeting for residents and businesses at the Business Design Centre on 1<sup>st</sup>.February at 6.30p.m.at which Councillors would be present.

The Chair added that the meeting that evening would therefore concentrate on the asset management strategy of Thames and their emergency response procedure and look into the circumstances of the floods in Stoke Newington and Upper Street and other issues such as compensation could be dealt with in detail at the 1 February meeting

**299**

**FLOODING INCIDENTS IN UPPER STREET AND STOKE NEWINGTON - SCRUTINY REVIEW - WITNESS EVIDENCE THAMES WATER AND TFL (Item 8)**

Chris Davis, Simon Hughes and Rob Hales of Thames Water were present for discussion of this item. A statement from TfL was circulated and Mufu Durowoju and Andrew Sherry were in attendance from TfL.

During consideration of the matter the following main points were made –

- TfL stated that the incident on Upper Street occurred on 5 December and had resulted in a 36" trunk main burst which resulted in the full closure of Upper Street and numerous business and residents were flooded
- TfL asked Thames to work round the clock to complete the repair works and although the northbound carriageway was reopened in a short space of time the southbound carriageway remained closed until 16 December
- This closure resulted in serious disruption, on the first morning in particular with southbound traffic slow moving beyond Highbury Corner at considerable inconvenience to bus users. One lane southbound reopened on 16 December and the site completely cleared on 17 December
- During the course of the works TfL acted to prevent other works taking place on TfL roads that would have conflicted with the closure and kept the Council's streetworks team informed of the works and used roadside Variable message signs (VMS), to inform road users about the closure
- In Stoke Newington Thames attended a leak on 6 December and was unsuccessful in identifying the source of the leak and on 9 December Thames communicated that the leak may be on the trunk main. The main burst on 11 December and resulted in the full closure of the A10 Stoke Newington High Street at the junction with Northwood Road . Numerous properties and residents were flooded
- TfL asked Thames to complete the works as quickly as possible and although the northbound carriageway was reopened within a short space of time, the southbound carriageway remained closed until 23 December. This resulted in serious traffic disruption and all southbound traffic slow moving beyond Tottenham Hale gyratory. All buses had to be diverted and this resulted in inconvenience to bus passengers
- Thames reopened the road and completely cleared the site on 23 December. TfL during the works kept L.B.Hackney streetworks informed of the works and used mobile VMS at strategic locations to inform road users about the closure. In both the

above cases TfL had to make emergency/urgent traffic regulations order following discussions with the boroughs involved

- TfL engage with Thames on a regular basis at senior management level with respect to their performance, response to incidents and future maintenance of these assets, however due to the recent state of bursts the Chief Executive of TfL and Thames are conducting high level discussions
- It was stated that a current investigation between Thames and TfL on maintenance and replacement of Thames assets was being conducted and it was agreed that this report be submitted back to the Committee in 3 months time
- Discussion took place as to the impact on passengers of the road closures and it was stated that this had resulted in inconvenience and longer journeys for passengers but TfL had done all it could to mitigate this
- Reference was also made to the fact that shopkeepers had lost a great amount of business at the busiest period of the year due to the burst at Upper Street
- Concern was expressed at the burst in Upper Street and the effect on businesses and residents and given Thames profits more should be done to ensure pipes are in an acceptable condition
- Members stated that they had the impression that there had been more major leaks in the last few years than previously and that it should be looked into **whether this was in fact the case**. Thames stated that they would investigate this and report back in 3 months time when they came back to the Committee
- Thames stated that they did have discussions on a regular basis with TfL and Local Authorities to look at the best way to manage road closures and pipe works
- A Member enquired whether heavy traffic loads had an effect on the ageing Victorian pipes and the vibration was causing bursts. Thames stated that this was not the case in their view as the roads were concrete and even if there is a leak and the road is reinstated a curing element is added to enable the concrete to set quickly to avoid as much disruption to roads as possible. The Victorian pipes were in some cases over 150 years old and could have been subject to contamination or laid with various degrees of quality control in the past, but mainly the leaks were due to corrosion in the pipe
- Thames stated that they had investigated all the last 8 major bursts that had occurred recently and there was no common reason for the bursts
- In response to whether there had been an increase in burst pipes, TfL stated that they only had information on TfL roads and that there is a need to take a pan London view of this and engage with London Boroughs to ascertain this information
- In response to a question in respect of Thames Emergency response teams it was stated that Thames did have 24/7 emergency operations teams to deal with any emergency situation. Thames stated that the length of time to get to the Upper Street flood had been due to crews getting to the site, the need for safety inspections in respect of voids and water contamination etc. and then the need to turn off the valves which was a lengthy and complex process. The response teams crews were highly skilled and trained. Members were concerned however that it was a number of hours before the leak was stopped
- The view was expressed that businesses, residents and TfL had lost revenue as a result of the closures and it was stated that Thames were in discussion with residents and businesses on compensation
- Reference was made to the fact that many commuters were confused about the arrangements for diverted routes and TfL stated that they would look at their website with a view to improving the information available, however when there are diversions they have travel ambassadors at bus stops to advise passengers of diversions in place
- The GLA Member stated that the situation with burst pipes was not satisfactory all across London at the present time and that the GLA would be interviewing Thames

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Director of External Affairs the following day and Councillor Greening would be giving evidence

- Thames stated that they had commissioned an independent review into the recent leaks headed by an industry expert and this will look into the reasons for the leaks in the last 12 months and if there any patterns to the bursts and lessons that can be learnt going forward and this would assist in building a case with the economic regulator to look at investing in the assets in future. Thames stated that they would submit this report to the Committee when it is available
- Thames stated that the economic regulator set the amount of money that Thames could raise on guidance from the Department of the Environment and this is closely controlled. There needed to be a prioritisation for the investment plans which included things like safety, quality and availability of water supply and Thames had not been able to pay a dividend to shareholders in the last 18 months. A Member stated that Thames increased their profit by 29 % in the previous year and that in their view Thames profits should be put back into asset management
- Thames added that it is difficult to deal with pipes on trunk road as these pipes were large and not visible and often of Victorian origin
- Thames stated that they had had loss adjustors on site quickly and had provided for evacuation and provision of temporary accommodation, where necessary, with the assistance of the Local Authority, and there had been a facility provided for access to Thames staff at the Business Design Centre and this had now relocated to 222 Upper Street to assist residents and businesses. In addition a meeting with residents and businesses to discuss outstanding concerns had been arranged for 1 February at the Business Design Centre
- In response to a question it was stated that in Stoke Newington 20/22 residents/businesses had been affected and in Upper Street 120 and there had been 18 residents who had had to go into temporary accommodation and there were still 10 residents in alternative accommodation and there had been 104 insurance claims from residents
- The Upper Street burst had now been repaired but was still not in operation and would be subject to further testing, however the repair had been carried out with the highest quality pipe available. Thames apologised sincerely for the bursts and the inconvenience to residents and businesses that had been caused
- A Member expressed the view that Thames were aware that these pipes were Victorian and subject to corrosion and bursting and Thames was run as on a commercial basis and not as a public service
- Thames stated that they did have modelling to predict the degradation of the network and that this is being independently reviewed. Pipe replacement is prioritised and Thames operated within a 5 year plan of investment and the independent review being carried out will inform this. However it should be noted that one section of a pipe may be in excellent condition whereas the next bit of pipe is leaking and this needs to be looked at when replacing pipes in entirety as it could be a waste of money and resources and Thames had a duty to act efficiently
- A Member referred to ongoing problems of dampness in flooded properties and whether any advice had been given on this. Thames stated that they had supplied dehumidifiers and other equipment and the Member stated that he would supply the information he had on this and make it available for the 1 February meeting with residents and businesses
- Councillor Patrick expressed concern that the Stoke Newington leak had been reported some days earlier and despite Thames being on site they had not been on site all the time and that they had not identified it was likely to develop into a major burst. The major burst would not have happened if they had fixed the leak initially
- Thames responded that whilst the leak had been reported earlier that week the risk assessment of a major burst had been unsatisfactory and apologised for this

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- Member expressed concern that when leaks were reported there appeared little feedback and communication from Thames about what action was being taken and that there needed to be an improvement in response times given the volumes of water that have been lost as a result of these floods
- In response to a question it was stated by TfL that where there was an emergency it was not necessary for Thames to apply for a permit for works before the works could begin
- Concern was expressed that it appeared that the Victorian pipes on the valves required more than one person and a great deal of time to close down and whether new technology could improve this. Thames stated that they were exploring new technology solutions and how it could assist in this and indeed a new system called SYRINIX which will be able to check pressure changes in the pipe had been installed in Upper Street.
- Thames were now embarking on a 4 element strategy to improve performance - looking at a detailed review of recent bursts and patterns of these bursts within the last 12 months, what they could do better in terms of response and repairs, identify any common factors for bursts. In addition the burst pipe at Upper Street had now been repaired using a 2"-3" plastic pipe inserted into the old pipe and that this type of pipe is extremely strong and manufactured to stringent conditions. Furthermore Thames were looking at options for managing risk and to identify techniques that are available to monitor and identify leaks at an earlier stage
- Thames stated that to replace all the Victorian pipework in London would create 'gridlock' and there is an need to find a solution that minimises disruption and there is a need to get the balance right
- Thames outlined the process for turning off the valves on Victorian pipes and that this operation was very skilled and needed to be carried out carefully
- Thames added that the intention is to investigate every 100 metres of pipe where there have been recent bursts to form an analysis of risk and to understand the quality and type of pipe involved and if needed make the necessary investment. It was not possible to investigate every bit of pipework however the intention is to rank the ones that are most vulnerable and assess other pipework in a structured way
- Concern was expressed that the two flooded areas in Stoke Newington and Upper Street had been subject to similar leaks over the past few years and that this should be looked at. Thames stated that the two sections of pipe in Stoke Newington and Upper Street had now been repaired however these parts of the pipe were still not operational but were being tested, however there were some other pipework across London where the testing equipment that is used would not be able to be used
- Reference was made to the fact that Thames should make more use of social media like other utility companies and Thames stated that they were in negotiations with a communications company at the current time and that there will be improvements in future and more use made of social media to inform customers and the general public
- Discussion took place as to the mains replacement programme and Thames stated that work did take place with TfL and boroughs to minimise disruption and the process of wholesale replacement of pipes had been discontinued as this was felt to be wasteful as Thames were replacing serviceable sections of pipe in the process and they needed to justify their 5 year plan to the economic regulator
- Thames stated that the target is to replace 700km of pipe in the next 3/4 years of the current 5 year plan. Members expressed concern at this level of progress it would take Thames over 200 years to replace all the Victorian piping in London and given that some of these pipes were already 150 years old this was clearly unacceptable. Thames responded that this was clearly not acceptable, however they had to present a case to the economic regulator for extra investment and the independent review currently being carried out would assist in this. The costs of only renewing

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the Stoke Newington and Upper Street piping alone would cost in excess of £10m and that new techniques needed to be identified to repair and replace pipes without bringing London to 'gridlock'

- A Member referred to the critical response procedures put in place by Thames for dealing with situations near to tube stations, electricity sub-stations etc. and Thames stated that the response to the Upper Street flood was no different to that which would have been used in these circumstances
- In response to a question Thames stated that there could be no guarantee of further floods in Upper Street and Stoke Newington but could guarantee that the measures that had now been put in place were the best that could be achieved to minimise any chance of flooding in these areas again. All the new piping used was to the highest quality plastic available with electro fusion joints and could withstand extremely high pressure
- A Member referred to the fact that in the last 5 years Islington residents had paid over £180m in water bills and this is without the contribution from businesses and in view of events and lack of investment this was not acceptable. Thames stated that they were trying to improve hence the independent review recently set up. Thames stated that they would arrange an inspection for Members of the new type of piping installed
- Discussion took place as to the large amount of construction work taking place in the south of the borough and across London, including Crossrail and the amount of heavy traffic and Thames stated that discussions did take place with relevant parties and permits had to be issued for works
- The Chair stated that when Thames came back on 8 March to the Committee they could discuss progress on the incident reports produced by them and any update of the independent review progress referred to earlier. In addition information should be provided on whether there had been an increase in major bursts in the last 12 months

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That a report, as referred to above be submitted to the Committee detailing the results of the investigation between Thames Water and TfL on maintenance and replacement of assets in 3 months time
- (b) That Thames Water investigate whether there has been an increase in major bursts in the last 2 years and report back thereon to the Committee
- (c) That Thames Water report back to the Committee, once the independent review, as referred to above, has been completed into reasons and patterns of bursts and investing in assets once this is available
- (d) That a site visit be arranged by Thames Water for Members of the Committee to see the new SYNIRIX system in place in Upper Street as referred to above and the new piping that has been installed

The Chair thanked Thames Water and TfL for attending, together with Members and officers from L.B.Hackney, members of the public and Jennette Arnold GLA Member

The meeting ended at 9.55p.m.

CHAIR