

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 8 March 2017

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 8 March 2017 at 6.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Greening (Chair), Jeapes (Vice-Chair), O'Halloran, Gallagher, Wayne and Heather

Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair

312 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Councillors Gantly, Doolan, Chowdhury and Russell

313 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None

314 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None

315 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 2017 be confirmed as a correct record of the proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them
- (b) That approval of the minutes of the meeting of 18 January 2017 be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee

316 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)

None

317 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)

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

318 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 7)

The Chair outlined the future meetings of the Committee as follows –

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FLOODING SCRUTINY - WITNESS EVIDENCE (Item 8)

Professor Roger Crouch, City University was present.

Nigel Dyer and James Kingston, Thames Water were also present for discussion of this item and gave a verbal update to the Committee during which the following main points were made –

- The report on the incidents of the last major 8 bursts, including the Upper Street burst, had been expected at the end of February, but because of the need for further additional information requested of the independent consultant, Paul Cuttill, to supplement the review, this is now not expected to be ready until April
- Discussion took place as to the precise location of the 8 recent major bursts and the differing sites that Thames Water had detailed previously, and the precise list was clarified for Members
- Thames Water stated that there was a need to look at how they responded to emergencies, such as Upper Street, and whilst it had to be recognised that Thames Water were not a blue light service, they need to ensure that they responded as quickly as possible to such incidents. In addition, they needed to look at issues in relation to the wider network, and the control regimes in place and it was important that the independent review took these factors into account
- Thames Water also stated that a wider review had also been commissioned, in relation to the remainder of the network, with a specific focus on historical bursts on the main trunk mains network and whether there were any patterns to the bursts, the type of piping e.g. plastic or metal in place, new technology that may be available to detect leaks, monitoring techniques and also the aspect of asset management and the replacement of pipes. There is also the need to look at the operator model and how Thames Water responds with staff having the necessary skillsets to deliver
- There is also a need to look at the asset risk management strategy and the consequences of bursts, and how Thames Water responded in an emergency
- It was noted that this review would be concluded in September and supplement the review to be completed in March, that is referred to earlier
- Reference was made to the main trunk pipes in Canonbury ward, and that these needed to be surveyed, given the potential for serious injury if these burst, due to basements and proximity to large housing estates. Thames Water undertook to investigate when these pipes were last surveyed and inform Councillors Jeapes thereon
- It was noted that the initial surveys taking place at present in the Upper Street area were from City Road to Colebrooke Row, in order to ascertain which pipes needed to be replaced, and there had to be co-ordination with TfL, the Council and other relevant authorities to get necessary permissions for road closures
- Thames Water explained that it was difficult to detect leaks, such as the Upper Street burst, from their normal monitoring methods, as it was felt that this was caused by a thinning of the wall of the pipe from outside corrosion, although this is still to be definitely substantiated. This could have taken many years for the pipe to degrade to the extent that it had caused such a major burst
- Concern was expressed at the speed of the response of the Thames Water emergency team to the Upper Street burst, and that given the proximity to the London Underground station, this was even more concerning, given the problems that the flooding of the London Underground would have caused

- Thames Water stated that they had plan in place to deal with an emergency response in incidents such as this, and the Thames Water Control Centre analyses the risk of any flood to an underground station/hospital etc.
- Part of the work of the independent review commissioned included looking at new and developing technologies in order to detect and monitor leaks, although it had to be noted that at present corrosion of the pipe from the outside, such as was possible in the Upper Street flood, would be difficult to detect with the systems currently available for detecting leaks
- It was stated that it would be useful if Thames Water could provide details of the main trunk roads in the borough, and details of the Victorian mains replacement that had taken place in the borough, together with those that were programmed in for the future
- Thames Water stated that they had replaced over one third of the Victorian pipes in the borough to date, but future plans needed to take account of the fact that there would be increased disruption to the public and traffic congestion, as a result of any works, and the co-operation of other organisations would be needed, as well as the financial constraints for Thames Water of such replacement needing to be considered
- Members expressed the view that communication between Thames Water, TfL and other public utilities needed to be improved e.g. pipe replacement could have taken place at the same time as the recent TfL works that closed Holloway Road, and that in future, communication should take place to ensure such works are co-ordinated to minimise disruption
- Thames Water stated that they were looking at the use of Twitter and the use of TfL CCTV technology to identify flood situations, and Thames Water added they had a dedicated Research and Development team that is looking at developing new technology to monitor and control leaks and that this team is being supplemented
- In response to a statement that it would be useful if Thames Water could identify where flooding could cause the most damage/potential loss of life, particularly in low lying areas, Thames Water stated that they would add this to the scope of the independent review being carried out
- A Member stated that this was the third burst in the Upper Street area in the past 15 years on the 36" main trunk mains, in roughly the same location and that this fact should have been part of Thames Water risk assessment programme. Thames Water responded that their records indicated that there had been 7 leaks in Upper Street in recent years and 3 of these had been major leaks and that these factors were being considered as part of the review process
- In response to a question it was stated that the previous repair to the Upper Street pipe in 2005 was pipe replacement rather than relining
- Thames Water stated that to replace the Victorian mains network may take over 30 years and they would wish to do this as quickly as possible, given the constraints and emerging technologies that may be able to be employed
- Discussion took place as to the time that Thames Water received the initial information on the Upper Street flood, and the time taken to respond. Thames Water stated that they had not been contacted by TfL about the flood, but had received this information from the Fire Brigade, but not the details of the severity of the flood. The quickest response from a Thames emergency technician to reach the Upper Street site had taken 58 minutes and this technician had come from Chingford, and he had arrived at 7.36a.m., However the emergency response arrangements were being looked at as part of the independent review. Other technicians were located further away and had taken longer to respond
- Reference was made to the discrepancy in information the Committee had received about when the first Thames Water emergency technician had arrived on site and Thames Water stated that they would clarify the details and respond thereon

- Discussion took place as to the fact that the Thames Water Control room had identified on their system that there had been a burst, and had also received a call from the Fire Brigade, and yet it had taken some time before these two reports were linked and the emergency response teams despatched. Thames Water stated that they recognised improvements did need to be made
- In response to a question as to whether there had been a reduction in emergency response teams in previous years, Thames Water stated that they had in fact taken on additional staff, as they had recognised the need for more skilled people to be available
- A Member enquired as to the process of compensation, especially for businesses who had suffered as a result of the flood and any consequential loss of trading, and it was noted that some businesses were still unable to open. Thames Water stated that no businesses would be materially worse off as a result of the flood, and that they had requested their loss adjustors to work with individual claimants on a like for like basis and Thames Water would make up any difference and payment would be made in a single cheque
- In response to a question Thames Water stated that, provided businesses could demonstrate loss, they would make up the profit margin for goods lost as a result of the flood. Thames Water added that discussions were taking place with individual businesses and that they had asked their loss adjustors to expedite claims and a further meeting between Thames Water and their insurers and individual businesses was scheduled for later that month, where individual businesses could raise issues of concern
- Concern was expressed that some businesses may not have records of stock, or had had these destroyed in the flood. Thames Water stated that they recognised that some businesses may have difficulty in this regard, but reiterated that no business should suffer a material loss, as a result of the flood, but it would be for the loss adjustors to determine and work with businesses and consult with Thames Water in the event of difficulties. Thames Water reiterated that no business should be 'out of pocket' as a result of the flood, and that they would make up any difference from that assessed in the amount determined by their loss adjustors
- Discussion took place as to the reopening event and that this is being considered and discussions were taking place between the Angel BID, businesses and Thames Water. It was stated that it is hoped that Thames Water would provide both revenue and capital funding, with a series of events taking place, and that in addition an event is being planned for Council staff to reward them for the excellent work that they did for residents and businesses on the day of the flood
- The Chair stated that to improve communication between emergency authorities, the Council and Thames Water it would be beneficial for Thames Water to be involved as part of the emergency planning process, and to share information with them. Thames Water stated that, whilst they were not an emergency response authority, they did have a duty of care and that they were in favour of co-operation and sharing of information
- In response to a question, as to whether the relining of the pipes in the Upper Street area would result in road closures, it was stated that once the surveys had been completed discussions would be taking place with stakeholders the following week, and this would inform the plan going forward. However, road closures or diversions would need to be agreed with TfL and traffic management orders and other necessary approvals obtained

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Thames Water inform the Committee as soon as possible, when the report on the recent 8 major bursts is available, in order that this report can be considered by the Committee at the earliest opportunity

- (b) That Thames Water provide a map of major trunk roads in the borough to the Council, and also details of the distances of these mains, in order that the risk of flooding to low lying areas, in particular, can be assessed. In addition, Thames Water should supply details of the Victorian pipes that had been replaced in the borough, as part of the Victorian mains replacement programme and the programme of any future works
- (c) That Thames Water provide a timeline, from the first report of the leak to the despatch of the first operative on site, and also confirm the time that the first Thames Water operative arrived on site, and if this was in fact at 7.36a.m. as stated, given that this appeared to conflict with earlier evidence the Committee had received
- (d) That Thames Water investigate when the pipes in Canonbury Ward were last surveyed and inform Councillor Jeapes thereon
- (e) That it be noted that Thames Water undertook to include in the scope of the independent review being carried out, an analysis of where flooding could cause the most damage/potential loss of life, particularly in low lying areas

The Chair thanked Nigel Dyer and Simon Kingston for attending

The meeting ended at 8.00p.m.

CHAIR