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**TONBRIDGE & MALLING**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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19 February 2014

**TONBRIDGE FORUM - MONDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 2014**

The following papers were made available for collection at the end of the meeting:

- § **Minutes of public meeting: Hildenborough - 4 February 2014 (Pages 3 - 8)**
  
- § **Minutes of public meeting: Danvers Road residents - 5 February 2014 (Pages 9 - 14)**
  
- § **Responses arising from public meetings (Pages 15 - 26)**

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## HILDENBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

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### Minutes of Public Meeting held on Tuesday, 4 February 2014 in St John's Church Hall at 7.30pm

**Present:** Mr M Dobson (chairman) Mr S Medlock (T&MBC)  
Mr M O'Brien (T&MBC) Mr A Pearce (EA)  
Mr N Gunn (EA) Mr T Norton (EA)

**Also present:** Mrs P Gow (Clerk) Cllr Rhodes  
Cllr V Dagger  
Parish Councillors M Baker  
M Brown M Coles  
D Haugh M Nairne  
N Simpkins  
Approximately 180 residents

The chairman welcome everyone and introduced officers from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and the Environment Agency.

Andrew Pearce, Area Manager for Kent and South London who is responsible for Kent, Surrey and London, including the Thames Barrier, said he had worked for the Environment Agency for 21 years and was on duty on Christmas Eve, 2013.

He went on to explain the role of the Environment Agency as having an operational role, looking after assets and providing a flood warning service. He said they wanted to look at what had happened over Christmas from residents' points of view and investigate what could be done to alleviate the impact of flooding. The Environment Agency would be happy to come along and meet with residents again should this prove necessary.

Mr Pearce handed over to Neil Gunn to explain the operation of the Leigh Barrier and the events which led up to the flooding during the Christmas holiday.

Mr Gunn provided an illustrated commentary on what occurred from 23<sup>rd</sup> December. He said the amount of rain falling during this time was very exceptional with 60-70mm of rain falling in the Upper Medway catchment area on already saturated ground. It has been the wettest December ever with 500% of long term rain falling. He illustrated this by saying in 1968 there was 250 m<sup>3</sup> in 2000 220 m<sup>3</sup> and in 2013 300+ m<sup>3</sup>.

He provided a map which showed which areas were at risk of flooding from the River Medway in Hildenborough. The Environment Agency has a supervisory role of flooding from all sources.

Mr Norton is the team leader and he sets up systems. He said the Environment Agency do not offer a system for a flood warning in Hildenborough because of the complex nature of flooding which occurs in the area. In addition to the River Medway backing up through Hawden Stream, there was surface water, drainage ditches and foul water. Any flood warning system would be unreliable because of the complexity of the flooding.

It is possible for Hildenborough residents to be given the same level of flood warning as residents and businesses in Tonbridge and an offer was made to include those who signed up, using the forms on the chairs or on line, but this would only be for flooding from the River Medway.

Mr Gunn then explained the working of the Leigh Flood Barrier. He said there were some misconceptions of how it works and went on to say that it was designed to reduce the risk of flooding in Tonbridge passing some benefit further downstream. It is 1.5 km long and 5m high at its highest and hold 5.5 mill. m<sup>3</sup> of water. It is managed by three radial gates with one, at least, always being open. Only trained operators are allowed to use it and they undertake regular exercises using simulated events of all types.

During the Christmas period there were numerous checks, and inspecting engineers were on site during Christmas. At the beginning of December the storage was empty and by Christmas day it was full. They are continually updated by the Met Office who supplies 5 day ahead forecasts, which are fine tuned as any expected damaging event approaches. Rainfall is measured at multiple locations up and down stream of the barrier. The flow is measured in cubic metres per second and there was a peak maximum of 342 m<sup>3</sup> per second the safe level is 160 m<sup>3</sup> a second. The legal storage is a maximum of 28.0 mAOD/ 5.5mill m<sup>3</sup>. This is set out by the Reservoir's Act.

Looking to the future, capital investment is planned in the Medway Catchment Plan and is directed to raising the available storage in the Leigh Barrier to 10.10 mill m<sup>3</sup>. It is estimated this will be by 2035 and would involve raising the barrier by 1m. Funding is from a number of different sources and could be brought forward should this investment be made available.

There are other options to investigate such as changing the legal maximum from 28.0 to 28.5 mAOD. A safety gap must be left at the top. The Agency want to build a clear picture of what has caused the flooding so they can work with the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board, Borough Council etc. They know that giving flood warnings help to cut the cost and community action can help with this.

Mr Dobson opened the meeting up to questions from the floor.

The first questioner wanted reassurance that all the equipment at the barrier was in working order on the days between 21 and 26 December, confirmation the rules on operation were followed and it was manned 24 hours every day. The answer to all of these was yes. He went on to say that during the summer when no rain is forecast there is no one monitoring but beyond a certain threshold there is always monitoring taking place. There was an offer to give the logs to the Parish Council for the critical period during Christmas.

The next questioner wanted to know what caused the flood. The answer was that the Environment Agency did their very best to reduce the risk but were beaten by the intensity of rain.

The third questioner wanted to know why the Environment Agency does not have a plan of the whole drainage system. This is not the responsibility of the Environment Agency but they will form technical groups with Kent Highways, Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board, and Southern Water to see if there are solutions to the highways drainage.

A local resident of Leigh Road said that Leigh Road was cut off for a considerable number of days during the Christmas period because a drain was blocked. Kent Highways' engineers would not listen to local residents who explained what the problem was and instead installed a pump for a number of days. Finally last week the drain was repaired in anticipation of tonight's meeting.

There was criticism of Kent Highways for not maintaining the gulleys and drains and it was felt they needed to reprioritize their resources.

Historically the Parish Council managed a flood warning system with wardens but this was disbanded by the Environment Agency in 2003. It was hoped that following the information gathered at this meeting a more effective system would result to warn residents of flooding.

The next questioner had noted that the flooding coincided with high tides and asked whether this would have had an effect on the volume of water flooding the water meadows. They also wanted to know why more water wasn't released earlier to alleviate the problem. It was further stated that in the past all agencies had quickly pulled together.

In response Mr Norton said that there was multi-agency action on Christmas Eve. He explained the system is to have a severe weather telephone conference with the Met Office and all agencies when there is a vague threat. All agencies are alerted and come together when it is established this is an actual threat. The questioner asked when this happened on this occasion. The answer was they did not know but would answer this at the meeting to be held in Tonbridge on 5<sup>th</sup> February. There would already have been a review of flooding but this had been cancelled due to the continued bad weather and threat of more flooding this coming weekend.

Co-ordination of agencies would in future be located at Tonbridge Gateway and they will be working together to provide a better service. It was agreed this was lacking at Christmas.

In answer to the second part of the question it was explained that the tide did not have any effect on the extent of the flooding as the furthest tidal effect had been recorded at East Farleigh. The Leigh Flood storage area leaflet gives details of how the volume of a known inflow is managed to optimise its use. The reservoir has to be kept below the legal limit and so the rest is let out. There is a safe volume release level and at 180 m<sup>3</sup> per second Tonbridge floods. A senior manager has to sign off a discharge above normal. On Christmas Eve the level was within 10mm of maximum level and this was being monitored at 15min. intervals. It was as close to a perfect operation as could have been expected. There was more water coming in than flowing out and so the gates had to be opened to release more water.

It was accepted that the flood ambassadors sent out to the affected areas had not done a good job in Hildenborough and this was identified by managers who immediately organised training before they were reallocated to other areas and further training will be put in place.

The capacity of the bridges is critical as these hold back water and increase the extent of the flooded area beyond the water meadows. It was suggested that dredging the river would help to address the lack of capacity under the bridges. The response was that it would be considered during the review.

Finding funding sources would be a priority before any work could be undertaken and discussions will take place with Paul Carter, KCC Leader, next week.

The next question concerned the late warnings given. The questioner was flooded at 2.10pm and the flood warning came 2hrs later. Earlier in the day there was nothing in the Hawden Stream, all the water came from Tonbridge. 157 people were flooded in Hildenborough and 127 in Tonbridge. Tonbridge residents get warnings but Hildenborough residents do not.

The respondent reiterated that flooding in Hildenborough comes from a number of different sources, sewage, drainage and ditches and consequently the service was withdrawn as inappropriate. Those who do get flooded as a result of the River Medway will be given the same service as for Tonbridge.

A further discussion took place on the effect of raising the height of the flood by 0.5m. This would result in it becoming level with the railway line. The proposed project for 2035 would be looking at ways to protect the railway line should the height be raised.

It was suggested by the questioner that a 1m bund at the back of the gardens would protect houses from flooding and the water could be safely stored in the water meadow beyond. The response from the Environment Agency was that this could have an impact further upstream or further afield on the flood plain and this would need to be modelled.

Residents were urged to sign up for flood alerts as this weekend it was currently predicted by the Met Office that high winds and very heavy rain would affect this area. There has been rain every day since Christmas but not with the same intensity and so far, to date, further flooding has been averted.

The Environment Agency would be looking into what could be done in the short term which would have a high impact on flooding.

Residents continued to express their frustration at only receiving a 20 min. warning, if any at all. It was stated that residents in Hawden Close did have sufficient time to raise some of their furniture

The Environment Agency reiterated that they would be looking at the information gathered via the current meetings with the aim to improve the flood warning system, and have more timely, accurate and consequently a better co-ordination between agencies. Resources will be focussed and better information provided than at Christmas. They are happy to hold a surgery to meet with individuals, bringing in more staff to answer questions.

Cllr Rhodes said he received his flood warning at work only to be told by his son the water was in the garden. He raced home and went straight round to Leybank and Bramble Close. He went on to say that the Environment Agency staff who arrived did not know anything and did not give any support.

(As noted above the Environment Agency agreed there was room for improvement and since given training.)

Since 2000 things have been pretty good and he had a feeling we had been caught napping. The next time it was requested that the amount of water to be released should be stated. It was further suggested that flood ambassadors would be better replaced by local flood wardens. There was a scheme managed by the Parish Council which had been disbanded by the Environment Agency. The need is to find a system to disseminate information accurately and quickly, such as a cascade system.

The next questioner said that at noon they were told by the Environment Agency there was no flooding likely but within a few hours there was flooding. The Environment Agency would look into this and see what was logged. It was further asked whether dredging the reservoir would help, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council had asked for permission and some de silting had been done. The Environment Agency would sort out all the information to find what was true and what could be done. The drainage issue and long term works would be looked into.

The Environment Agency promised a forward command centre, closer liaison between Leigh control room and on the ground, they would make sure agency staff and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council received information. They will try to put as much as possible in place before this weekend.

Another questioner enquired why Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, on their website, gave instructions to buy sand bags from B & Q. The officer replied that they hold a stock of 2,000 and very quickly ran out. They admitted there were not enough to go round all properties at immediate risk to flooding. It was suggested that a local support system would help disabled and vulnerable people as they could not rely on local authority support.

Looking forward it was hoped that flood warnings could be sent by text. The Environment Agency would be looking to working with the community to sort out flood warnings. They would be arranging a surgery via the Parish Council. Residents were reminded to return the questionnaires which had been distributed. These would give valuable information on the extent and causes of flooding.

Mr Dobson thanked everyone for their contributions and promised a special Parish Council meeting to bring back further information and suggestions for the future.

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## **EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO FLOODING – Christmas 2013**

### **Multi-agency meeting with residents of Danvers Road, and surrounding area, affected by flooding**

**Wednesday 5 February 2014 at the Angel Centre, Tonbridge**

**Present:** Representatives from the Environment Agency; Southern Water Services; Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Leader – Councillor N Helsop and Chief Executive – J Beilby); Kent County Council Highways and Transportation; Kent County Council Emergency Planning and Kent Police (Chief Inspector J Kirby).

Together with Sir John Stanley MP and residents of Danvers Road, Barden Road and other surrounding areas affected by flooding.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Leader (Councillor N Heslop) of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council welcomed everyone to the meeting and was pleased to announce that multi-agency attendance had been secured to listen to the views of those residents affected by the recent flooding in and around Danvers Road, Tonbridge. It was hoped that open discussion would help identify where improvements could be made and how these could be delivered.

All thoughts, ideas and actions put forward from this meeting would be captured and reported into the relevant committees at both Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the other agencies. Councillor Heslop advised of his commitment and intention to progress and monitor all outcomes. In addition, the next meeting of the Tonbridge Forum, arranged for Monday 17 February 2014, would also focus on the emergency response to flooding and enable agencies to report back progress made on issues and concerns raised.

A range of questions had been received in advance of the meeting, co-ordinated by the community Facebook page '*Help and support for Tonbridge and surrounding areas affected by the floods*'. Councillor Heslop commented that this demonstrated strong community values and a real example of people working together to support each other.

Following a presentation from the Environment Agency, residents would have the opportunity to raise concerns and ask questions from any of the agencies attending.

Sir John Stanley MP was also in attendance and he would speak later in the proceedings.

### **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

Reference was made to a 'flooding questionnaire' circulated before the meeting, which residents were invited to complete. Responses would help the Environment Agency (EA) better understand the full picture of the flooding event in the area and the impact

on individuals and their community. The information collected would help to improve the EA's response to flooding and their work with partner agencies. It would also be used to develop and improve flood warning services in the area, so that more detail could be given in messages to make them as accurate and timely as possible. Residents were advised that the EA wanted to work with local communities and other authorities to improve collectively on preparation and response to future flooding events and identify where, working together, the impact could be reduced.

The presentation of the EA centred on many of the questions submitted in advance of the meeting. These questions would also be answered formally on the community Facebook action page.

Severe weather between 17 December 2013 and 17 January 2014 meant that the ground was saturated and rivers high when approximately 65-70 mm of rain fell during 23 and 24 December. This led to flooding in many areas, particularly Danvers Road, Barden Road, Avebury Avenue and surrounding properties. However, there appeared to be three contributing factors to the flooding:

- (1) Intense rainfall causing surface water
- (2) Overflowing drains
- (3) River Medway bursting it's banks

Residents were told that the EA provided flood warning for rivers and did not take account of surface water and/or overflowing drains. However, the Agency was interested to hear from residents how and when they were flooded as this could help identify contributing factors, which in turn could identify possible prevention options.

The EA also aimed to deliver flood warnings 2 hours in advance, although in Tonbridge on the morning of Christmas Eve they managed to give 3.5 hours notice. The EA understand that the flooding initially started from the foul and surface water sewers rather than from the river.

In response to questions regarding the operation of the Leigh Flood Storage Area and control of the flood water levels, the EA remained confident that the management of the barrier had been appropriate. The operation of the barrier had accorded with legislation (River Medway Flood Relief Act 1976), fully trained staff had been in place and the site was independently audited every six months. Appropriate evidence was available to support the actions taken and this could be provided at a later date.

Finally, the EA highlighted issues already identified for action:

- § The need for capital investment
- § Improvements to flood warnings, communications and information
- § Reduce risk of surface flooding
- § Community action and how the Agency could work with communities to address concerns

## **RESIDENTS MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

Residents voiced severe concern and frustration at the lack of communication, not only

between agencies but with communities, particularly the lack of sufficient warning given prior to evacuation and the inaccurate/conflicting information provided from EA staff in the area. In addition, residents were angry and disappointed at the lack of support, assistance and guidance offered and complained that not enough help had been received during and after the flooding. There was also a feeling that agencies had not accepted responsibility following the event.

Questions were asked about:

- (1) Surface water drainage and if an improved cleaning regime, at a different time of year, would be introduced; blocked drains and did these contribute to significant flooding in some areas; query over whether a pump on the drain system operated by Southern Water Services was working.

Kent County Council Highways and Transportation advised that currently drains were scheduled for cleansing every 12 months. A reactive cleanse as part of the flood cleanup operation would be undertaken.

Southern Water Services resolved to investigate all issues fully and apologised if they had got things wrong. Residents were advised that the pump, based in Sovereign Way, had been repaired several months ago. However, it was possible that it had not been switched back on, although as it was part of a two pump system Southern Water Services were confident this had not impacted sufficiently on the surface water problem.

**Action: In response to further queries, Southern Water Services agreed to check what areas were covered by the pump, if and how long the pump was out of operation and report back to residents.**

**Action: Kent County Councillor R Long would pass concerns regarding surface water drainage and the cleansing regime to the relevant Cabinet Member at County.**

- (2) The impact of planning decisions leaving some areas exposed to flooding and would future planning decisions take into account the effect of building on the flood plain. Some residents felt that existing development was far less resilient to flooding and created an impact for existing properties.

In respond it was explained that the Local Planning Authority (Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council) had to comply with legislation set out and were bound by certain rules within the National Policy Planning framework. However, the Environment Agency was a statutory consultee on new developments and the advice received had to be seriously considered before reaching a decision.

The Chief Executive of the Borough Council (J Beilby) advised that Tonbridge and Malling worked closed with the EA and continued to have discussions at a local level to understand where flooding pressures and tensions existed. The importance of working together to make improvements was recognised.

- (3) Communication between staff and agencies. Concern was raised about the

warning system and the automated text alerts not being sent early enough. No central communication point in Tonbridge to provide accurate messages. Conflicting messages received from EA staff in the area (flood ambassadors). Inaccurate information received over the telephone from EA staff.

The EA advised that a Severe Weather Advisory Group had met on 22 December to advise and co-ordinate a multi agency response. All of the agencies had met at regular intervals over the Christmas period and during the flood event.

It was acknowledged that the flood ambassadors did not necessarily have local knowledge and, therefore, the EA apologised for the quality of information given.

**Action: A potential solution to the warning system would be to appoint flood wardens who would inform neighbours of any flood risk. This system had worked successfully in other parts of the county. (Environment Agency)**

**Action: Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council advised that the offices at Tonbridge Castle would be set up as a central communication and liaison point in any future event.**

Chief Inspector Kirby briefly outlined the role of Kent Police and advised that a number of addresses had been attended by officers once the evacuation stage had been reached. Mobile police stations and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had been out and about to provide a point of contact during the event. Recent events provided an opportunity to look at what worked well and more importantly what could be learnt and improved for the future.

Sir John expressed serious concern about flood alerts and the amount of time given especially as the warning system was based solely on the River Medway flooding, which was only part of the risk. He asked whether the flood warning/alert should be adapted to cover both the River Medway and surface water flooding.

The EA representative answered honestly that it was doubtful that surface water would be monitored in the same way as a river due to complexity and costs.

Residents not signed up to the flood alert system were encouraged to speak to the EA direct to discuss if alternatives were available.

It was recognised that early warning of flooding was important but it was equally important to have improved prevention measures in place.

(4) The provision and distribution of sandbags would be better before/during flooding and not after the event.

Julie Beilby, Chief Executive, acknowledged that the Borough Council had not had sufficient number of sandbags available at the beginning of the floods as they were not stored on-site. 2,000 had been distributed prior to the event and another 4,000 during and after. Stocks had now been increased and the Borough Council were better prepared for any future event.

**Action: Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council resolved to identify local pick up and storage points for communities so that some sandbags were readily available.**

(5) Insurance premiums

Residents were advised that if they felt they had a claim against the EA they should contact the Environment Agency claims department with evidence.

Residents of Gladstone Road asked if a letter of acknowledgement regarding the incident could be provided by the EA to demonstrate evidence to the insurers.

**Action: Letters and the flooding questionnaire to be delivered to Gladstone Road and Barden Road. (Environment Agency)**

**The National Flood Forum could provide advice and assistance to residents in looking for the best insurance.**

Telephone: 01299 403 055

Website: [www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk](http://www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk)

Many of the points raised were noted by the relevant agencies for further consideration on how to introduce improvements. Residents were also encouraged to contact relevant agencies to raise any issues.

## **COMMENTS OF SIR JOHN STANLEY MP**

Sir John Stanley MP was invited to speak and he thanked everyone for their frank and open comments, especially as it was important to get firsthand experience from those affected.

He promised to put pressure on central Government for increased investment into flood protection measures for Tonbridge, East Peckham, Hildenborough and Wateringbury.

Clarity would also be sought on how different agencies accessed funding for additional flood protection and this information would be shared with local authorities and other responsible agencies. In addition, to strengthen the success of future bids county, district/borough and parish councils together with flood action groups would be asked to identify top priorities for additional funding in their areas.

Sir John also talked about the following priority actions for Tonbridge:

- (1) Flood wardens for Tonbridge: As the town was non parished it would be suggested that the Borough Council establish an appropriate flood warden system.
- (2) Existing barrier: It would be suggested that the height of the flood defence wall be increased.
- (3) Length of wall: It would be suggested that serious consideration be given to

lengthening the flood defence wall.

- (4) Adequacy of Leigh Flood Storage Area: The EA would be pressed as to whether the existing controls were sophisticated enough to ensure water was let out sufficiently early. In addition, should consideration be given to increasing the capacity of the storage area?

Sir John concluded by reassuring residents that he would actively and strongly seek increased funding and approval for additional flood protection measures.

## **CONCLUSION AND ACTION POINTS**

In summary, residents wanted:

- § Better communication and accountability between/of agencies
- § Better warning notification
- § Better assistance during and following event
- § Prevention i.e. improved and better drainage/gully clearing and planning considerations

Other actions identified for the Environment Agency:

- § Deal with the River Medway (longer term measure)
- § Address surface water issues (longer term measure)
- § Address drainage water
- § Improve communication of flood warning
- § Temporary barrier at Town Wall, between TA Centre and Barden Road
- § Establishment of incident room at Tonbridge Castle, in liaison with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- § Training of own officers
- § Creation of Flood Wardens

In conclusion, it was accepted that communication between agencies needed to be improved and it was hoped that the public meeting had proved beneficial in enabling concerns and issues to be aired and addressed.

The meeting ended at 2300 hours  
After commencing at 1930 hours

## Written Questions Received from Various Sources together with Answers

Topic	Agency	Question	Asked by	Resident from	Initial Response	Further Actions Required	Full Response
Cleaning	KCC	Are the KCC going to introduce a cleaning regime for the drains to improve flow & capacity?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge	KCC clean drains on a cyclical basis. We are currently reviewing the way we do this and this review will be informed by the recent events. Some of our drains flow into the Southern Water sewer i.e. we own the road drain and they own the main pipe in the road - we will need to look at this jointly.		
Communication	EA	In 2000, EA staff visited properties in Hildenborough stating (accurately, within the hour) when the water level would peak. Why was this information not available either in person, by phone, or online in 2013?	Paul Bird	Hildenborough		We have changed the way warnings are issued. We have moved to daylight hours and are sending the anticipated list of warnings to Silver Control who will then resource house to house back up of warnings where possible. The warning system is for the river flooding, for example the Medway or Bourne and not for surface water or foul flooding.	
Communication	EA	Why did the EA tell us over the phone twice on Christmas Eve that the amount of water in our road would not get any higher, yet by early evening we were up to our knees in flood water?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge	Please tell us how you came by the information, if you have a call reference we will chase it up and see why it happened and prevent it from happening again.		
Drainage	KCC Highways	Why the drains were blocked in Holdford Street and Danvers Road, which is why the initial flooding happened?	Trudi Giles	Tonbridge	The drains on Holford Street and Danvers Road were all cleaned in May 2013 and found to be flowing well. We had not had any reports of blocked drains or flooding since and therefore additional cleansing was not carried out.		
Drainage	KCC Highways	What is the council proposing to do to improve the surface water drainage to prevent it backing up?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge	Drainage repairs and improvements are assessed to determine the risk to highway safety and the risk to private property. Schemes are then delivered on the basis of highest risk first - sites in Tonbridge and Malling will be assessed and considered along with all other sites identified across the county		
Dredging	EA	When was the Tonbridge section of the river last dredged and are there any plans to dredge in the future?	Carl Lewis	Tonbridge	We have been carrying out some dredging this year on the river medway and were programed to be someway to tonbridge but our works have been interrupted by the weather. In the main desilting works are done for navigation purposes rather than flood management purposes. An annual inspection is scheduled, but may be delayed by the flooding.		
Early Warnings	EA	What early warning system can be set up?	Carl Lewis	Tonbridge	The Environment Agency already offer a free flood warning service. We aim to offer at least two hours notice before the first property flood but in practice usually give more. You can sign up online or by calling 01732223257. The warning system is for the river flooding, for example the Medway or Bourne and not for surface water or foul flooding. See also house to house visits.		

Emergency services	Emergency Services	Why there wasn't an emergency service representative sent down Leybank on Christmas Eve, even though an evacuation service was being offered?	Rachel Murray	Hildenborough				KCC provided a coach to evacuate residents from Hildenborough and Tonbridge. TMBC had staff out in Tonbridge, East Peckham and Hildenborough to liaise with residents and provide advice on the emergency rest centre arrangements.
Financial Future	KCC/TMBC	What is the financial future for Tonbridge, both residents and businesses? Why would anyone invest in houses or businesses here post flood? What infrastructure is proposed to stop this happening again?	Caroline Stevens	Tonbridge				Clearly there is a need to enhance the flood protection for Tonbridge and Sir John Stanley MP has assured residents that he would actively and strongly seek increased funding and approval for additional flood protection measures.  TMBC has undertaken to do the following: a) Lobby at National level for improved flood defences in Tonbridge, and participate in discussions. b) Bid to be made through the Kent Growth Strategy Document to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for funding for improved flood defence in
Flood Storage Area	EA	I would like to know why the levy was already full to capacity the night of 23/24 December, and why so much water was released on 24 December, causing homes to flood? Also how could the same issue be prevented in future?	Laura Bayley	Tonbridge	This is not true. We didn't start to store water till Tuesday morning 24th December.			
Flood Storage Area	EA	If the problem was that the barrier reached capacity, can its capacity be increased? In light of recent events, would the money earmarked for strengthening the barrier be better spent on increasing capacity?	Paul Bird	Hildenborough	Before the flooding we had plans in place to increase the capacity of the structure.	In the short term we will seek the permission of the inspecting engineer to use some more of the space in the reservoir, if allowed this could increase capacity by 15%		We will see if the scheme from the middle medway strategy to increase the capacity of the reservoir by a total of 30% can be brought forward
Flood Storage Area	EA	Why was water released from the Leigh Barrier at such a high rate and could more have been released sooner to prevent this?	Paul Bird	Hildenborough	We have explained how the flood storage area was used, this was not the case.			
Flood Storage Area	EA	I think it would help most people if the EA were asked to explain in simple language exactly how the flood barrier works and why it was built in the first place. Most people seem to not understand that the flood barrier NEVER actually closes, there is always water being released. The three sluice gates move to control the flow. The EA also have to 'think ahead' as to when water released at Leigh will reach Allington and what the tidal section of the Medway will be doing. I do believe if this and other aspects of the workings of the barrier are explained many of the questions raised would be answered in one go.	Nick Johnston	Tonbridge	hopefully we have done this			
Flood Storage Area	EA	Who was directly in charge of the flood barrier over the Christmas period?	Carl Lewis	Tonbridge	Trained operators, using set procedures. Monitored by an external inspecting engineer and overseen by a clear management chain.			
Flood Storage Area	EA	Why were we not informed that the barrier was going to be opened on Christmas Eve?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge	Warnings were issued, hopefully now that the way in which the structure is operated has been explained residents will realise that the structure halved the flow of the Medway in Tonbridge			
Flood Storage Area	EA	Is there any truth to the rumour that the barrier was opened for too long and too much water was released in one go?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge	No			
Flood Storage Area	EA	Is there any truth in the rumour that the EA held back water for 5 days before releasing it on Christmas Eve, if so, why?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge	No			
Flood Storage Area	EA	Why was Christmas Eve so exceptional after 41 years when our house never flooded...and hasn't since despite further heavy rain and saturated ground?	Caroline Stevens	Tonbridge	We hope that this question has been answered in the presentation at the public meetings. This was the highest recorded flow ever on the Upper Medway.			
Flood Wardens	EA	What help can we get to set up a flood warden group/team? What equipment can be provided by authorities and what training is available?	Carl Lewis	Tonbridge	Yes we would like to support KCC in providing information for a flood warden service			



<b>Flood warnings</b>	<b>EA</b>	In 2000 a severe flood warning was issued, when a lower rate of water was released from the Leigh Barrier than in 2013. Why then was a severe flood warning not issued in 2013?	Paul Bird	Hildenborough	The criteria for a severe flood warning were not met.	In light of a conversation with one resident who lives near Pizza Express we have revised down the severe threshold.	
<b>Flood warnings</b>	<b>EA</b>	Will there be a review into the best means of warning relevant publics about the opening of the Leigh flood barrier, in times of flood? The current emphasis in relation to flood information seems to be on the individual and for individual responsibility and pro-activity [registering with the EA]. In a few years time, this need for pro-activity will ebb from public consciousness, particularly as new people come into the area. [possible ideas: sirens in relevant areas; public information broadcasts, cutting into radio/television programming...]	John Cockram	Wateringbury (attending Tonbridge meeting)		After any incident we carry out a review, the aim is to learn lessons, improve procedures, exercise them and put them into practice. We have an agreement with BT that they will provide us with phone numbers of individuals who live on the floodplain. We also have publicity <del>campaigns to raise awareness</del>	
<b>Flood warnings</b>	<b>EA</b>	The EA website does not identify Hawden Close as being in a high flood risk area, confirmed by the fact that it doesn't allow the set up of the automated flood warning alert system. We would suggest that mismanagement of the Leigh flood barrier led to this one off flooding of properties in the street. How would the EA respond to this?	Jo and Ian Wallace	Hildenborough	There was a flood warning service for Hildenborough in 2000. As the community floods from so many different sources we were able to offer a service for sday foul water flooding. At the Parishes request we <del>withdrew the service</del>	A service will be offered for the River Medway in Hildenborough, with the proviso that we cant warn of flooding from all sources	
<b>Floodline Warnings Direct</b>	<b>EA</b>	I would like to know why Floodline Warnings Direct didn't know we were flooded even though a number of residents reported it we were still on alert?	Rachel Murrery	Hildenborough	Please provide information as to the exact time of your call and if possible the call reference and we will follow this up	There have been a number of cases where the performance of floodline operators has not been satisfactory. We will put measures in place to improve this service	
<b>Flood Warnings Direct</b>	<b>EA</b>	Why did the EA website still state only a "flood alert" all day for Christmas Eve for the Hawden Close postcode even as the water was entering our properties?	Jo and Ian Wallace	Hildenborough	There was a flood warning service for Hildenborough in 2000. As the community floods from so many different sources we were able to offer a service for sday foul water flooding. At the Parishes request we withdrew the service	A service will be offered for the River Medway in Hildenborough, with the proviso that we cant warn of flooding from all sources	
<b>Flood Warnings Direct</b>	<b>EA</b>	Why did the residents of Hawden Close have no communication from the EA on Christmas Eve, either in person or by telephone to warn us that we were at risk of flooding?	Jo and Ian Wallace	Hildenborough	There was a flood warning service for Hildenborough in 2000. As the community floods from so many different sources we were able to offer a service for say foul water flooding. At the Parishes request we withdrew the service. Flood ambassadors were sent	We will improve the training offered to flood ambassadors. In future events a local bronze control will be established at Tonbridge castle to coordinate multiagency response and activities such as this	
<b>Formal investigation</b>	<b>EA</b>	Will an independent body [of informed experts in the field] be put in place to arbitrate, on behalf of the wider public, in disputes about EA activity and flood management? [In the same way ombudsman arbitrate in the financial sector.] At the moment, many people's perception, for good or ill, is that the EA is a government 'Quango' and cannot be 'held to account' for its actions.	John Cockram	Wateringbury (attending Tonbridge meeting)	This is a question to ask of the minister. This quango employee is sure that such an investigation will take place, see stage 6 review above		
<b>Formal investigation</b>	<b>All</b>	Will there be a formal investigation into what went wrong on Christmas Eve, considering we were not in a known flood risk area, to ensure that if an authority is responsible for mismanagement of the situation that they are held accountable?	Jo and Ian Wallace	Hildenborough	see above		
<b>The future</b>	<b>EA/SWS</b>	Why did it flood and is it likely to happen again or have lessons been learnt?	Rachel Murrery	Hildenborough	I hope this question has been answered in the presentation. If not, it rained hard, the flow of the medway was halved but still there were flooding problems.	Causes of flooding will be investigated, in the short term some infrastructure will need to be repaired.	In the long term we will do our utmost to seek investment in improved flood management structures
<b>The future</b>	<b>EA</b>	How are the authorities going to make sure this won't happen again to both residential and business premises?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge		Causes of flooding will be investigated, in the short term some infrastructure will need to be repaired	In the long term we will do our utmost to seek investment in improved flood management structures. It must be remembered that in the long term nature finds a way of giving us a bigger flood than our defences are designed to manage
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>EA</b>	The newly flooded areas are likely to be blighted as far as getting house insurance goes. Is there any help or advice available for residents?	Caroline Stevens	Tonbridge	Yes please go to the website of the national flood forum <a href="http://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/">http://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/</a>	In the long run the government have been consulting on FloodRe a scheme to provide insurance for properties at risk of flooding	

<b>New town development</b>	<b>TMBC</b>	What steps are going to be taken by TMBC to prevent flooding at the new shopping, cinema and leisure development?	Carl Lewis	Tonbridge			When producing the Local Plan and deciding planning applications, including the redevelopment in the Town Centre, the Council takes in account the effect of development on flooding and how development would be affected by flooding. Individual proposals where flooding is likely to be an issue have to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which must demonstrate how any flood risk can be mitigated for the development to proceed satisfactorily. The Council applies national Government policy and guidelines and does so in close consultation with the Environment Agency.
<b>Official presence</b>	<b>KCC</b>	Where exactly were KCC in Tonbridge and what date/time did they arrive?	Carl Lewis	Tonbridge	Our crews attended over 50 sites in Tonbridge and Malling between the 23rd and 25th December. In addition our Highway Stewards, Engineers and Out of Hours team were working throughout		
<b>Official presence</b>	<b>All</b>	Why was there an absence of EA or other authority officials during 23rd/24th December to monitor the rising water in Hawden Close and to provide advice?	Jo and Ian Wallace	Hildenborough	We had staff present in Hildenborough on 23rd and 24th		
<b>Resources</b>	<b>TMBC</b>	Why is the council wasting their time and resources placing sandbags around the bottom of parking meters?	Vivien Ambrose	Tonbridge			These were placed in two locations as a short-term measure following repairs needed after the earlier flooding.
<b>Road closures</b>	<b>KCC Highways</b>	Why were flooded roads not closed off earlier to prevent wash into houses?	Tracey Salter	Tonbridge	Between 23 Dec and Christmas Day KCC received over 2,000 highway enquiries, staff cancelled leave and worked very long hours. Due to the volume of enquiries and the impact of the weather, we had to prioritise strategic routes in the first instance and worked our way around the rest of the network as quickly as we could.	Following the recent floods we are looking at how we can work with parish councils, the EA and Flood Wardens to get emergency road closures implemented more quickly when flooding occurs	
<b>Text alerts</b>	<b>EA</b>	Why could a text, like the flood alert text, not have been sent to tell people when the flood barrier was going to be opened? It would have given people more chance to try and save items at home.	Nicky Crowston	Tonbridge	Firstly we have a flood warning service that disseminates texts warning of the possibility of flooding. In Tonbridge this is based on operation of the Leigh FSA. A warning was issued. We are now issuing warnings to areas based on forecast rainfall as far in advance as possible. We will update the warnings to account for conditions in the catchment		
<b>Town Planning</b>	<b>TMBC</b>	Will the town planners those responsible for planning permission take into consideration the detrimental effect of building on the flood plane to existing houses and businesses?	Caroline Stevens	Tonbridge			When producing the Local Plan and deciding planning applications, including the redevelopment in the Town Centre, the Council takes in account the effect of development on flooding and how development would be affected by flooding. Individual proposals where flooding is likely to be an issue have to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which must demonstrate how any flood risk can be mitigated for the development to proceed satisfactorily. The Council applies national Government policy and guidelines and does so in close consultation with the Environment Agency.
<b>Water levels</b>	<b>EA</b>	Why did less rain in the 3 days leading up to the flood, result in a more severe flood than in 2000?	Paul Bird	Hildenborough	Actually a similar amount of rain fell, but over a wider area, the flows were higher. 300 - 340 m3/s in 2013 as compared to 220 - 250m3/s in 2000.		

<b>Water levels</b>	<b>EA</b>	Why did we flood on Christmas Eve for the first time ever in Hawden Close and have not flooded since despite there continuing to be high levels of rainfall?	Jo and Ian Wallace	Hildenborough	Hildenborough has flooded in the past. We hope the information in the presentation showed that the rain that fell at Christmas was more than in the events prior to or after the Christmas flood.		
<b>Grants</b>	<b>EA</b>	Is there any grant funding available from the government via the local council for homeowners to purchase floodgates, airbrick covers etc.	Via Sue Chalkley	East Peckham	There didn't used to be but we are investigating a recent announcement by the prime minister		
<b>Leigh Barrier</b>	<b>EA</b>	In flood situations, how long does it take for a discharge from the Leigh Barrier to reach East Peckham?	Via Sue Chalkley	East Peckham	10 hours		
<b>Leigh Barrier</b>	<b>EA</b>	What factors determine when and how water is stored/discharged from the Leigh Barrier?	Via Sue Chalkley	East Peckham	The basic principle for an operator is to reduce the flow coming out of the structure as much as possible by using the available storage to its maximum. However the operator must be mindful of the forecast and forecast inflows so as not to overtop the structure as this would make flooding worse.		
<b>Road Closures</b>	<b>KCC Highways</b>	How are road closures coordinated? For example, the road closure signs put up each end of Old Road on Friday afternoon 7th February. Who is informed locally?	Via Sue Chalkley	East Peckham	All road closures are coordinated by KCC and local residents and businesses are notified where closures are planned. The nature of emergency road closures mean that we cannot give prior warning but we do aim to provide adequate signage to minimise the disruption caused.	Following the recent floods we are looking at how we can work with parish councils, the EA and Flood Wardens to get emergency road closures implemented more quickly when flooding occurs	
<b>Sewers</b>	<b>Southern Water</b>	There is also growing gossip about 'the pump' which either failed or was turned off which is why the drains were not flowing away.	Via Sue Chalkley	East Peckham			We have looked at the information available for the pumping stations and there should have been no effect on customers' services at all from WPS performance over the Xmas New Year period. All stations appear to have been operating as designed the only pump failure that occurred was at a duty-standby station and the standby pump took over without problems. Every indication appears to be that the system was dealing with an extreme weather event, but coped and continued running as well as could be expected under the load. If the pumping station details are supplied we can be more specific on response.
<b>Weather Forecast</b>	<b>EA</b>	Can we see evidence that rain was forecast for Christmas day to demonstrate barrier need to release at higher rate		Tonbridge	Yes, make it known as to who wants it and we will supply it		
<b>Street Lighting</b>	<b>KCC</b>	Can the street lights be left on overnight in Danvers Road given the need to see and monitor potential flooding and given the amount of debris in road. Also to protect empty houses		Tonbridge	The streetlights on Danvers Road and Holford Steet have been converted back to "all night" operation		Actioned on Tuesday 11 Feb 2014 until further notice
<b>Parking Concessions</b>	<b>TMBC</b>	Can we have car parking arrangements in place for Danvers Rd etc for contractors working to reinstate people's homes		Tonbridge			Agreed that special permits would be issued. Council staff advising contractors and residents on site how to apply. It is important to have some control to limit potential parking by users of station.
<b>Parking Concessions</b>	<b>TMBC</b>	New Wharf Road and area - when basement car parks are flooded can we have alternative parking arrangements with no cost?		Tonbridge			Yes. This was actioned in response to requests immediately after first incident of flooding. Similar arrangements will be implemented in future.
<b>Sandbags</b>	<b>TMBC</b>	You didn't have enough sandbags for everyone.		Tonbridge			There is no statutory duty for Council's to provide sandbags. However TMBC recognises that in some flooding incidents, sandbags can be a benefit to residents in protecting properties. We have a core stock of approx 2000. This was not enough to meet need on Christmas Eve. We are reviewing our core stock arrangements to cater for any such future incidents.

Distribution of Q&A's	All	Can the answers to questions raised at the meeting be made available to a broader range of residents what those affected (Gladstone Road specifically mentioned)		Tonbridge			Yes. A combined response to issues and steps for action will be distributed and will be made available on line and via the community facebook page.













