

WOLSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Notes of the Public Meeting of Wolston Parish Council
held at 7pm on Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at The Baptist Church, Main Street, Wolston

Present WPC	Cllrs: T Willis (Chair), Jock Rainey (Vice Chair), Mrs A Milne, L Wright, T Ramsay, Ms J Galliford, S Osmond, Mrs D George (Clerk) Apologies: Ms S Dobinson
RBC WCC	Cllrs: D Poole, S Ward, T Willis Cllr Mrs H Timms
Advisory Panel	Rugby Borough Council (RBC): Mannie Ketley, Chief Executive, David Burrows, Chief Officer for Regulation and Safety includes Emergency Planning Response Warwickshire County Council (WCC): Rianveer Mahal, Flood Risk Management, Georgina Flower, Flood Risk Management Team, Jeff Morris, Highways (Drainage) Environment Agency (EA): Oliver Hartland, Emergency Panel Adviser West Midlands, Rhys McCarthy, Service Manager West Midlands. Severn Trent: Martin Young, Financial Planning & Reporting Manager
Public	49 Members of the Public (MOP)
164	Apologies - To receive apologies WPC Cllr Ms S Dobinson
165	<p>Meeting commenced at: 7pm Chair welcomed all in attendance and pointed out the Fire Exits. Chair asked members of the panel to introduce themselves.</p> <p>Public Forum – Question and Answer Panel To consider Recovery and Prevention Flood Planning for Wolston following the events of 2nd January 2024 and to make any appropriate decisions.</p> <p>Chair advised that each of the 10 questions would be read out and the panel asked to respond followed by comments from the public.</p> <p>Chair asked two of the residents who had been badly affected by the flood of 2nd January 2024 to address the room to share their experiences.</p> <p>MOP - On 2nd Jan our home at in main street flooded through the front and back of the house, causing 2.5 inches of water to spread throughout the entire ground floor. The water came in through the front due to the sheer volume of water coursing through main street, in part due to the brook that runs outside bursting its banks, but as we observed on the day - the drains out the front of main street were already overflowing long before the brook overflowed so it is clear that it's not only the brook to blame. Out the back of our property, the manhole which sits in our patio area overflowed and pushed filthy sewage water all through our home. What happened to us was therefore not only the impact of heavy rain and surface water, but foul drainage which is of course a serious health hazard.</p> <p>Our home is currently uninhabitable, and due to the expected scale of work required to dry out our house and declare it safe, which includes ripping plaster, wallpaper, skirtings etc off the wall and possibly pulling out entire tiled kitchen floor (and therefore ripping our entire kitchen out) up it could be up to</p>

six months before we can return. I am sharing this to impress upon you the scale of the disruption this has caused and how many people are no further forward now than they were weeks ago.

With 12-week-old twins, who were 9 weeks old when the flood occurred, currently living out of a bedroom at my parents' house. It will be 4-6 months until we can return to our home, and in the meanwhile finding an alternative that our insurers will pay for. We need to take this really seriously, it is not just talking about ruined carpets and sofas, material things that can be replaced. I am on maternity leave, we don't have a penny to spare. So far we have had absolutely nothing in support of this from our insurance company. Not a single cleaner, not a single dryer. At 2 a.m. in the morning cars are pulling up outside our family home looking through the windows and going round the back of our house with torches looking to take advantage of the fact that the house is empty. Any decisions that you make please, please consider the reach and the implications of this on people. We need some answers on what can be done we need that from all of you tonight.
Chair thanked the residents for their contribution.

Chair read out the first question for the panel.

Flood Recovery Framework and Community and Business Recovery Grant Funding – *please can the Panel advise on current position, e.g., are the appropriate Authorities in a position to confirm that the number of properties flooded in Warwickshire has reached the number required to trigger grant funding? And if so, when this will be issued to those directly affected?*

Response/debate

WCC: Flood Recovery Framework Funding – it has been confirmed that Wolston has met the trigger threshold to access government funding. Waiting for guidelines from central government, this will be communicated.

M Ketley, after thanking the residents for sharing their experience and sympathising with them, reported that the RBC will be administering the scheme, the local lead authority will provide information to central government and then will advise guidance and confirmation of the various funding streams. RBC will then reach out to the people affected and distribute the funding direct to residents.

WCC: This is why the completed Questionnaires were necessary to start the process.

MOP Is the funding intended for individual home defences or for the village defences?

M Ketley reported that the government has opened up different funding streams, each resident may qualify for more than one type of funding dependent on their circumstances. When contact is made all the different funding streams will be explained to residents.

MOP How many properties?

M Ketley reported that they have not exact figures but it is roughly about the 60 mark. It has taken a long time to identify the properties affected.

Cllr Wright reported that there was a sewerage problem on the Spitfire site and asked if the EA could explain what went wrong?

Chair indicated that the question would be coming up in a later item on the agenda.

MOP – Is it still relevant to complete and return the questionnaire? Is that the route to access funding through the Council?

WCC – The questionnaires and confirmations of what has happened are required to record properties affected.

MOP - Does the grant scheme cover the Council Tax?

M Ketley – One of the funding streams is Council Tax. Once central government advise us of the different funding streams we will share them with affected residents.

MOP – you can apply for void from Severn Trent once the Council Tax void is given in writing.

M Ketley - Yes

MOP – Is the Council Tax on the question list? Why is it only 3 months? Why cannot RBC stop the Council Tax on its own? Why is it only 3 months discount when the voids could be 6 months?

M Ketley –RBC are bound by central government guidelines. As soon as we know we will try and coordinate the different funding streams – if people have paid Council Tax for this month and were eligible to have not paid it we will be able to refund or put a credit on next year's account.

MOP - Have RBC got the authority to stop a particular residents' Council Tax.

RBC: M Ketley – There are different criteria on which Council Tax does not have to be paid. RBC are waiting for the guidance from central government.

Cllr Timms - Are Business Rates included in the funding stream?

M Ketley – Businesses and residents are eligible for different funding streams.

MOP – If the government did nothing for the flooded properties would RBC be able to stop the Council Tax on those properties.

M Ketley – If the government did nothing, and there was a legitimate basis on which a property was uninhabitable, then yes, RBC could stop Council Tax.

Chair read out the next question for the Panel:

Planning and Drainage - *my understanding is that there is just one main soil pipe that goes across the river Avon to the pump station at Castle Hill.*

How on earth can we keep on building properties in the village and not insist as part of their granted planning permission that these antiquated systems are not updated to enable them to cope with the extra demand these new houses create? One of the main issues on the night of the flood was the inability of the current drainage system being able to cope, which given that the system is extremely old, is understandable.

Response/debate

M Young of Severn Trent Water (STW) reported that at the planning stage STW are not a statutory consultee in the planning process – we assess the developments impact on our drainage/sewerage system – we can make recommendations to the planning authority ie. onsite storage or upgrade of infrastructure, etc., the planning authority are not required to take those into consideration. There is one pipe, Brandon and Wolston is served by one pump station which discharges back into the village by the Spitfire Homes site and takes it back towards Coventry and a separate surface water drainage system.

J Morris of WCC Highways reported that the Flood risk team do respond to planning applications – where a planning application has been accepted they will make exception to the surface water run off on the application and make sure there is mitigation in place to stop any water coming off that site in

excess, if it is a greenfield site, so there is indications where that is done or even bettered, so any future development I would suggest we look at the betterment of the area within the catchment area – going forward there may be a project – in south of the county and they looked at roof drainage – where is it going, surface or sewers? Individual properties can look at attenuation of that roof surface water to stop it overwhelming the sewers.

Chair advised that WCC and EA are the two Lead Local Flood Authorities.

WCC: G Flower reported that WCC are statutory consultees regarding surface water and drainage– we assess proposed drainage systems in a greenfield situation – there is no obligation to developers to make better existing systems, but they cannot undermine them.

EA: R McCarthy reported the last 6 months were the wettest recorded in England. The systems in place are not adequate to cope with the quantity of surface water we are experiencing. We are going to work together jointly with this community and with the other authorities as well to ensure the impact on the community is limited. Wolston Brook, River Avon, Severn Trent systems are all linked – we need a variety of measures to be put in place moving forward, it takes years, but we can start now to improve things going forward.

Cllr Wright – would it be fair to say that regardless of the funding there are two options to satisfy Wolston to reduce the water coming in or move the water going out. In 20 years we have advocated the river to be dredged, the pump station to be upgraded, EA has safeguarded the life in the brook. Flood alleviation scheme on the Fosse and that worked up to now.

No assessment of the brook on Coalpit Lane which also comes to Wolston.

WCC and RBC listened to WPC and the surface water from Millennium Way was discharged away from the Village.

The new development surface water comes to the centre of the village.

Flooding in the centre of the village is inevitable. We have had no support from the landowners.

On 28th December 2023 we had a burst sewerage main pipe came into the village that was stopped on 7th January 2024, this contaminated the surface water which entered people's properties. No action from anyone, builders or authorities to clear the sewerage in the ditch on Warwick Road. Is it fair on the people of Wolston to wait years? Sandbags need to be stocked up ready. We want the water away from Wolston.

EA: R McCarthy - We are willing to come to WPC meeting and work with local councils to improve its resilience.

MOP - Can we have that in writing?

EA: R McCarthy - Yes, minutes* are being taken of this meeting.

**notes*

MOP– the sewerage from the pumping station goes into a manhole by the Spitfire Homes site. When they damaged the drains, what damage was done? Is that why the sewerage was backed up because it was left for two weeks?

STW: M Young - The damaged drain was reported to STW on 4th January 2024. Tankers were sent, pumping station was closed. Flooding was stopped and the pipe was repaired over the weekend of 6th and 7th January 2024. Had we been informed previously we would have reacted sooner.

MOP - What are WCC doing with Spitfire Homes?

WCC: G Flower – We can liaise with planning authority enforcement in terms of the construction management practice because it is their responsibility to enforce actions outside of their planning permission – it is not uncommon to

have building sites in this condition at this time of year, attenuation pond was not connected is poor timing in terms of the event experienced.

MOP – I am a builder and if I had done something like this I would be investigated and taken to court.

RBC: D Burrows – Briefly there is no evidence that Spitfire damaged the pipe. The EA team are investigating to find out exactly what went on. It occurred on 28th December 2023 when the contractor had been off site for the holiday period. RBC are working with STW to ascertain what happened. There is an investigation going on.

Chair – we are working with Spitfire to get to the bottom of what went on.

STW: M Young – we are working with Spitfire to understand what happened, what working practices they have on site to make sure that does not re-occur.

MOP – The 2nd Jan was the seventh flood we have experienced since October 2023, we cannot open the Royal Oak – five feet of sewage water in the cellar. Water comes up through the floors. We are self employed and our staff are laid off. What can be done in the short term to prevent this happening again?

MOP – Resident of Avondale Road for 20 years, 2013 Brandon flooded. Wolston is different.

EA: R McCarthy – Extreme weather patterns are worsening – we need to deal with it now. Watercourses, dip in the road, drainage, there will be different solutions for each depends on the situation, some may be flood management, resilience measures include property protection up to a certain height. We will come together look at the sewage, drainage and river system. There may be other funding measures which are available which we can tap into.

MOP – Brandon children missing school as they cannot attend due to flooding.

MOP – Last time river flooded 1998 due to the river– this year all the water was draining off the fields. Wolston is a microclimate, Wolston and Brandon are in a ditch. Something has happened in the last twelve months causing the village to flood.

MOP – Brandon – Avondale Road resident – contacted STW – they sent a team out two days ago – been told that there is a six-inch storm drain which should be a ten-inch – the camera revealed that there is a pipe within the pipe reducing the flow and making it back up. 30 houses since he moved in the bore of the pipe is now 3-4 inches and will not take the flow. Chair asked the agencies on the panel to take this question away.

MOP – there should be some sort of maintenance protocol in place to ensure drains can sustain the water volume.

MOP – I would like the people on the panel to look at the drains after they have so called been cleaned.

Chair read out the next question to the Panel:

Funding and Protection – *it is important that homeowners are protected. We need all the ‘agencies’ to come together to advise us of ‘best practice’ in terms of prevention going forward.*

We expect a wider scheme to protect us, but what funds will be available for us to individually protect our properties, e.g., there are flood gates that can be fitted to individual homes, but these are unsightly and would not be in keeping with our beautiful village centre that is quite rightly protected by a conservation area?

What about funding for 'flood doors', which can be made individually for each property and seem to be an excellent solution, e.g., Storm Meister Flood Protection?

Response/debate

EA: R McCarthy – there are various types of funding available as a community which has to be bid for on behalf of a community by the local authority or the EA, there are certain criteria which have to be met, you can view these at www.gov.uk to see how you fit into those criteria. There is cost/benefit analysis which is too much to go into here and now, there is something called partnership funding which means that there is an element of funding that will always be available but might not be for the full amount of whatever scheme you are looking at putting in, it could be that 50% is funded by central government and we find the other 50% of it and that could come from a variety of different sources including the Regional Coastal Flooding Committee, that is made up of all the local authorities within the Severn catchment who come together every quarter to approve a program and approve funding. They have access to a pot of called Local Levy and we can all access that through the authorities once we know we want to do. That could be looking at property level protection, flood doors for the community, passive measures, pumps, a whole host of other things as well for that property level resilience. So if that is a decision that you make as a community then absolutely the EA and I am sure WCC will work together with the community to put a bid in to access that funding.

STW: M Young – STW do have funding available for property level resilience, so if it turns out that the property has been flooded as a result an issue with the public sewage system then you can access funding as well.

RBC: M Ketley – RBC work with all partner agencies to help find the best possible solution.

MOP – It all sounds quite vague. How is it working? – who will do this? – is there a group I should be part of?

MOP – Is there a timescale for the doors.

EA: R McCarthy – The first thing is to set up a community Flood Action Group (FLAG) who work with the authorities that group can be made up off 2 – 10 members of the community to represent the community and work with the authorities and put these measures in place. Obviously in a meeting like this we cannot talk technical bids, it just does not work, there are too many people. There is a charity called National Flood Forum (NFF) who will come into the community and help set up a FLAG, I will have a chat with them and see if they will come and help this community.

MOP – WPC should have a community group to cover this and it should be a standard item on each WPC Meeting agenda to keep us informed of where we are with all these things.

Chair: I looked at the minutes of the last four or five years, and flood mitigation dropped off the agenda after Covid and allotments planning application came along, business was diverted. Cannot speak for members of WPC between 2018 and 2022, as I left WPC in 2018. It was not discussed again until December 2023. We are going to discuss this later on and age of Mitigation Plan. More than happy for WPC to pick that up, we will need community volunteers, we can look at things like Shipston on Stour FLAG who have been in place for 10 years. There are examples there and I think

one of the actions WPC needs to take away from that is exactly as you said, that we need the community with us to link in to the Borough Council and the Parish Council.

Cllr Wright – Question for RBC. Ditch in Meadow Road has not been cleared out in 20 years this was a contributing factor to School Street being flooded and Coalpit Lane. The drains and gulleys are in the verge on the side of the road, no water goes down the drains or into the gulleys it just comes down the road and it ponds outside the footpath by Melodies Meadow. WCC should dig a grip to run the water into the ditch. Tonight, Coalpit Lane is flooded it was reported three days ago that the chamber top is off and the chamber is full of rubbish and the water is coming out and flooding the road. No action from WCC.

MOP – More maintenance is required.

WCC Flood Risk Management– There should be a FLAG to provide communication between yourselves and WCC and other partners. WCC will be in support of setting that up. As part of that work there is a CSW Emergency response team which can help the community set up an Action Plan.

Chair – WPC now have the templates to progress putting this together.

MOP – Are there no officers available to do this job? Why do you need a group to tell you what has happened? If I were to volunteer to join a FLAG tomorrow, what can I say that you do not already know?

WCC Flood Risk Management – I understand there has been some feedback regarding this but there is a direct line of communication between us and yourselves.

MOP – But if people are reporting drains that are blocked and nothing is done what is the point? It does not make any sense to me.

EA: R McCarthy – The point of the FLAG and why the community should be involved is that the community is required to decide what they want, if it is just left up to the authorities, we might put something in place and the community say they do not want that. Coming in early and speaking to the community is vital.

MOP How do you get all of these agencies to work together? You all seem to be working in grand isolation and not being able to pull together the expertise and the local knowledge all in one place.

WCC Panel member – That point of the forum is for everybody here to commit to that driven by WPC to collaborate and work effectively to get all these systems to interact. There is no one magic bullet that we or the EA can produce so we need that forum to understand and work together to bring all the ideas to the table to understand how it interacts and to drive that plan forward.

MOP - How quickly can that be set up because obviously there are businesses here that are potentially going to be hit again unfortunately without any protection at all against the next big storm that hits?

MOP – My point is if stuff is reported to you and nothing is done, surely that is on you – like roads drains that were blocked reported days before the floods, nothing happened. There is just a build up of things not being done that are just going to keep re-occurring unless you take action. Rather than keep saying we have got to discuss this lets just crack on and do it.

MOP – RBC and WCC surely the first move would be to get a maintenance team out to Wolston and Brandon to clear and get drains and the sewers running freely first.

MOP – If we have another downpour we will be back in the same situation. Get a digger out, get the ditches cleared, get the drains clear.

MOP – You are in a position to do this, to get your team out tomorrow and start.

Panel Member – It is more complicated than that.

RBC: D Burrows - The key advantage of a FLAG is that it brings everyone together, because each of us has their own discipline, each of us is responsible for different types of drainage, etc. If we dredge all the ditches and they feed into the brook and the brook cannot cope with that capacity, then it creates a problem rather than solving it. The FLAG can work together to work out what the best solution is. We have talked about storm pipes, drainage ditches and all of these things interact in different ways. We need to understand that before we go rushing and spend money and create a bigger problem.

MOP – Is a survey needed to work out a plan as to what will give us the best efficient short-term solution is best way forward?

Panel Member – That is why we have already committed to work together with our partners. As EA has mentioned, there is no quick solution to this. These are unusual circumstances. Several of the retail units flooded on Elliots Field. We need to understand exactly what the problem is, whether it is narrow pipes, insufficient capacity, whether the drainage ditch is blocked, whether the rivers need dredging, all of these things have been put forward as solutions but the risk is we will do all of those and the village will still flood and it could be worse, so that is why it needs to be worked in a co-ordinated way.

MOP – When do you plan to investigate these things?

WCC: J Morris – from a highways point of view, last week we collected all the data across the whole of the county we have 120,000 gulleys which is a massive undertaking. We introduced a variable frequency of emptying. Risk points include Wolston and Brandon have been put onto a more frequent cycle of emptying the gulleys. That is going to be an improvement, but it is not a panacea. A lot of the gulleys that are down there if the water is up in the brook that gully is not going to do anything. Or if the brook is higher than the level of the road at that point, the water will come back up the gulleys. It is not a single solution it is one of the pieces of the jigsaw, this is why I am an advocate of the FLAG. Roadside ditches are the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. The community representation is sometime more effective trying to get landowners to do their duty than a letter coming from a faceless bureaucrat. If the ditches are cleared the water will get down here quicker. It is looking at all these different bits and pieces and working in a logical way get this system working as efficiently as it can. Even if we put all these measures in place there is no guarantee that the brook will not reach that level again.

RBC: M Ketley – we recognise that over the coming weeks wet weather is going to continue. Because there are multiple factors here it is not appropriate for individuals to put in measures without appreciating the wider implications of what that action means. All partners are co-ordinating understanding what is and isn't happening, what should be happening and what can we be doing. And then the benefit of having a local FLAG means there is a forum to which all of that can be presented. There are colleagues actively working to identify what went wrong here and what might those solutions look like so that we can liaise with yourselves to identify all the

options available, what is most palatable to the community and having identified that how to secure funding. We need to understand each other's respective areas of expertise to identify the best possible next step forward.

MOP – from the floor please can you do this as quickly as possible?

RBC: M Ketley – Yes, we will, we do not want this situation to re-occur and are pro-actively working. Being fair to colleagues around the table, the geography which each agency represents, with the greatest of respect, is bigger than the geography of Wolston. I could not tell you whether the EA would consider this to be a greater priority or whether something happening somewhere else is, that is not for us, but we from RBC perspective will try and help partners keep colleagues moving forward as quickly as we can.

MOP – Experts here in the room together before you leave us in the lurch tonight that you get together and put in a date in your diaries to come back in your wellies and have a look where the problems are and just get together and give us a date. You get together and we will get a committee of passionate caring people together and meet with you and say what do we do next?

RBC: M Ketley – With the greatest respect I recognise why you want that commitment, we are not the technical experts, there are colleagues and teams who will carry out their parts of the investigations. We are reassuring you that this will happen. We can re-assure you that this is happening. We cannot give you a specific date as some of the teams may not be available on that date.

MOP – so we can have a meeting date when we can all then get together and say when the experts can get here?

RBC: M Ketley – WPC has committed to supporting this so we ask that you trust us to work with WPC and they keep you all informed.

MOP – With the greatest respect, we trusted WPC in 2018 when a report was made and recommendation made and absolutely nothing was done. There are several of us sitting here with homeless families, tens and tens of thousands of pounds out of pocket so you can understand our frustration and mistrust in the people.

RBC: M Ketley – Yes, I can, and sadly we were not part of that so it is a difficult one for us to answer. But we do understand that.

Chair: That is why I put my hand up when they were asking for volunteers last year. Hopefully we will get more volunteers in the future.

Cllr Rainey – Please go back and do the basic bog-standard maintenance activities which have not been carried out since Covid. The drainage systems have been overloaded for 32 years. STW diverted the flow back into the centre of the village – has the planning department and STW re-looked at their calculations from 5 years ago. We need to address the facts that all the maintenance of systems has not taken place over a number of years.

RBC: M Ketley – WCC are reviewing their pattern of maintenance priorities. With regard to the ditches not being emptied for 20 years I will take that back and RBC will look at this and seek to understand what should be happening.

MOP – I have never in my life seen flooding as we saw on 2nd January 2024 – I watched as I could not help – I saw the community come together up to their knees in water, soaked to the skin, not any outside or emergency agency. No help from any authority. Frustration here because promises have been made and not been kept – all we want from you is to see your words put to action – do not want to hear more false or empty promises. Cannot change the weather – please support us and represent us and ask the panel to work

together and do not disappoint us again.

MOP – I feel that we are not being listened to. The road gulleys and foul drainage was overflowing before the brook broke its banks. There is an infrastructure problem. I understand you have been out and cleared drains, etc, but surely more investigation is required, cameras down drains, inspections to make sure there are no other faults that are causing the overflow before the brook even floods.

WCC Highways: J Morris – we are awaiting reports back to see if there are any blockages or issues, this will inform what action is taken. We have taken this on board, there are lots of different types of drains whether that is foul. If it is coming out of the road gully, then that is us. It indicates either there is an issue further down or that the levels in different places are perhaps raised. We will look into the outcome of what we have done cleaning wise and get action taken.

MOP – I feel that that is something that can be done now rather than waiting.

Cllr Wright – Could WCC notify us when coming into the village to clean – if we knew the days you were coming we could ask residents to move the cars to enable cleaning to take place.

WCC Highways: J Morris – We will see if we can get that notification available. It is an issue we have parish wide.

Cllr Wright – another point would be that when the gully is cleared out, please take the debris and rubbish away instead of leaving it on the side of the gully to be washed back down the gulleys.

WCC Highways: J Morris – If that is happening, please send photos and let us know.

MOP - Brandon has been flooding year by year – the drains are full of mud and silt. You know it is flooding, you know there is a problem you should be getting people out to clear the gulleys now.

Chair read out the next question.

Farming - *I understand that local farmers have implemented new land drainage systems to their fields to protect their crops. The idea of these land drains to remove surface water as quickly as possible off the fields to ensure that the crops are not sat rotting in water. Unfortunately, instead of allowing water to naturally soak off a field, the land drains create a torrent of water over a very short period of time, which the already overflowing rivers and streams cannot cope with, couple this with a suggested lack of maintenance by local farmers can only lead to flood risk being increased. Local farming styles are also having a detrimental impact, by removing hedges and by not cleaning/dredging ditches on a regular basis, water simply 'flows' off a field as there are not natural defences to slow it down.*

Who do we approach to understand whether this actually has been happening and again who governs this? How do we "locals" ensure that good practices are followed by our farming community to ensure that we don't see the same catastrophic impact that was seen on the 2nd January?

EA: O Hartland – We have a large group of landowners as part of the EA and the wider DEFRA group which covers our panel today and a whole array of government departments. As part of the FLAG, we hope we can set up for yourselves in the village we can get those local landowners involved with that as stakeholders and have those conversations with them it requires us vying with landowners and look at what is going on. There are grant funds available

to change practise. It is definitely something we can talk about with them as a collective.

WCC: R Mahal – In terms of the runoff that was mentioned of the catchment in Warks the water is not going to soak into the ground or it will at a very low rate. Addressing farms practice and ground geology we cannot do a lot about that.

STW: M Young –where water is coming off farms and private land swathes of silt laden water coming off fields onto the highway – we have powers to contact landowners and serve notice on them but we require evidence. FLAG can gather evidence and forward it to us to follow up and take action.

MOP – Wolston is built on sand.

MOP – I live on School Street I reported to WCC regarding one of the drains outside our property and two doors up – every time it rained the road flooded. I dug three gulleys of my own to drain the water off the field. The farmer who owns the farm directly behind the chicken shed he has dug a grip which causes the water off the land to flood into Coalpit Lane.

Cllr Wright – that has been reported to WCC by the Clerk.

RBC: M Ketley – this feedback demonstrates why the benefit of residents being involved as part of the FLAG. Once the reports are made we can act on them.

MOP – known Avondale Road for 47 years – only in the last two or three years it has been flooded by water pouring off through a drainage channel off the field by Rugby Road. In Brandon problems are caused by drainage off the land.

MOP – why isn't the water directed into the river?

MOP – If the ditch is blocked it's the landowner's responsibility to maintain it? Who is responsible for maintaining the river Avon and the Wolston Brook?

EA: O Hartland - EA is responsible for maintaining the river Avon and the Wolston brook – there is a regular maintenance schedule for the brook to manage the vegetation, through spraying three times a year and to cut back any overhanging trees and debris further up on Brook Street.

The river Avon as well overhang and where there is a pinch point we act and deal with that situation.

MOP So getting in touch with the landowners to clear the brook is a waste of time, it is your responsibility?

EA: O Hartland – we make sure that it is maintained in terms of conveyance, if there is a landowner issue, we can contact them directly as they own the brook and the channel.

MOP Is it the landowner's problem when all the weeds are coming down and filling up the brook all the way down to the river if the river itself is full of reed beds which is restricting the flow and needs to be cleared. Nothing has been done since 2010. The bridge over the brook is five foot deep in silt, needs looking at desperately.

EA: O Hartland - we can look into it, bring that forward through the FLAG and we will see what we can do.

MOP – if the water could get to Brandon Marsh it would dissipate.

MOP – If there are 8 inches of silt in brook why cannot it be taken out? Or stop the silt from entering the brook from the farmer's field?

EA: R McCarthy – If you take out the burns (mud banks) in the brook or dredge the water courses it will have no impact of high-level flooding. There need to be other measures employed.

MOP – Brook Street crossing – water came over the brook – people have

been digging in the brook before – it was blocked – tree trunks were blocking the bridge on Brook Street. It would make a big difference if you dug out the narrow area of the brook.

EA: O Hartland – collectively community could remove the large debris to prevent it going into the brook. Permitting processes in place in order to protect the environment which we have to follow which is government legislation. Our objective as an agency is to protect the environment and to protect communities and the environment – getting a balance.

MOP – 20 October 2023 brook outside my house was up over the grass verge. That was a red flag, what pro-action was taken between then and when it flooded my home.

Cllr Wright – sandbags were put out and they were left there for future use.

MOP – There were not enough sandbags.

MOP – Bluemels was a business park, RBC Planning Committee looked at the site one of the planning people said where is the river? The river is 8 meters wide at least.

MOP - Where was the help? Where was the fire brigade? Where was the emergency services? I asked you to get the answers to this.

Where were the emergency services – why is there no stop on planning – why were the sandbags so late and why so few. Why WCC lied on TV and social media saying that they had a place to go. No emergency services available to help. I asked those questions for the Parish Council to come back with tonight. Then you asked for all the other questions from those who emailed them in. You can't be sat there thinking its ok. We need those answers why my wife and 13-year-old son ... (mumbles cannot hear exactly what MOP is saying here). These questions are really important.

Chair - Apologies if I have misread – I have got those as comments rather than questions, I will listen back to the recording I am more than happy to pick those up if you want to email them.

A discussion took place about GDPR. and recording, mumbling more than one person talking at once.

Chair: - all WPC meetings are taped.

MOP - Why were no fire brigade there and why all those lies were said?

Chair: - My understanding is that there were no calls made to the Emergency Services.

MOP - OK it's not for now but those questions need answering.

RBC: D Burrows - To be fair to the Chair there have been questions e-mailed to the panel. Whenever events like this occur there is an emergency group - that is set up, this was set up on 2nd January 2024 and all the partner agencies are attending those meetings, and they are continuing. These are the sorts of questions we are looking at.

MOP - who from Wolston is on your Incident Management Team? In resilience planning there must be a representative from the village.

RBC: D Burrows – We are looking to change that and set up a FLAG. RBC officers were unable to attend due to the flooding. Why there were not fire brigade there I do not know.

MOP – Are Wolston and Brandon Parish Council liaising regarding this.

Chair: There is a meeting with Brandon Parish Council to be organised with the Chair.

STW: M Young – Thank you all for coming and thank you for the articulate way you have described your experiences. We have a few takeaways from this meeting, Avondale Road, developer two pipes into one. Collaboration

	<p>required from all partners. Actions will take place as soon as possible. Would like to speak to the two residents directly to understand exactly what is happening in your property. We need to be clear about roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>WCC: J Morris – Thanks for coming. Hopeful the FLAG is set up and sustained, not a knee jerk reaction. From highways point of view - a lot of the gulleys have been cleaned out – we will put Brandon and Wolston on a more frequent schedule as appropriate. Our teams will work with the FLAG and our own Cllr Timms and do what we can which is reasonable and practical to alleviate the situation.</p> <p>WCC: G Flower – Thank you for your input. It is evident that we all need to work together – we will collect the information on who has been affected to make sure that funding can be accessed from central government.</p> <p>WCC: R Mahal - we will support and work with the FLAG.</p> <p>EA: R McCarthy – Thank you. Actions taken away: -agreement to work with you all, pledge to come back, you should have all received a contact letter from our team please use the contact details on the letter. I will contact National Flood Forum to put them in contact with WPC.</p> <p>RBC: D Burrows – Comment about trust, RBC have a new chief executive and you have a new Parish Chair I think give us the opportunity to show we are committed to prioritise action in Wolston.</p> <p>RBC: M Keley – Thank you and thank you Chair. We hear your frustration and despair and genuinely are committed to work together to help you. We do not know what occurred in 2018 or prior to that, all we can do is take away what has been brought to our attention. We assure you we will take a coordinated role across all the partner agencies, we will work closely together with the WCC, WPC and via the local FLAG which hopefully some of you will want to actively take part in. As soon as we have clarity over the funding, which is available, we will share that with you. Hopefully you feel reasonably assured that there is a lot going on behind the scenes, we will continue to keep you updated.</p> <p>Chair: – hope you are reassured that by being able to pull together tonight a panel of all the authorities quickly gives you some reassurance that I take my role as Chair of your Parish Council very seriously. I put my hand up last year because I believe in this community, I wish to serve this community and get things right. We will form this action group and work with our partners, our agencies, the tiers within the local authorities to ensure we get the right things done. And most of all thank you to those were directly affected for sharing your experiences with us tonight and thank you for all who have given up your time this evening. I hope you have found it as helpful as we have on this side of the table.</p> <p>Cllr Wright – Thanked all the panel members on behalf of the residents and parish council.</p> <p>Chair – Thanked everyone and the panel.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 21:15</p>
166	<p>Date of Next Meeting – To consider and confirm the date of next meeting as required.</p> <p>This item was not discussed.</p>