

10<sup>th</sup> January 2013

At a meeting of the Tidal Defence / Delf Committee held this day present:-

The Mayor (in the Chair)

Councillor Bragg

“ Daw

“ Graeme

“ Trussler

“ Leith

1. There were no apologies.
2. The Committee considered the report regarding de-silting of the Delf Stream (a copy of which is attached to the official minutes of this meeting). Councillor Bragg expressed appreciation of the quality of the report, with which the Mayor concurred.

Initially discussion centred around the possibility of letting more water through the Delf from the Roaring Gutter, and whether this would remove the need for mechanical de-silting altogether. However the Committee concluded that the most beneficial course of action for the preservation of the Delf Stream and to increase flow capacity through the Delf would not be to increase the water flowing through nor to mechanically de-silt the Stream bed, but rather to clear the banks between Poplar Avenue and the fir trees by the Worth footbridge. The Committee was of the opinion that this would improve water flow, benefit the aesthetic value of the Stream in the long-term (although the Committee acknowledged that its aesthetic value may temporarily be diminished by the clearance work), help preserve the Stream as an historic feature and may also disturb the silt on the Stream bed which (with an improved water flow) should, in the Committee's opinion, help alleviate the silting problem and increase flow through the town centre.

The Committee expressed disappointment and frustration at the Environment Agency's conduct in this matter. It was felt that the recent Agency restructure and associated change of personnel responsible for the Delf Stream had devalued the Town Council's previous discussions with the Environment Agency. Moreover Committee members expressed a strong opinion that the Agency had been inactive and had not obtained or provided the information required to progress work on the Delf Stream (such as identifying the owners of land either side of the Stream along the stretch in question, and obtaining their permission – and the approval of the other necessary consultees – for work on the Delf to proceed). The Committee felt however that the Town Council had been provided with too much inappropriate information, for example members felt that the technical data supplied to the Town Council was such that it was unintelligible to all except specialists in the field. Committee members also expressed frustration that £1,700 had been paid for consultancy work.

The Committee was of the opinion that, given funding from the local County Councillor was not necessarily available for roll-over into the next financial year, and that wildlife considerations would halt work after the start of March, the necessary permissions to proceed with bank clearance should be sought as soon as possible. In the meantime it was felt that cost information should be sought so that, upon obtaining approval from landowners and agencies, bank clearance between Poplar Avenue and the Worth footbridge may proceed immediately.

The Committee RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the Town Council, meeting on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2013, that:

- the Council agree that landowners either side of the stretch of the Delf Stream in question be identified and contacted as a matter of urgency, seeking their agreement for bank clearance work to be undertaken and for any resulting organic waste and silt to be spread on their land (the Committee asked for these letters to be prepared in advance of the Council meeting, so that they would be ready to send immediately)
- the Council agree that, once the agreement of the local landowners is secured, the approval of the necessary consultees for bank clearance work should be sought as a matter of urgency
- the Council agree that in the meantime, Councillor Trussler should seek cost information for bank clearance work between Poplar Avenue and the Worth footbridge
- the Council should not commission a survey of local surface water systems, as the Committee did not feel this would be necessary for work to progress on the Delf Stream
- the Council should pursue repayment of the £1,700 paid to Maltby Land Surveys Ltd. for consultancy work since the Committee believed that this payment was not sanctioned either by the Tidal Defence / Delf Committee or by a meeting of the Town Council. The Committee assumes that the invoice for survey information was sent to the Town Council, not the Environment Agency, in error.

The Committee also recommended that a press release be prepared and issued in advance of the Town Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January, stating that the Council is working towards preservation of the Delf Stream and to overcome problems of low water flow through Sandwich which are causing health problems in the town.