

Question from Nigel Rowe, Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition

Context: The findings of independent research by Royal Holloway, University of London, into groundwater flood risk in Staines were first published in June 2024 and presented subsequently to the full Council. The research revealed 1) the scale and complexity of flood risk from groundwater in Staines (greater than that from both fluvial and surface water run-off) and b) the threat of increased flood risk for existing properties and public spaces from the below-ground structures of new developments. The Council chose to ignore the findings pending a peer review. The findings, unchanged, acquired peer review validation in March 2025, and were re-presented to and discussed with the full Council in early June 2025. The findings were presented to and discussed at length with delegations from Surrey County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority) and the Environment Agency earlier this month. As we understand it, both Spelthorne and Runnymede Borough Councils were invited to participate, and Spelthorne sent an observer.

There has been no challenge to the research findings from any quarter. Repeated requests to the Council's leadership from the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition since the summer of 2024 to accept an obligation to protect residents from the inherent threat set out above have been rebuffed or ignored. Given that the absence of such protection could have generational consequences, not just in relation to the cost or even availability of home insurance but also the trauma of being flooded, we ask the Committee to consider all of the above in answering the questions.

Question

'Does the Committee agree that the Council should have clear, robust and enforceable policy directives and processes in place that will get as close as is possible to a guarantee that no new development in Staines will increase flood risk for other properties and public spaces?'

Questions from Kath Sanders

Context - As a resident, I appreciate that the Best Value Commissioners are committed to the Intervention being carried out in a transparent manner and that the Commissioners' fees and expenses were published on 14th August for the first 3 months of the Intervention.

However, at the time of writing, there is not full transparency.

Meetings do not detail which members of the commissioners' team (and senior officers) actually attended those meetings - the attendance details list those "expected" but do not appear to be updated as a matter of course for officers. However, I believe it would be useful, in the interests of transparency, for interested parties to see which officers have attended (either in person or online).

The published fees and expenses schedule lists the fees and expenses of the four commissioners but does not include all associated costs, such as those for the Commissioners' Chief of Staff. However, I believe it would be useful, again in the interests of transparency, for interested parties to see the full costs of the Intervention.

Question 1 from Kath Sanders

'In the interests of transparency, will the Chair of CP&R undertake to show on relevant meeting details which officers were in attendance, including those from the Commissioners' Team, either in person or online?

Question 2 from Kath Sanders

'In the interests of transparency, will the Chair of CP&R undertake for council reports to make clear the full cost of the Best Value Intervention on a quarterly basis?'