

Alcester Town Council
Lead Councillors Report

Name: Cllr Colleen Chester

Topic: Flooding

Date: 26th October 2026

UPDATES

Since the last report to Full Council in March and during what has been a record breaking hot dry summer, meetings have still been taking place with stakeholders regarding Alcester's flood resilience.

This report provides an update on the status of those discussions.

Severn Trent Water (STW)

Contact with STW Community Flood Resilience Team continues and a good working relationship with personnel has been established.

STW have

- Attended ATC's Climate and Nature Family Day.
- Confirmed that the Victorian drain at Stratford Road is no longer operational.
- Shared mapping of STW assets in the town centre area.
- Confirmed drain blockage at Bleachfield Street is to be resolved via their Clean Water Team -though date for work still to be confirmed.

Outstanding matters still to be investigated.

- Suspected blockage of outfall at Ragley Mill Lane.
- Stratford Road 'Big Tank' – Specification and technical drawings now with the Flood Resilience Team- I am awaiting receipt of these details.

Environment Agency (EA)

As reported in the March report to Full Council, the EA have carried out a hydraulic flood modelling exercise to determine whether the towns existing flood defences continued to provide the EA required standard of service, referred to as 1 in 100 year. ATC contended that this report was flawed because it was using historic data regarding the crest levels of the earth bunds and flood walls.

The EA acknowledged this and have now conducted a topographical survey of the School Road and Gas House Lane flood defences. This survey has enabled the EA to compare the current embankment crest levels and top of flood wall levels against historic information and hydraulic modelling data.

The EA have reported that the findings of the survey were:

‘Overall, the findings indicate that the flood defences remain capable of delivering the required standard of service. While some localised reductions in embankment crest levels have been identified, these are not considered significant enough to compromise performance of the flood defences when assessed against the latest hydraulic modelling results.

Key findings:

- Comparison of the 2026 and 2017 survey data identified only minor variations in crest levels along the surveyed embankments in the School Road area.
- Assessment of the Gas House Lane defences identified no concerns when compared with the latest hydraulic model predictions.
- Hydraulic modelling demonstrates that all surveyed flood defences remain above the predicted 1 in 100 year flood level, including an additional 21% allowance for climate change.
- Planning and investigative works will continue to explore options for refurbishing the embankment within the School Road allotments. Over time, the informal footpath has the potential to compromise the integrity of the flood defence, although not causing an immediate issue. Therefore, any future improvement works are likely to focus on strengthening the embankment and enhancing the crossing point where the footpath passes over the flood defence. Currently, we do not have any allocated funding to progress these works. In the interim, we will continue to monitor the condition of the assets and seek out funding opportunities.’

- Next steps

I have requested details of the likely cost of the embankment works and confirmation whether a project will be included in the next round of funding applications. We know at ATC that this area is the weak point in our defences and that EA keep a store of sandbags to bolster this section of the bund during high river events. Therefore, the strengthening of the bund here is critical to our flood defence and so I will continue to press EA for these works to be carried out.

As a result of our discussions, the EA have agreed that there is a need for continual planned management of our defences rather than reactive management responses. EA will now develop an asset management plan for all flood defences in Alcester. This will assist in their planning and prioritisation of future maintenance works and capital investment programme. I have asked for this to be shared with ATC.

Warwickshire County Council (WCC)

Eliciting action by WCC in response to reporting blocked road gullies via their online reporting system is still proving challenging. It has become evident that constraints on

resources at WCC are significantly impeding officers' ability to positively respond to fault reports.

It is also noteworthy that when a blocked drain has been reported more than once, usually due to the time lapse from the first report and no action taken, W.C.C treats the report as a duplicate and cancels the latest report off their system and so does not keep an audit trail of how many times a particular drain is reported in. This data however is now recorded by the Flood Watcher system. This enables us to clearly document which drains are problematic, each time they have been reported to WCC, response received from WCC and when and if WCC resolve the issue. This acts as an aid when discussing priorities with WCC.

Flood Watchers

There are currently 8 Flood Watch volunteers signed up to the programme.

Though their activity was dialled down during the hot and dry summer months they are now actively carrying out road drain observations along their specifically allocated routes and rivers surveillance.

This will be the first autumn and winter season that the team will be out working to help report in the early signs of problems that if left unattended will affect our town's flood resilience.

Stratford District Council

Stratford Streetscene

A good working relationship has been established with Stratford District Council Streetscene team. (SDCSs)

This enabled a planned street sweeping at Gas House Lane in May this year. Gas House Lane has historically not been cleaned due to the parked vehicles obstructing access by the sweeper resulting in accumulations of compacted leaves blocking the road gullies.

By agreeing a specific day and time with SDCSSs it was possible to organise advanced notification of the work and request that vehicles were not parked along Gas house Lane. Alternative parking was provided at ATC's land at Stratford Road. The sweeping was successfully carried out and positively received by residents.

There will be a further clean carried out at Gas House Lane on Wednesday 4th November to clear the autumn leaf and conker falls. ATC facilities team organised pruning of one of the Horse Chestnut trees located at Centenary Fields which had limited the access of the sweeper during the May visit.

Plans organised to carry out sweeping and road gully jetting at Birmingham Road during the school summer holidays were postponed due to WCC proposal to carry out road

and pavement resurfacing during the same period. Though these works have not yet been carried out and are to be re-scheduled at a date to be confirmed by WCC, WCC have advised that gully jetting will be carried out as part of the re-scheduled highway work.

SDCSs have contacted me to request details of how our street clean was organised as other parish councils have expressed an interest in undertaking similar targeted cleaning.

Stratford District Council – Community Climate Change and Nature Recovery Fund (CCNF)

ATC has received confirmation that its application for CCNF funding has been successful. The £10k funding is to facilitate the appointment of a specialist drainage company to cleanse and desilt highway gullies and undertake CCTV investigations to establish the cause of significant blockages at two priority flood hot spots; School Road joining Henley Street; Gas house Lane.

Following completion of the work ATC will prepare a report incorporating the CCTV findings for the relevant statutory authorities, requesting the necessary remedial works including infrastructure replacement where required. We aim to start these works winter 2026.

Special thanks go to our Deputy Town Clerk, Kyla Brown, who prepared this detailed application and SDC for their support.

Natural Flood Management (NFM)

Discussions with groups actively undertaking schemes along our river catchments are continuing.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)

I attended a site visit to Spernal Hall Farm and Haydon Way Wood with WWT to see how the creation of wetland areas will contribute to slowing the flow of water run-off into the River Arrow.

WWT are also progressing plans to design floodplain enhancement project for a farm upstream of Runway Park. WWT have also commissioned a feasibility study to look at re-instating old meanders on the River Alne that were taken offline when the river had been straightened in the past.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (WRWT)

During the summer I contacted WRWT to learn what projects they had ongoing that may slow the flow of the river Arrow in our area.

Their plans are in their infancy, but they have recently signed their partnership agreement with their funders and will now programme their proposed interventions. Their plans primarily aim to reduce urban pollutants entering the Arrow and reduce the amount of rainfall entering the wastewater system during times of high rainfall. They also aim to intercept overland flows that go to the Arrow or its tributaries around Redditch. They have agreed to keep me advised as to what these specific projects will be.

I have put RAAR in contact with WRWT respect of the river quality elements

Councillors from Great Alne, Kinwarton and myself from ATC are planning to meet with these and other third-party organisations who are undertaking NFM projects along the Alne and Arrow to learn more about their proposals: what they are doing, where and when so that we have a complete picture of these schemes which we can inform our councils and residents. (see note re: collaborative working)

Court Leet

I attended the Court Leets' river clean at Gunnings Bridge in May where substantial amounts of river debris were cleared from the bridge piers.

A plan to carry out another clean in September was cancelled as WCC had cleared debris whilst carrying out repairs to the bridge.

Liaison with the Courts Brook Looker has proved to be a valuable addition to our 'eyes on the ground' strategy as whilst carrying out brook looking duties, issues on river courses in the town have been spotted and reported into the Flood Watch team.

I have secured agreement with WCC Highways Dept. to carry out road gully cleansing at the High Street after the annual Pancake Day Race on 9h February 2027. The Court Leet have applied to SDC Events Committee for an extended road closure notice to accommodate this work.

Future Actions

- EA- Response to my request regarding cost and funding for bund improvement works is expected late November 2026.
- CCNF- work to appoint and deploy selected contractor will now commence.
- Public awareness- As we are now entering the autumn /winter seasons, flood preparedness information will be posted at regular intervals on ATC and Alcester Community News Facebook pages.

An item re-enforcing this message will also be included in our winter newsletter. In September 2025 councillors delivered flood preparedness information directly to residents whose properties are in areas of the town vulnerable to flooding. It is proposed that this messaging be now delivered to businesses located on High

Street, Swan Street and Bulls Head Yard. As always, the message is awareness, not alarm.

- Collaborative working. A cross-parish flood resilience group has recently been set up with Great Alne and Kinwarton parish councils. The aim is to plan for how our parishes can work together on flood resilience. Our first meeting is scheduled for 3rd November.

Finally.

There are many strands to the issues associated with flood risk management which will change and evolve as our Town and neighbours' villages develop and grow. Therefore, there is no 'one time only' solution but, the need for a continual approach involving vigilance and the development of strategic solutions. Our plans for flood resilience need to be a combination of ensuring that the public are aware of their risks and their role in actively mitigating that risk, together with pressing for delivery by the statutory authorities to fulfil their obligation to keep their infrastructure assets fit for purpose. It is not an 'either or option', but a collaborate plan to work to keep our town and neighbouring villages flood free.

This is a T. T. Race- Time and Tenacity.

END OF REPORT.