

CABINET**19 March 2014****Minute Extract****553. FLOOD SUPPORT SCHEMES**

(Report CAB2571 and Addendum refer)

Cabinet noted that the Report had not been made available for publication within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration, to allow Cabinet to comment on the proposals before its consideration at Council.

On behalf of Cabinet, the Chairman thanked all those involved in the recent response to the flooding across the District, including Council Officers and staff from other agencies operating the Council's Emergency Control Centre and operational staff from all the agencies who helped within the Winchester District. He reported that the Mayor would be hosting a reception on 4 April 2014 to thank those involved.

Councillor Godfrey stated that since the Report was produced, additional guidance had been received from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). An Addendum was circulated at the meeting setting out a revised version of Appendix 2 to the Report, taking account of this revised guidance. Cabinet agreed to accept the Addendum onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration to enable Cabinet to consider the revised proposals prior to Council.

Councillor Godfrey reported that letters advising about the flood support schemes available had been sent to all businesses known to be affected by the recent flooding. The assistance of Ward Councillors and parish councils was being sought in identifying domestic properties that might have been affected.

With regard to the joint visits planned to the worst-affected areas of the District (Paragraph 4.4 of the Report refers), a Member requested that Ward Councillors be notified of the dates proposed.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Byrnes and Learney addressed Cabinet and their comments are summarised below.

Councillor Byrnes spoke as a Ward Councillor for Littleton and Harestock and highlighted the flooding issues experienced by residents of Littleton, which were ongoing in a number of cases. He stated that difficulties had been exacerbated by the closure of the Andover Road. He noted that the response by both the City Council and Littleton Parish Council had been good and welcomed the measures proposed in the Report. He queried how long the schemes outlined in the Report would be available to residents?

Councillor Learney welcomed the Report and the speed of its preparation and thanked Council Officers involved in the recent flooding response. She also highlighted that some Littleton residents still did not have working sanitation in their properties and the risk of further flooding remained. Whilst welcoming the opportunity for joint schemes to address the requirements of a group of householders, she highlighted that individual householders would still want to apply and clarification of any time limits for grant applications would be useful.

Cabinet noted that the difficulties experienced in Littleton due to the flooding were shared by a number of other areas across the District.

Councillor Godfrey stated that the Government package of flood relief support measures were aimed at addressing the impacts of flooding that occurred between 1 December 2013 and 31 March 2014. There was the possibility that the Government might extend the duration of the Council Tax discount beyond the current three months, subject to demand nationally. The Assistant Director (Economies and Communities) advised that guidance on the flooding support provided was available on the Council's website. If approved, all the measures outlined in the Report would start immediately, with the exception of the Repair and Renew Grants Scheme which the Government had stipulated could not commence until 1 April 2014.

The Head of Revenues emphasised that householders might wish to consider a joint approach to appropriate flood prevention work under the Repair and Renew Grants Scheme. In addition, she confirmed that the Council would interpret the guidance in relation to the Council Tax Flooding Relief Scheme as widely as possible to maximise assistance to residents.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RECOMMENDED:

1. THAT UNDER SECTION 13A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1992 THE COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT SCHEME CRITERIA SET OUT AT APPENDIX 2 (AS AMENDED AND SET OUT IN THE REPORT ADDENDUM) BE APPROVED.

2. THAT IN THE EVENT THAT FURTHER FUNDING IS IDENTIFIED BY GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT THE COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT SCHEME, THAT AUTHORITY BE DELEGATED TO THE HEAD OF REVENUES, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TO IMPLEMENT THE DISCRETION PROVIDED WITHIN THE SCHEME FOR THIS PURPOSE WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT.

RESOLVED:

1. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Built Environment), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Built Environment, to finalise and implement the Repair and Renew Grants Scheme, including the authority to allocate grants to residents and businesses of a maximum value of £5,000.
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Revenues to implement the Council Tax Flooding Discount Scheme according to the criteria set out at Appendix 2 (as amended in the Report Addendum).
3. That authority be delegated to the Head of Revenues to implement the Business Rates Flooding Relief Scheme with immediate effect and to award rate relief according to the criteria set out at Appendix 3.
4. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development to determine emergency grants to voluntary organisations affected by the flooding, up to a maximum value of £5,000.
5. That the budgets for income and expenditure are adjusted accordingly for the respective grants receivable and payable.