

CABINET

3 December 2014

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 January 2015

FLOODING INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP - RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT OF THE ISG CHAIR, COUNCILLOR CHRIS PINES

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RECENT REFERENCES

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At a meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 June 2014 appointments were made to the Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) which had been established by the Council to consider Winchester's response to the 2014 floods.

This report describes the review process and sets out the recommendations of the ISG.

It would be regular procedure for the recommendations of the ISG to be considered by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee before they were submitted to Cabinet. However, because of the requirement to implement the recommendations at the earliest opportunity and that the Report on Response to the winter 2013/14 Flooding Incident further update (Report CAB2636 refers) was also to be considered at this meeting, it has been agreed between the Portfolio Holder for Business Services and the Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Report be brought directly to Cabinet prior to being submitted to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet consider the following recommendations of the Flooding Informal Scrutiny Committee:

1. That important benefits of local community emergency planning groups be promoted in parishes and the Winchester town area.
2. That clear channels of communication be promoted, including telephone numbers for the public to contact the City Council and also to provide plain English advice in the City Council's outward facing publications, including its website.
3. That the City Council review measures for the protection of its own property, including its housing stock.
4. That a briefing be held for Members on emergency planning and flooding, so that Ward Members are best placed to help their parishes and town wards.
5. That the benefits of emergency planning be promoted through the media, including details of where to obtain additional information.
6. That the City Council prepare a model Community Emergency Plan that can be adapted for parish use using existing best practice.
7. That the local knowledge and expertise of the existing drainage engineers on the City Council staff be captured, and that consideration be given to appointing an apprentice drainage engineer.
8. That the trigger mechanisms be defined for when local communities operating their plans in response to a local incident need to involve the Tactical Coordination Group (TCG).
9. That a copy of all local Flood Action Plans and Emergency Plans be held by the City Council.
10. That the TCG be properly equipped to deal with a Multi Agency Response, including robust communications equipment.
11. That consideration be given to making representations to Government to allow the County Council to raise additional funding through a one-off council tax levy, which could be used to resolve flooding problems.
12. That local communities be encouraged to hold an appropriate store of diversion road signs and fluorescent work wear together with a plan of potential road diversion routes so that they can self help when road closures were required.

13. That shared IT, such as Google Docs, be used so that the City Council's plans and Community Plans can be visible to all parties and updates shared.
14. That detailed Met Office information be shared with Parish Councils and Flood Action Groups.
15. That the representatives of the emergency services, villages and other contributors be thanked for their input into the work of the ISG.

CABINET3 DECEMBER 2014THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE19 JANUARY 2015FLOODING INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP - RECOMMENDATIONSREPORT OF THE ISG CHAIR, COUNCILLOR CHRIS PINESDETAIL:1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 9 June 2014, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) made appoints to an Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) to review the effectiveness of the City Council's response to the 2014 floods and to identify areas for improvement.
- 1.2 The Members of the ISG were Councillors Pines (lead), Byrnes, Bodtger, Dibden, Gottlieb, McLean, Laming Learney, Rutter, Southgate and Verney. Prior to the first meeting of the ISG Cllr Southgate withdrew from the ISG to be replaced by Cllr Warwick as an invitee due to her experience of representing Hursley, which had experienced flooding problems. The supporting officers were Steve Tilbury (Corporate Director) and Dave Shaw (Principal Democratic Services Officer) in his capacity as Emergency Planning Liaison Officer.

Work programme

- 1.3 The ISG has held three meetings to hear the testimony of expert witnesses from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum, which is comprised of local Emergency Service and supporting organisations. The experiences of Parish Council representatives and Ward Members, whose local areas were affected by flooding, were also sought. In addition, Winchester City Mill's representative gave an account of the impact of flooding on the operation of the Mill.
- 1.4 Details about the programme of meetings, evidence provided by expert witnesses and the ISG recommendations have been included in the final report which is shown at Appendix 1.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO)

- 2.1 The work of this ISG is directly relevant to maintaining a high quality environment and maintaining a prosperous economy. The process of the Council's response to flooding ensures an effective and efficient Council.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Implementation of the recommendations relating to administration arrangements set out in this report should have no significant resource implications over and above staff time which can be found within existing resources. The resource implications for implementing the capital schemes to assist in alleviating flooding are the subject of a separate report to Cabinet on 3 December 2014 (Report CAB2636 refers) and are detailed therein.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 There are no significant risk management issues associated with this report.

5. EQUALITIES

- 5.1 The Council has a legal obligation to ensure that no one is unfairly disadvantaged, excluded or subject to discrimination when accessing its services.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Minutes of the ISG, held by the Democratic Services Team.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Final Report of the Flooding Informal Scrutiny Group

FINAL REPORT

OF THE

FLOODING INFORMAL SCRUTINY

GROUP

1. Introduction

1.1 This report describes the conclusions of the Flooding Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG). The ISG was established by Council and appointments were made to the ISG by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 June 2014. It was established to review the effectiveness of the City Council's response to the 2014 floods and to identify areas for improvement.

1.2 The ISG met on three occasions as follows:-

Meeting 1 – 20 October 2014

Meeting 1 was held in the Guildhall, Winchester, and reviewed the conclusions of the flooding debriefs undertaken by Winchester City Council, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Resilience Forum and also the post flooding Recovery Group. Representation was also made by Mr Weeks, the Manager at Winchester City Mill. The views of Ward Members were also taken into consideration and the meeting was attended by Councillor Henry from Colden Common and Twyford who was accompanied by Mrs Forder-Stent representing the Parish Council. Councillor Gosling provided details of the flooding encountered in St Johns and All Saints Ward in Winchester Town.

Meeting 2 – 23 October 2014

The second meeting of the ISG was held at The Jubilee Hall, Bishops Waltham, and heard the community view on what constitutes an effective response and how the City Council can best support local resilience. Representations were received from Mr Higham and Mr Norman from Hambledon Parish Council, Mrs Martin from Bishops Waltham Parish Council, Mr Cleary from Owlesbury Parish Council, Mr Lawrence from Cheriton Flood Action Group and written representations from Kilmeston, Wonston and Bishops Sutton Parish Councils.

Meeting 3 - 17 November 2014

Meeting 3 was held in the Guildhall, Winchester, and received the latest information on Government, County, District and Public Utility funding towards flood schemes and their implications for preparation for future flooding events; written representation from Councillor Clear representing Wickham Ward and the result of surveys from residents in the Water Lane area of Winchester, and considered the draft report to Cabinet with recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Winchester's response to future flooding events.

2. Main findings of the ISG

At the conclusion of each of the three meetings of the ISG a number of observations and considerations were made by the members of the ISG. For completeness, details of officer actions proposed to address these observations and considerations are included where appropriate. At the conclusion of the meeting of the ISG held on 17 November 2014, the ISG approved its recommendations to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, and these are set out at the end of the Report.

3. Observations of the ISG that arose during its deliberations:

It was noted that the following actions are being led by the Local Resilience Forum:

- Information will be captured, for example relating to the specific impact of adverse weather, Environment Agency modelling and other tools to aid planning.
- Community Resilience Groups will be established to involve local people.
- The Multi Agency Flood Plan will be fit for purpose and individual plans will be merged into one consolidated document.
- The response structure should aim to be flexible so that it can be scaled up or down as required and that all participants in the structure know where they fit in.
- That the Response Working Group (RWG) should aim to have its terms of reference defined at the earliest opportunity as it sets the heartbeat and tempo of any response and the relationship of other agencies to the RWG should be defined.
- Teleconferences need to reduce background noise and distractions and to be shorter in duration.
- Requests for military assistance are a decision for the military lead at Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) level.
- That the role of the Police in a flooding event will be more clearly defined, ie the staffing of traffic closures.

It was noted that the following LRF actions will be developed in conjunction with the City Council:

- Consideration - Communications will be improved by the use of a secure live web based system - Resilience Direct. This system is capable of providing live information and situational reports, for example on the availability of sandbags.
Proposal – *This system is now available to the City Council and will be rolled out to responders within the Council’s Emergency Plan. Appropriate information can be extracted from Resilient Direct and can be shared with community groups where this is helpful.*
- Consideration - Incident logs need to be maintained.
Proposal – *incident logs are maintained during emergency situations and this is reinforced through regular training.*
- Consideration - Experienced leaders are required at all levels to act as TCG controller and participate in any emergency response.
Proposal – *A significant number of staff can operate at this level and regular training helps to ensure this.*
- Consideration - There needs to be the development and exercising of teams.
Proposal - *Regular emergency planning training takes place. Training is also being developed to ensure that the response to any future emergency flooding situation is up and running quickly.*
- Consideration - To establish Community Resilience Groups to involve local people in the emergency response. Community Resilience Groups with their own plans could be relied upon to improve decision making and to provide two way communications with the City Council to improve situational awareness.
Proposal - *Hampshire County Council is developing community plans and templates to recognise that such groups exist and to add them to the Council’s database. These plans can then be shared with emergency responders.*
- Consideration - The future provision of manual assistance (as from the 31 December 2014 the Accredited Community Safety Officers would be made redundant).
Proposal - *Hampshire County Council is taking steps to provide a potential resource of staff from existing employees.*

It was noted that the following actions would be implemented by Winchester City Council:

- Consideration - To gather information on possible indicators of flooding, such as Hambledon so that an “educated guess” can be taken when

flooding is developing, as there is a window of opportunity for the responding agencies to visit in the field and put measures in place. The use of a plain English alert system based on information held by the City Council would be welcomed.

Proposal - The City Council receives Flood Alerts from the Environment Agency and the Council's drainage engineers also provide monitoring. There is two way liaison with the County Emergency Planning Unit who will bring developing situations to the City's attention. Hambledon has its own Flood Plan, which contains well established indicator mechanisms.

- Consideration - That links will be established with the flood wardens and an e-mail distribution list created so that the Environment Agency's groundwater briefings and predictions for flooding can be distributed at the earliest opportunity. Daily and weekly briefings will also be of benefit if there is the prospect of an emergency. Information update status reports for the whole District will also help Members to have a clearer picture of relative need. The establishment of two way communications with parish councils, including utility companies through the TCG (in order that calls could be logged and recorded) is important.

Proposal - These links with community groups will continue to be developed and a regular update for external groups will be part of the emergency response in the future.

- Consideration - To define the policy on the supply of sandbags.
Proposal – It is the responsibility of every householder or business to protect their property if they believe that flooding may occur. The City Council does not distribute sandbags to individual properties as a precautionary measure, but sandbags can easily be obtained from builders' merchants or on-line for you to keep ready. Should you be affected by an unexpected, emergency flooding situation caused by bad weather you can contact the Council for advice on where and how to obtain assistance. If there is extensive flooding affecting any part of the District, Winchester City Council will set up its Emergency Control Centre to coordinate the response.
- Consideration - To have Business Continuity plans in place for the provision of normal service delivery in the event of a prolonged incident.
Proposal - The Council has Business Continuity Plans to continue to deliver its pre identified critical services in the event of severe business disruption.
- Consideration - The Council should work with the Environment Agency when implementing engineering solutions, such as those at Easton and potentially the whole of the Upper Itchen area. Detailed planning with the

Environment Agency gives an added degree of certainty in decision making.

Proposal - The Council works closely with the Environment Agency in implementing its capital works.

- Consideration - To establish contacts with suppliers of flooding equipment to be deployed at a local level. The provision of flooding equipment will help to obtain community support.

Proposal - noted and this has been progressed with Streetcare and the Drainage Engineers.

- Consideration - That the expertise of the Council Drainage Engineers be recorded.

Proposal - This is noted and action will be taken to record and share their detailed knowledge.

- Consideration - That the sluices operating in Winchester be kept fully operational and clear of weeds and logs. Throughout the District bodies undertaking weed clearance should abide to their agreement to only carry out such work out at agreed times.

Proposal - This will be actioned by the Council's Drainage Engineers.

- Consideration - That in the event of an emerging emergency situation and prior to the opening of the TCG, the internal notification procedures with the Out of Hours service be clarified.

Proposal - a procedure for internal notification with the Out of Hours service will be implemented.

- Consideration - That consideration be given as to whether the three month Council Tax abatement is sufficient to compensate local residents for the impact and inconvenience caused from the flooding.

Proposal - This will be considered.

- Consideration - That advance plans be prepared for arrangements for waste collection, for example with circulating lorry picking up black bags (also containing recyclables) as had been deployed at Hambledon.

Proposal - The final agreed scheme that was implemented at Hambledon is documented and can be used elsewhere in the District if required.

- Consideration - That clarification should be given to providing long term alternative accommodation to private sector householders whose properties are flooded and are in distress. This is particularly of importance to the elderly.

Proposal - The Council will clarify and publish updated information on its website so that residents understand what assistance is available.

- Consideration - How best to support Council tenants, both in terms of flood protection of properties and welfare support.
Proposal – The housing service will review and existing measures and modify these if and how this is appropriate.
- Consideration - To streamline the decision making process so that local communities obtain the necessary resources to achieve the outcomes they require. A critical period is when resources are required during the night.
Proposal – This is a priority action for the TCG.
- Consideration - To organise visits to affected areas by the Leader of the Council and the Mayor to raise local morale.
Proposal – Civic visits will be organised to support communities.
- Consideration - To prepare model community emergency plans for guidance for all parishes and community groups.
Proposal – The City Council will work closely with the County Council's Emergency Planning Unit to provide guidance.
- Consideration - That the City holds a central supply of sandbags and also documents the deployment of sandbags so that they can be positioned in locations where large scale use of sandbags had been effective. Deployment can be co-ordinated with a local person with local knowledge. Businesses should be made aware at an early stage that they should make their own provision.
Proposal - in accordance with the sandbag policy, the City Council holds a limited supply of sandbags for use in case of immediate and unforeseen flooding events. Large stocks for deployment in emergency situations are held by the County Council and access to these will be via the Response Working Group. The TCG will work closely with the local community to ensure their effective deployment.
- Consideration - A Member training event be organised to raise awareness of flooding issues.
Proposal - This will be organised and Members will also be kept informed through the Democratic Services Update and by direct emails.

It was suggested that the following points should be noted during the production of Community Plans:

- That lines of communication might be established with Southern Water to respond to unblock drains and with Scottish and Southern Energy to respond to power cuts.
- That community groups be alerted to the benefits of creating an e-mail distribution list to convey guidance, for example in the use of washing machines. Daily briefings were also of assistance to inform people and keep them up to date.
- That the Plans should be regularly updated and used in the event of an emergency.
- That broadband connections and mobile phone reception be made as resilient as possible.
- That consideration be given to the impact of flooding on roads and the marshalling of road junctions in the event of road closures. A supply of “slow down flooding” signs held locally would be of assistance, as would fluorescent work wear.
- That consideration be given to including guidance on the following within the Community Plan:
 1. To the village responding 24/7 to an incident.
 2. The impact on the local economy, including village shops.
 3. Facilitating school runs.
 4. Parking arrangements.
 5. Online deliveries
 6. Delivery of mail.
 7. Provision of bus services.
 8. The clearing of fallen trees and who is responsible for the works.
 9. Dealing with flood tourism.
 10. Clean up and return to normality.
 11. The checking and resetting of water pumps in the event of power cuts.
 12. Information on improving driving through flooded areas so as not to cause bow waves.
 13. Clarification on the legal ownership of ditches to ensure that they were cleared.
 14. Details of council contacts via the ECC/TCG.
- The extended use of the village hall, including its use as a dormitory for military personnel and as a rest centre displaced local residents. Food and drink for the agencies and volunteers could be distributed from this point. Consideration should also be given to installing generators to increase a Village Hall’s resilience.

In addition to making the above observations at its three meetings, the ISG also made the following recommendations to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet at the conclusion of its final meeting.

Recommendations to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet:

1. To promote the establishment of community emergency planning groups in parishes and also the un-parished areas. These groups would be best placed to deal with local issues arising from flooding, freezing conditions and power cuts.
2. To establish clear channels of communication. This would include telephone numbers for the public to contact the City Council and also to provide plain English advice in the City Council's outward facing publications, including its website. Staff should be trained so that the Council's message is consistent and that the public had a one stop shop for advice without being referred between responding agencies. There should also be ready access to decision makers to allow enquiries to be resolved.
3. For the City Council to protect its own property. This would include its tenants through works to be undertaken by the housing services team.
4. To hold a briefing for Members on emergency planning and flooding, so that Ward Members were best placed to help their parishes and town wards.
5. To promote emergency planning in the media , including details of where to obtain information. The information could include publications from the Environment Agency on water levels.
6. That the City Council prepare a model Community Emergency Plan that can be adapted for parish use (however, it was still essential for parishes to complete their own plans to learn and understand the process).
7. That the expertise of the Drainage Engineers be captured, and that consideration be given to appointing an apprentice Drainage Engineer.
8. That the trigger mechanisms be defined for when local communities operating their plans in response to a local incident need to involve the Tactical Coordination Group (TCG). This was necessary as there could be a local emergency that did not require a District response (but it was noted that, as in the case of Hambledon, events can escalate).
9. Than a copy of Emergency Community Plans be held by the City Council.

10. That the TCG be properly equipped to deal with a Multi Agency Response, including robust communications equipment.
 11. That a representation should be made to Government to allow the County Council to raise additional funding through a one-off council tax levy (for example a 2% increase to generate £20mn) which could then be used to resolve flooding problems. The requirement for a referendum should be removed so that solutions were not compromised by an inability to spend.
 12. That the role of the police in a flooding event be more clearly defined.
 13. That local communities should hold a store of diversion road signs and fluorescent work wear together with a plan of potential road diversion routes so that they can self help when road closures were required.
 14. The use of shared IT, such as Google Docs, so that the City Council's plans and Community Plans can be visible to all parties and updates shared. These plans can include open and closed versions as required.
 15. That detailed Met Office information be shared with Parish Councils and Flood Action Groups.
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