

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan.

Report of the Director of Human Resources, Performance and Communications.

SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP (TFG) REPORT ON FLOODING

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet the findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) from the investigation undertaken on its behalf by the Flooding Task & Finish Group (TFG) to review what has been learnt since the 2007 floods, what has been put in place, as well as make recommendations for improvements.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That Cabinet considers the conclusions and recommendations set out in section 6 as a result of the TFG's review of Flooding in Barnsley.**

3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 Following the Pitt Review, Scrutiny was given powers to investigate activities in relation to flood risk management; this includes information outlined in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Given the devastation that recent flooding events have caused, the impact of climate change and the increase in incidents of flooding, this TFG was established to consider Barnsley's position in relation to this. Specifically to investigate: what has been learnt since the 2007 floods including what preventative measures are in place; the emergency response; and how we have assisted communities to be prepared, particularly those in high risk areas.
- 3.2 The members of the TFG who undertook this investigation included the following: Councillor Paul Hand-Davis (TFG Lead Member), Councillor Gail Charlesworth, Councillor Jeff Ennis, Councillor Annette Gollick, Councillor Ralph Sixsmith, Councillor Harry Spence and Councillor Sarah Tattersall. Due to the high risk of flooding in the Darfield Ward and as none of these Members are on the OSC, they were co-opted onto the TFG to facilitate their contribution to the investigation: Councillor Dorothy Coates, Councillor Pauline Markham and Councillor Caroline Saunders.

4. What the Task & Finish Group (TFG) looked at

- 4.1 Initially, the TFG met to consider the scope of the investigation. This included discussing their key concerns and experiences of dealing with flooding issues in their local communities as well as services they would like to engage with.
- 4.2 The TFG undertook a number of 'check and challenge' sessions with officers and the Cabinet Member for the Place Directorate regarding the work being carried out

and future plans. This involved asking questions of them regarding their work, their involvement and partnership working with other agencies including the impact of this on Barnsley residents. This included meeting with: Council representatives working at both a strategic and operational level in the Place Directorate including those from Highways, Engineering and Transport; representatives from the Council's Health, Safety and Emergency Resilience Service; as well as a representative from the Environment Agency (EA).

- 4.3 In addition to these sessions, the TFG met with a group of residents from the Dearne who had been affected by the 2007 floods and had ongoing concerns regarding flood risk management in their local area.

5. What the Task & Finish Group found

- 5.1 Through undertaking the 'check and challenge' sessions, the TFG found evidence of a variety of work which has taken place since the 2007 floods. This includes a number of schemes undertaking flood alleviation works to watercourses as well as residential properties. It is testament to the work undertaken that despite river levels being higher in 2012, only 6 properties were affected, compared with 660 affected in the 2007 floods.
- 5.2 Due to recent events, flooding is on the agenda locally, regionally and nationally which helps to ensure this is on the government radar and that resources are made available. A lot of work is being undertaken regarding flood alleviation and a number of reports have been published regarding findings and recommendations regarding how local areas can better plan and prevent flooding. One of the key documents is the Pitt Review which was undertaken as a result of the 2007 floods and contains 92 recommendations. The TFG has reviewed those relevant to Barnsley and has sought assurance that actions have been undertaken or plans are in place to complete them.
- 5.3 The TFG found evidence of some good partnership working in relation to flooding. For example, the EA working with the Council to implement water management schemes and assess planning applications to ensure developments do not have an adverse impact on flooding in the borough. The EA also advised that Barnsley had been effective in applying for funding for schemes in Barnsley, however due to limited resources, additional funding was available but applications for this would need to be completed. Work in partnership with Yorkshire Water is also undertaken; however challenges arise in terms of Barnsley schemes being prioritised due to pressures from other areas such as Calderdale.
- 5.4 A particular area of concern for the TFG is the increase in flash-flooding events where heavy rainfall causes localised flooding where drains are unable to cope with the amount of water, particularly if they have not been cleared. The TFG welcomed the information that in-cab GPS technology will shortly be used to undertake drainage management, which locates gullies and will gather intelligence over time regarding how often each one should be cleared.
- 5.5 The TFG also learned about specific flood plans being pulled together for local areas at Ward level, which include the use of flood stores. Different areas were at different stages with their plans and it is evident that there are a number of differing

opinions regarding what should be done in response to a flooding emergency, which creates challenges in terms of officers managing and resourcing responses. It was also highlighted that flood stores should not be seen as a panacea in response to flooding as their contents are limited.

6. Recommendations

6.1 During the investigations, the TFG members made a number of suggestions and recommendations regarding the work being undertaken which the services were able to consider as part of their work. An example includes ensuring that information regarding Flooding is available under 'F' on the Council's website A-Z list to enable easier access to information rather than requiring customers to go through 'Highways and Drainage'. Also, ensuring links to information on surface water flooding are available from this page as this is an increasing problem and cause for customer enquiries, as well as links to the government's national flood campaign information. In addition to these suggestions, the TFG recommends the following:

6.2 **Recommendation 1: An all-member information brief (AMIB) is held so that ALL Members are aware of and are updated in relation to key flood risk management issues including supporting community resilience**

This will help raise awareness of all the flood prevention work which has been undertaken both regionally and locally including works to properties and watercourses as well as planning policy implementation. Also this could be followed by a drop-in session for Members to discuss specific concerns in their wards.

6.3 **Recommendation 2: Barnsley Leadership Team (BLT) to engage in Emergency Planning to ensure all departments are prepared**

To ensure the Council is resilient during emergencies and given the turnover of staff since the 2007 floods, the Council needs to ensure it is prepared should another similar event occur, for example being able to quickly access information regarding vulnerable residents.

6.4 **Recommendation 3: Emergency contact information card to go into the New Members Induction Pack**

The small card which has been issued to all Elected Members with Out-of-Hours service contact numbers on should be included in the New Members Induction Pack to ensure all Members receive this information and are aware of the Council's on-call facilities.

6.5 **Recommendation 4: Intelligence regarding culverts, trash screens and flood-risk spots should be shared with Ward Alliances, enabling them to monitor and report issues**

Sharing information with community members regarding water management infrastructure and risk areas in their local community will raise awareness amongst them regarding flooding. This alongside encouraging them to keep a watch on these when they are out in their community, for example checking trash screens are clear of debris and reporting issues via our customer services team, will enable issues to be dealt with in a timely way and avoid flooding incidents.

6.6 Recommendation 5: Agree Council-wide principles regarding the response in a flooding event

The TFG are aware that there are differing opinions amongst both Members and officers regarding what the Council's response should be in a flooding event, therefore it would be useful for cross-Council agreement to be sought so that appropriate resources can be put in place to respond and so that consistent messages can be given to our communities.

6.7 Recommendation 6: Ensure local flood plans are finalised

The TFG is conscious that completion of a number of local flood plans is still outstanding and a number of details missing such as key holders for flood stores and contingency plans for access. The TFG is cognisant of the previous recommendation regarding agreement of what the response should be, however feels it is vital completion of these is prioritised to ensure our communities are prepared. To enable completion of local flood plans it is important our communities engage to facilitate this. Additionally, our communities need to be proactive in taking preventative measures to protect their homes from flooding both in terms of their property's infrastructure, ensuring they have appropriate insurance cover and utilise information available on the Government's 'Floodaware' Campaign website: <https://floodsdestroy.campaign.gov.uk/>

6.8 Recommendation 7: Investigation regarding the residents' flooding concerns in the Dearne to be followed up

Further to the TFG meeting residents in the Dearne, the group is aware officers have already undertaken work to follow this up which the group welcomes. The group therefore requests that this is finalised in liaison with other agencies as indicated including the EA.

The TFG would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provided information and assisted with the TFG's investigation.

7. Implications for local people / service users

- 7.1 Extensive works to both water courses and properties in the borough have been undertaken which have largely prevented flood damage in our local communities. It is important that such works continue and that our communities are encouraged to gather and report intelligence in relation to flood risks. By agreeing Council-wide principles regarding the response in a flooding event should enable both officers and Members to deliver consistent messages and support in an emergency.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the financial implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

9. Employee implications

- 9.1 There are no specific employee implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the employee implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

10. Communications implications

- 10.1 The work which has taken place in relation to flood prevention in the borough highlighted in the report should be shared and celebrated. By holding an AMIB, Members will be better aware of the work which has taken place in relation to flooding and how to be prepared in future. It is also important that our communities are aware of flood risks in their local areas so they are engaged and can share intelligence to protect their local community.
- 10.2 In planning for emergency incidents and when they arise, it is important that clear, timely and accurate information is available on the Council's website and social media channels, both to prevent unnecessary contact as well as facilitate ease of access of those who need to contact services.

11. Consultations

- 11.1 Consultations have taken place with the Flooding TFG Members, Councillor Roy Miller, Council Officers Ian Wilson, Derek Bell, Sean Davis, Simon Dobby and the Senior Management Team as well as Simon Mann from the Environment Agency.

12. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

- 12.1 As outlined in the Corporate Plan, the three priorities for Barnsley are: a thriving and vibrant economy, strong and resilient communities; and citizens achieving their potential. To contribute to achieving these, we need to ensure flood risk management is considered. This includes ensuring the homes we are building are fit for purpose and take account of flood risk, that we protect our borough for future generations and support our communities to be resilient.

13. Risk management issues

- 13.1 The ability of the Council to be able to respond effectively in the event of an emergency event is logged as a risk in the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) ('Failure to be prepared to assist in the event of an emergency resilience event in the region'). This risk is currently logged as being red' due to the significant impact on the Borough, and its residents if the Council is unable to respond and assist appropriately.
- 13.2 It is envisaged that the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny TFG will contribute towards the effective mitigation of this risk through the implementation of recommendations detailed in section 6 of this report.
- 13.3 The findings of the TFG, detailed in section 6 will be discussed between the Risk and Governance Manager, and the Head of Health and Safety as part of the review of the SRR which is due to be reviewed during March 2017. A number of these actions may at that stage be included on the SRR as risk mitigation actions.

14. Health, safety, and emergency resilience issues

- 14.1 Ensuring BLT and Council services are prepared to respond in an emergency is critical, therefore it is important that BLT engage in emergency planning activities and ensure plans are in place and relevant information available in their services. It is also important Members are aware of how to respond in an emergency and are able to give consistent messages to our communities.

15. Promoting equality, diversity, and social inclusion

- 15.1 The TFG highlighted that particularly in an emergency response, we need to ensure our customer needs are met, particularly those who are vulnerable, have disabilities and would need additional support should an emergency flooding event occur.

16. Glossary

AMIB – All Member Information Brief
BMBC – Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
EA – Environment Agency
OSC – Overview and Scrutiny Committee
TFG – Task and Finish Group

17. Background papers

- Government 'Floodaware' Campaign Website:
<https://floodsdestroy.campaign.gov.uk/>
- Government Website: Find out if you're at risk of Flooding & sign up to Flood Alerts: <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk>
- National Flood Resilience Review (Sept 2016):
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551137/national-flood-resilience-review.pdf
- Pitt Review of the 2007 Floods:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100807034701/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/pittreview/_media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/flooding_review/pitt_review_full%20pdf.pdf
- Defra: Government Response to the Pitt Review:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/194675/govtresptopitt2008.pdf

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