

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Strong & Resilient Communities Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday, 3 December 2019
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Carr, Green, W. Johnson, Leech, Lodge, Lofts, Makinson, McCarthy, Phillips, Smith and Tattersall

8 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillors Tattersall and Makinson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 21 as they are Berneslai Homes Board Members.

9 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2019 were noted.

10 Flooding and Emergency Resilience in Barnsley

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:-

Matt Gladstone, Executive Director - Place, BMBC
 Paul Castle, Service Director - Environment & Transport, BMBC
 Ian Wilson, Service Manager - Highway Delivery, BMBC
 Wayne Atkins, Principal Engineer - Asset Management
 Andrew Frosdick, Executive Director, Core Services, BMBC
 Simon Dobby, Head of Health, Safety & Emergency Resilience, BMBC
 Katie Rogers, Head of Communications & Marketing, BMBC
 Joe Jenkinson, Head of Planning Policy & Building Control, BMBC
 Cllr Alan Gardiner, Cabinet Spokesperson, Core Services
 Cllr Chris Lamb, Cabinet Spokesperson, Place Directorate
 Dave Fullen, Director of Customer & Estate Services, Berneslai Homes
 Darren Asquith, Housing Management Group Manager – West, Berneslai Homes

The Head of Health, Safety & Emergency Resilience introduced the report, which summarised the response to the recent floods. The worst affected areas were Low Valley and Burton Grange, with many properties uninsured. In terms of immediate recovery, a multi-agency co-ordinated approach was taken, with daily meetings and which included providing mutual aid to Doncaster (which suffered a catastrophic impact) in terms of highways, communications and emergency planning, which was commendable.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report and update and a full and frank discussion took place around a number of issues, including:

The need for sustainable drainage systems, particularly as part of new developments. It was explained that the Local Authority takes responsibility for surface water flooding on adopted highways, whereas responsibility for landscaped areas depends on whether the Local Authority has adopted the area in question. Sometimes Yorkshire Water Authority has responsibility or it can also be down to a management company. Discussions have taken place with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and the Land Trust around taking on areas which other organisations are unwilling to as part of the Master Plan consultations.

A Member who had experienced local flooding problems commended the work of both the Local Authority and Berneslai Homes. It was felt that a discussion needs to take place with Yorkshire Water Authority with respect to issues at Burton Grange. It was highlighted that the Council has met regularly with Yorkshire Water since 2007 and will continue to do so. Members were reassured that residents who had been given sand bags which had not been used could retain them but with advice that they do tend to rot quickly and so may fall apart before being used.

Members were reassured that plans are in place to provide support to the most vulnerable residents who have already been identified. If members are aware of businesses affected they should pass details on and they will also be contacted.

Members were informed that a number of projects are already underway in vulnerable areas, including Houghton Washrooms and Darfield. The bank at Low Valley has collapsed and this has been reported to the Environment Agency. A Member reported that the river had not been dredged for a number of years and felt that this had led to the flooding of houses in the Station Road area as the dyke was unable to take away the water. Unfortunately this is not the Council's responsibility. Similarly, a Member highlighted that the reservoir in Worsborough was around 9ft shallower than in past years and had not been dredged for some time. It was explained that due to the design of the reservoir, dredging would not be of benefit.

The Local Authority is aware of the problems experienced in the Aldham Bridge area and has done some initial works, with more planned in the future, following a full survey. Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency are looking at more natural measures mitigation measures when schemes are designed such as tree planting, looking at ecological aspects and designing in risk of flood including attenuation ponds etc.

It was reported that after the 2007 floods, Berneslai Homes' properties in flood risk areas are flagged on the IT system so that tenants are aware of the risk and are offered advice, information about the flood alert system and their low cost tenants' home contents insurance scheme. Worsbrough Sports Centre, a community building, was flooded in 2007 and 2011 and cannot get insurance. Members felt that this needs resolving at a national level.

A member questioned whether building on land liable to flooding was having any effect. It was explained that within the Local Plan, out of 80+ sites for housing plus commercial sites, only a handful of sites were identified where the risk of flooding was medium risk. Policies state that these areas should be avoided. An allowance is built in for undeveloped allocations with a higher risk of flooding. For sites over 1

hectare a flood risk assessment must be in place. On greenfield sites there must be an allowance for climate change and on brownfield sites the authority asks for a 33% reduction of water flow. There is a very robust process to ensure sites to be developed are carefully assessed. Flood risk heavily influences the design of sites, which must include attenuation ponds and other biodiversity measures. The sites at Manvers are the responsibility of Rotherham.

A member reported that many gulleys are still full to capacity despite being reported and this could present a danger if they were to freeze. Gulleys are cleaned regularly according to an agreed schedule but problems have been identified in some areas. A programme of investigation is in place and a budget has been identified next year for this. It was highlighted that due to prudent management by the Council this year, a £1m infrastructure investment will be made in the spring, with half earmarked for cleaning and repair of gulleys.

Leaf fall also causes problems. Neighbourhood Services clear leaves from hotspots but as leaves don't come down all at once and due to budgetary constraints a regular schedule cannot be developed. A significant amount of investment has been made in this area but the reality is that with more adverse weather and a high water table, this will continue to rise over time. Hot spots are identified, assessed and actioned straightaway. Members were asked to email 'member enquiries' and this is then sorted out quickly.

A member highlighted that Darfield and Low Valley floods every 10 years but is highlighted blue on the map and was aware of a local resident who had been badly affected and had received no assistance whatsoever, which was unacceptable.

Many lessons had been learned from the 2007 floods and also the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's investigation and recommendations around flooding in 2017. In fact, recommendations from the 2007 experience formed the basis of a plan as to how to prepare and respond to flooding. A full debrief will be carried out following this year's floods and will be taken to Cabinet. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be able to keep the issue under close review.

Members congratulated officers for the manner in which they worked with the other South Yorkshire Authorities. All 3 had declared a state of emergency but there had been no fatalities despite over 150 floods. Doncaster was worst affected, requiring military assistance. A campaign for more funding is being pushed through the recovery group, with a direct interface with politicians. Resources are already stretched and under pressure. It is important that there is consistency across the whole of the South Yorkshire area.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) The report be noted; and
- (iii) Officers involved in the flood response (including Communications) be thanked for the way they responded.

Chair