

Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Summary of Recommendations

Flooding Issues and Maintenance of Flood Defences in the District of South Derbyshire.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee was tasked with reviewing the flooding issues for South Derbyshire. Witness statements from several external sources and from within SDDC have provided us with evidence as requested.

The Objectives and Purpose of the Report

To present to Members a summary of the evidence gathered during the course of this review along with its associated recommendations.

To consider the risk associated with all types of flooding and to review what measures the Council and statutory bodies have put in place to minimise risk and to deal with such events when they occur.

Background

On Wednesday 27th June 2007 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee commissioned a review of issues around flooding covering areas of the Rivers Dove, Trent and Derwent along with the major tributaries that feed into the river and canal network.

It also covers cases of flash flooding that occurred in the urban core after recent torrential downpours during the early spring and summer months

This review takes a look at the Emergency Planning system and the role SDDC has within the network.

Emergency Planning

- Proposal for a Flood Liaison Group in the Urban Core to address areas of flash flooding and Emergency Planning requirements to address their needs.

This was addressed when it was clarified that all Members can attend the Flood Liaison Meeting.

The Committee was keen that promotion of floodboards and floodgates took place.

Emergency Plan contact details are updated on a six monthly basis and call-out tests are conducted twice yearly.

Recommendation: Emergency Planning will promote services/products that are available to British standards and encourage home owners self help, mini flood fairs will be held around the district inviting home owners to talk about concerns and have representatives from various agencies there.

Minutes from the Council's own Internal Debrief

SDDC held an internal debrief on flash flooding which occurred on July 26th 2007 after substantial amounts of rain fell across the district resulting in the Council receiving calls for assistance and sandbags.

Conclusion

As with any debrief it is always imperative that everything is looked at including things that went well and areas where improvements could be made.

In many areas the hard work and forward thinking of staff ensured that any requests made to SDDC were responded to efficiently and effectively, which then minimised the disruption to the community.

Recommendation: It was felt that should a situation like this happen again it might prove beneficial to implement the Emergency Plan in full and establish an Emergency Planning Co-ordination Team at the SDDC offices to be chaired by either the Chief Executive or a member of the CMT.

The practice of setting up more than one Gold, Silver and Bronze Command in the event of an emergency crossing Local Authority boundaries may need to be looked into.

A questionnaire was sent to all householders affected by flooding and each incident is being followed up with the relevant agencies to see if preventative works can be implemented. Members have also been sent a questionnaire requesting their views.

Overview & Scrutiny were informed through the officer responsible on the various roles played by the Police and Fire Rescue Services. Their role, along with other organisations, appears robust at present with the Council having its own emergency procedure which should have a well equipped control centre and a multi-agency Gold, Silver and Bronze Command each with its own scope of operation.

The Emergency Planning Team would be involved in major flooding incidents only. If, however, there was localised flooding affecting a significant number of dwellings the team may be involved or responsibility given over to the District Council and/or the Housing Department to where all contact should then be made.

Recommendation: The system for emergencies does rely on the availability of key identified people to be kept up to date with what is required of them and, if necessary, those likely to be involved in an emergency were in a state of preparedness. Regular live evacuation and exercises should be encouraged to ensure the system works well for everyone.

One exercise has taken place already and a second on flooding is to take place later in 2008.

A record is to be kept of vulnerable people living in parts of South Derbyshire in areas most likely to flood in order that people who could not self-evacuate could be targeted in an emergency.

Environment Agency

An EA representative attended the Scrutiny meeting to address questions prepared by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss flood prevention measures in the District.

There are four themes for flood defence:-

1. Strategic Planning and Improvements
2. Flood Warning
3. Flood Defence Operations and Flood Incident Response
4. Development Control.

Questions were answered during the session which are in the main body of the report.

Member's attention was drawn to the detrimental impact on communities across South Derbyshire at risk of flooding. The EA prioritisation scoring for flood defence installations emphasises larger populations.

Recommendation: The EA & DEFRA be urged to ensure continuity of funding for the prevention of flooding in South Derbyshire and to support the work of independent advice for those at risk of flooding or who have been the victims of flooding.

Recommendation: That the EA, SDDC, DCC, Severn Trent Water (STW) and British Waterways (BW) consider as to how communications between them can be improved. Especially to informing each other of activities to be undertaken by one party. For example, work undertaken of a minor nature, to prevent flooding from a main watercourse but possibly causing localized flooding elsewhere which was then the responsibility of another agency. This would also include an understanding of the resources held by each Agency.

Flood Warnings

The EA has a responsibility for issuing flood warnings depending on the severity of the risk. Such a scheme is currently being tested and is to be expanded along the major River network.

Recommendation: Forecasting the flooding on lesser waterways is not well received or developed. This should be improved once the proposed modeling activities are completed.

A consistent thread of the evidence given pointed to the lack of knowledge and understanding by the public about their flooding risks and responsibilities. This could be partly put down to the complexity of responsibility of various organisations for different aspects of this subject matter. It can also be attributed in part to the improvements in flood defences over previous years.

Recommendation: This can be addressed and initiatives such as information from leaflets, Flood fairs to raise the profile of flooding as a possible danger against individual plans should or might be made by householders / owners.

Report presented by Head of Planning

The Head of Planning, Gill Hague, presented the Committee with an update of the current situation and challenges that we face today together with information in regard to planning matters and the next approach to address the Flood Risk assessment for the Local Development Framework.

Conclusions on Planning Issues

The emphasis of Development Control and Planning is to try and prevent flooding and therefore, to stop inappropriate development in the floodplain. The department has powers which cover these areas. It has a duty and a role to educate the Public and Developers prior to plans being submitted. The use of sustainable drainage is now an important issue which needs to be addressed in new planning developments.

Some developments can cause problems for others for example Landowners. On the perimeter of the urban core/villages there are potential problems with surface water run off, and consideration has to be given to where it will go. If possible it should return to the aquifer, or a watercourse, or into a pond built as part of the development which would constitute an environmental gain.

It is important not to develop right up to watercourses in order that maintenance of banks can be undertaken. Consultations with Council Officers on these matters should be undertaken and joint schemes entered into to provide access for all to waterside walks.

Recommendation: The Planning Department will continue to demand sustainable drainage.

Severn Trent Water

A representative from STW, Tony Smith, attended the meeting on February 13th 2008 and presented us with information on their responsibilities, activities and contingency measures relating to public sewer flooding. Severn Trent then went further to explain what contingency plans they carry out. Questions were answered during the session which are in the main body of the report.

STW would recommend the use of proprietary floodboards that are reusable, easy to manoeuvre, store and are generally far more fit for purpose in conjunction with other means of flood defence (air brick protection, floodgates etc), rather than using sandbags.

Recommendation: Environmental Services to look into this matter.

In the event that repairs required on private sewers or drains are not undertaken by the owners, the Council can serve notice and carry out the work in default under the Public Health Act.

Flash Flooding Issues

There have been examples of Localised flooding which may be due to the rising water table resultant from heavily populated areas in the urban core and the loss of water intensive

industries. In the rural areas run off from surrounding farming land is the main source of problems in villages.

Over-ground flow can occur on such areas as car parks and in the dips between hills.

Measures can be put into place to cope with severe storm run off from roads such as the use of large diameter pipes which act as storage tanks and allow water to run out at a slower rate or to be hydraulically pumped out.

In rural areas there tends to be less obstructions to run off and not always kerbed edges to the road infrastructure. The construction of large dykes or ditches depending on volume of water could be placed around the perimeter of villages; this requires consultation with local landowners and interested parties.

British Waterways

BW is a public corporation that manage and care for the canal network and rivers under DEFRA. It is responsible for all navigable water but not banks or structures unless it owns them. Their role is sustainable management, heritage and environmental conservation, tourism and facilitating waterway transport. It owns much of the land adjacent to canals and many properties, often listed.

They have no responsibility for flooding but do work closely with the EA and have flood teams that work with other agencies in time of need. BW assist during a flood through a variety of activities which include work to prevent back flow from the River, with an operative on duty at all times. Other preventative measures include the closing of floodgates. They are also equipped with pumps and vessels that allow access to affected areas, help with moving equipment and teams around and if necessary are used for rescue work. The earlier that they receive information on flooding the better the preparations can be put into place.

BW are a statutory consultee on any applications for developments within 150 metres of canals.

Coordination and linkage with other agencies is good in general terms but with SDDC could be better in terms of knowing whom to contact. BW is a willing and well-equipped organisation and is not always called upon to play a full part; it is believed that they are not represented at command level.

Recommendation: The Director of Community Services is requested to bring this matter to the attention of County Council Emergency Planning.

The Pitt Review – Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods

The Cabinet Office of the Government has issued a review into the 2007 flooding. The County Council is ranking the recommendations in a priority action order to discuss with the District Council. A separate report will be taken to Members when this is available.