

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee.**

**Summary of Recommendations and Action**

**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 and 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 minimize risk and to deal with such events when they occur.

**Background.**

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee commissioned a review of issues around Flooding covering areas of the river Dove / Trent and Derwent along with the major tributaries that feed into the river and Canal network.

It also covers cases of Flash flooding which 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 of South Derbyshire District Council 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.

Action : this was addressed when it was clarified that all members can attend the Flood Liaison Meeting.

**Minutes from the Council's own Internal Debrief**

South Derbyshire District Council held an internal debrief on Flash Flooding which occurred on July 26<sup>th</sup> 2007 after substantial amount of rain fell across the district resulting 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 minimized the disruption to the community.

**Actions :** 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 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 effected by flooding and each incident is being followed up with the relevant agencies to see if preventative works can be implemented. All members have also sent a questionnaire for their views.

Overview & Scrutiny were informed through the officer responsible on various roles the Police and Fire Rescue services play. Their role along with other organisations appears robust, with the Council having it's own emergency procedure which should have a well equipped control centre and a multi-agency gold, silver and bronze commands each with its own scope of operation.

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

**Action :** 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 has taken place already 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 Environment Agency 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.

Action : Member's attention was drawn to the unlikely detrimental impact on small communities across South Derbyshire at risk of flooding of the environments Agency's prioritization scoring for flood defence installations, with the emphasis being on larger populations.

**Flood Warnings**

The Environment agency 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.

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

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

Action : 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. Presenting the panel 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.**

In terms 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, 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 could be undertaken. Consultations with Council Officers held on these matters should be undertaken and joint schemes are entered into to provide access for all to waterside walks.

**Severn Trent Water.**

A representative – Tony Smith from Severn Trent Water attended the meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup> 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 as to what contingency plans they carry out. Questions were answered during the session which are in the main body of the report.

Action : 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.

Further information to be added after Scrutiny meeting.

Grants may be available to certain households at risk of flooding.

Action: Environmental Services to look into this matter.

In the event that repairs are required on private sewers or drains and 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 between hill areas of our infrastructure, shows that there are insufficient gullies.

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.**

British Waterways is a public corporation who 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.

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They have no responsibility for flooding but does work closely with the Environment Agency and have flood teams which work with other agencies in time of need. British Waterways assists 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 preventatives include closing of gates. They are also equipped with pumps and with vessels which 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.

British Waterways are a statutory consultee on any applications for developments within 150 metres of Canals.

Coordination and linkage with other agencies are good in general terms but with South Derbyshire District Council could be better in terms of knowing whom to contact. BW is a willing and well equipped organization and is not always called upon to play a full part, It is believed that they are not represented at command level.

Action : 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 are 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.