

## **Environment Select Committee**

**February 2015**

### **Update on Flooding Issues**

The Wiltshire Flood Plan and Local Flood Risk Management Strategy were considered by the Environment Select Committee last year, and this report is to inform the Committee of the current flooding situation in Wiltshire and the preparations that have been made.

#### Organisational Resilience

The Council continues to roll out a programme of training for staff with response roles in an emergency. Substantial improvements have been made to the Council incident room, with improved IT facilities, a full GIS mapping system, and a mobile application which allows instant reporting and photographs taken at an incident scene and be uploaded directly to the incident room system via mobile tablet devices.

The new and simplified Flood Plan focuses on clear roles and responsibilities. Key changes include an improved ability to handle customer enquiries; greater staff resilience at strategic, tactical and operational levels; and improvements to technology to support the Council during incidents. Closer working arrangements are now in place with emergency planning team, highways engineers and the flooding and drainage teams, to share and coordinate responses to severe weather incidents. Details of parish clerks and flood wardens, where they are in place, have been added to the council emergency contact directory.

#### Community Resilience

Community resilience workshops have been initiated across the 18 community areas, with five delivered so far (covering approximately 50 town and parish communities). The workshops are attended by representatives from the Council's emergency planning, drainage and highways teams, the Police and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. These workshops help towns and parishes to create their own holistic emergency plans, and establish vital contact details for community liaison during incidents. The Parish Emergency Assistance Scheme is providing sandbags and other equipment to the 47 communities participating.

The Council has been administering the Repair and Renewal Grant and other government support schemes available for properties flooded in early 2014. This is helping improve resilience at over 80 properties, with a value of works likely to be in the region of £400,000. It is helping residents to protect their own property.

#### Infrastructure Improvements

Repairs have been made to drainage systems damaged by the flooding last year with £282,000 of Defra funding, and using the Council's own funds, with sites repaired at Warminster, Berwick St John, Barford St Martin Beanacre and Tilshead. There is a budget of £1,000,000 for drainage schemes this year, with work recently carried out at Dauntsey, Dilton Marsh and Bradford on Avon. Major new drainage improvements have recently been implemented in Aldbourne and Dilton Marsh, and improvement work has been carried out on watercourses by many of the rural communities affected by the flooding working with the Council.

Flood alleviation schemes are being investigated at a number of locations flooded last year, and consultants are developing proposals for future bids for Defra and other funding. The Council was pleased to recently receive funding of £260,000 for a scheme at Great Bedwyn, which has enabled an early start to be made on site.

### Flooding Situation

Although the first weeks of 2015 have been considerably drier than last year, there is still a significant potential flood risk from rivers, surface water and groundwater in Wiltshire. In September 2014 high intensity rainfall caused extensive flooding in Corsham, Whitley, Trowbridge and other areas, which were generally not affected by serious flooding earlier in the year. Investigations are proceeding to identify measures to reduce risk at these sites.

The situation is being monitored, and the Council is working closely with the Environment Agency and the water companies. The Operational Flood Working Groups are meeting regularly to prepare and co-ordinate responses and implement flood alleviation schemes. The recent establishment of the Salisbury group is a positive move which will help reduce the flood risk for the city.