

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
6th SEPTEMBER 2007

SUMMARY STATEMENT
WILTSHIRE FLOODING PROCEDURES

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Committee of the current arrangements for responding to flooding within Wiltshire.

Background

2. The Environment Agency (EA) is the lead agency on matters relating to flooding. They operate a system of alerts which are received by responding agencies, companies and householders in at risk areas.
3. The EA identifies local at risk areas and subsequently a Local Incident Plan (LIP) is written for that specific location. This plan in the past has been written by the District Council concerned in conjunction with the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU). However, flooding has become more widespread and is no longer confined to these areas throughout the county.
4. Each District Council has operated its own arrangements for responding to flooding incidents, for example issuing sandbags. Currently there is no legislation which requires the routine issue of sandbags to householders. The primary responsibility for a property rests with the owner. District Councils have issued sandbags to householders on an ad hoc basis.
5. Each District Council operates a separate policy on the issue of sandbags. LIPs have also varied from district to district.
6. When companies and householders, whose properties are within at risk areas, are not in immediate danger of being flooded, the EPU has found it difficult to engage them in planning for future incidents. The EPU has held two flood fairs, one in 2001 and the second in 2003, the latter being held on a Saturday for the public's convenience. Personal invitations were sent to householders and companies registered with the EA warning notification system; approximately 640 properties. All Parish and Town Councils and Local Authority Members were also invited. Thirteen companies and the EA had stands at the fair with a varied range of products available. The fair ran for six hours and received around seventy visitors.

Main Considerations for the Council

7. The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 sets out duties for those engaged in Civil Protection with emphasis placed on prevention as well as reinforcing the planning, response, mitigation and recovery aspects of the role.
8. The Act divides local responders into two categories, imposing a different set of duties on each.

Category 1 are those organisations at the core of the response to most emergencies (e.g. emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies) and are subject to the full set of civil protection duties.

Category 2 organisations (e.g. Health and Safety Executive, transport and utility companies) are “*co-operating bodies*” who, while less likely to be involved in the heart of planning work, will be heavily involved in incidents that affect their sector. Therefore, Category 2 responders have a lesser set of duties, co-operating and sharing relevant information with other Category 1 and 2 responders.

9. County and District Councils are now Category One Responders in line with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). The EPU has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with each District Council to conduct some elements of emergency planning on their behalf.
10. Some of the main duties of the Local Authorities during a flooding incident are shown below.
 - To support the emergency services and those agencies engaged in the response to an incident.
 - To provide a co-ordinated response for all Local Authority resources.
 - To maintain services and ensure a return to normality as soon as possible.
 - To activate and co-ordinate the response of the voluntary agencies, utilities and other supporting agencies.
 - To provide transportation and suitable temporary accommodation for survivors, evacuees, friends and relatives etc.
 - To provide emergency catering.
 - To provide, on request, engineering, highways, environmental health, communication and specialist support.
11. The EPU chairs a quarterly meeting with nominated representatives from all four District Councils dealing with emergency planning matters. It was decided that a joint county-wide plan would be the best way to improve response to flooding. The plan is still in draft. A summary of the plan together with the Sandbag Policy are attached at **Appendix 1**.
12. Set out in **Appendix 2** are details of the County’s response to the flooding that occurred during July this year to provide an example of the implementation of the Council’s emergency plans.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Draft Version 1.5 of Wiltshire County and Districts Flood Plan.