

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the committee of the current position with regard to flooding risk management and response arrangements within Wiltshire.

Background

2. A report on the proposals for Flood Risk Management was submitted to the Committee on 11 September 2009. The report outlined the proposed arrangements for flood risk management for Wiltshire Council and provided an update on progress with regard to the Pitt Review recommendations.
3. The report was noted and the Committee requested that an update report be presented to the March 2010 meeting.

Main Considerations for the Council

Work in Progress

Pitt Review

4. Details of the current situation regarding progress made on the recommendations of the Pitt Review are set out at **Appendix 1**.
5. A significant amount of work is being carried out to collate the information required to enable Wiltshire Council to prepare for and plan its response to flooding events.
6. The Local Resilience Forum Flood Plan prepared by the Council's Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) has gone out to partner agencies for consultation and will be presented to the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Executive Group for approval in the near future.
7. A draft plan for Wiltshire Council is being prepared. This plan will replace the plan written by Wiltshire County Council in conjunction with the four district councils. It will incorporate roles and responsibilities for services within the Council and also establish protocols for offering assistance and advice to the public.

Operational Flood Working Groups

8. Since the report to the meeting in September, the North Operational Flood Working Group (OFWG) has met three times and the South OFWG has met once. Items discussed at these meetings included:
 - Sharing of work schedules
 - Wilts & Berkshire Canal Scheme
 - Funding bids
 - Engaging Town and Parish Councils to attend meetings
 - Areas of concern
 - Flood Fair
 - Publicity

- Flood defence and levy funding
- Catchment flood management plans
- Flood mapping plans

Flood Risk Management Group

9. Due to the reorganisation of the Departments of Transport, Environment and Leisure (TEL) and Economic Development, Planning and Housing (EDPH) within the Council the arrangements for this Group are still being finalised. This forum will meet when a Weather and Drainage Manager has been recruited.

Surface Water Management Plans

10. The Flood and Water Management Bill will place a duty on local authorities to prepare surface water management plans. Wiltshire Council's Highways, Land Drainage and Emergency Planning teams are gathering information on known areas where surface water flooding has occurred within Wiltshire in the last three years.
11. Detail of river flooding information is available in the Environment Agency Flood Warning plan for Wiltshire.
12. Other information being gathered includes:
 - Flood mapping provided by the Environment Agency (EA)
 - Information from Parish and Town Councils
 - Incidents attended by the Fire & Rescue Service
13. The EA intends to make all their records of surface water events available to local authorities via a web site.
14. A letter with an accompanying questionnaire has been prepared to send to Parish and Town Councils requesting local information on flooding issues. A copy of the questionnaire is included as **Appendix 2**.
15. The Fire & Rescue Service have been requested to provide details of all flooding incidents they have attended in the last three years.

Flood Fair

16. As part of the process to engage communities in resilience planning, it is intended to hold a Flood Fair for up to 160 participants.
17. Speakers attending will be from the EA, National Flood Forum, Met Office, Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service and Wiltshire Council Emergency Planning.
18. The Water Authorities and members of the Operational Flood Working Group (OFWG) will also be invited to attend and put up displays during the event.

Flood Wardens

19. The Environment Agency Wessex Region established a network of flood wardens in the south of the county in 2003. This is not a national EA initiative and wardens are not in place throughout the county. Flood wardens are the point of contact for the parishes for flooding matters and are trained by the EA on how to form a local flood working group and prepare a flood plan.

20. Discussions have taken place with the EA with the intention of establishing flood wardens throughout the county. The EA have agreed to continue conducting the training and the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) will administer the flood warden scheme. It is hoped that some of the Community Emergency Volunteers currently registered with the EPU will volunteer for this new role.
21. A training and publicity programme is required to roll this initiative out throughout the county and will be considered after the Flood Fair has taken place. One of the objectives of the Flood Fair is to recruit eight Flood Wardens in response to a request for volunteers.

Grant Applications

22. DEFRA has allocated five million pounds of grant funding for local flood alleviation work nationally. Applications have been made for specific areas within Wiltshire. Details of the application process for funding and applications to date are shown at **Appendix 3**.

Drainage Works

23. The Council is carrying out an extensive programme of drainage improvement works at locations with known drainage problems. The 2009/10 budget of £500,000 for land drainage is significantly larger than that expended on land drainage issues in previous years.
24. Wiltshire Council is an acknowledged leader in the field of highways drainage management, and together with Gloucestershire County Council and Swindon Borough Council is sharing this expertise with other authorities in the south west and nationally.
25. The programme of highway drainage surveys and repairs has continued in 2009/10 and has been linked to the land drainage works programme to provide a combined approach to addressing drainage problems.
26. Working with other organisations, including the EA, Highways Agency and Network Rail, through the OFWGs offers the opportunity to co-ordinate the works of all agencies to reduce flood risk.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

27. Flooding can have serious environmental consequences. Those designing and building schemes to reduce flood risk will need to take into account the potential environmental impacts of those works, and seek to achieve environmental improvements where possible.

Risk Assessment

28. Flooding represents a potentially serious risk to public safety and to property, and it is important that appropriate steps are taken to reduce risks and respond effectively to incidents.

Financial Implications

29. It is anticipated that complying with the recommendations of the Pitt Review and the Flooding and Water Management Bill will result in the Authority incurring significant additional costs. The Council highlighted the need for additional resources in its response to the Government's consultation on the draft Flood and Water Management Bill.

Legal Implications

30. The Council has statutory duties as local land drainage authority, and in connection with the drainage aspects of planning and highways.

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

DEFRA Government Grants for local authorities for household level flood risk mitigation guidance

The Government's Response to Sir Michael Pitt's Review of the summer 2007 Floods Progress Report December 2009