

NOTES OF ACTIONS AGREED BY THE FLOODING SCRUTINY PANEL

MEETING 7: 31st March 2014

ATTENDED BY: **Councillors:** Harper-Davies (Chair), Grimley, K. Jones, Ranson and Smidowicz

Officers: M. Hooper, M. Hopkins and K. Roberts

APOLOGIES: Councillors Shepherd and Sutherland

CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTIONS AGREED
Action Notes of the Meeting Held on 6th February 2014	Noted.
Disclosures of Personal Interests	None.
Draft Scrutiny Panel Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That comments received on the draft Panel report from Charnwood Borough Council officers Richard Bennett, Head of Planning and Regeneration, Steve Lewis-Roberts, Group Leader Development Management, and Kevin Roberts, Emergency Planning Officer, and Caroline Watson, Flood Resilience Team Leader, East Area Midlands, Environment Agency, be noted. • That the Panel's disappointment at the lack of responses received from partner agencies that were afforded the opportunity to comment upon the draft recommendations be relayed to Julia Draycon, Resilience Partnership Co-ordinator, Resilience Forum.
Final Scrutiny Panel Report and Timetable for Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the recommendations detailed later on in these notes be confirmed as the Panel's final recommendations and that the Panel's report be amended accordingly. • Submit the Panel report for consideration by the Scrutiny Management Board on 23rd April 2014 with a view to it being considered by the Cabinet on 8th May 2014.

KEY WITNESSES

Following its February meeting, the Panel's draft recommendations had been circulated for comment to all witnesses that had assisted the Panel in its scrutiny review. The following responses had been received:

- In response to the draft Panel recommendation, 'That to provide greater clarity in planning application reports, Charnwood Borough Council Planners cite flood risk as a percentage in brackets after the industry practise 100 year probability is stated', Richard Bennett, Head of Planning and Regeneration and Steve Lewis-Roberts, Group Leader Development Management, Charnwood Borough Council, commented:

'It is not felt that specifying flood risk as a percentage would provide greater clarity to Plans Committee reports as it would be inconsistent with national guidance. It is therefore advised that this draft recommendation be deleted.'

- Caroline Watson, Flood Resilience Team Leader, East Area Midlands, Environment Agency, provided the following update on a matter discussed with the Panel at its August 2013 meeting:

'Work on the debris screen at Epinal Way has now been completed and work on the one at Forest Road is due to be undertaken in the next few weeks. Both form part of a programme which we will be continuing into the next financial year.'

Kevin Roberts, Emergency Planning Officer, Charnwood Borough Council, attended the meeting and provided verbal advice on the draft recommendations.

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS AND REASONS

Following the meeting held on 6th February 2014, the draft Panel report, including draft recommendations, were circulated for comment to all witnesses that had assisted the Panel throughout the course of the review. Responses had been received from Steve Lewis-Roberts, Group Leader Development Management, Charnwood Borough Council, Kevin Roberts, Emergency Planning Officer, Charnwood Borough Council and Caroline Watson, Flood Resilience Team Leader, East Area Midlands, Environment Agency.

Michael Hopkins, Democratic Services Manager and Kevin Roberts assisted the Panel as it decided upon its final recommendations.

Kevin made reference to draft Panel recommendation 1, 'That the Resilience Forum partners devise and maintain a job specification for volunteer Flood Wardens and that the Forum be proactive in promoting the role. Essential to encouraging volunteers would be for partners to confirm that they retained

overall responsibility and that Wardens would not be held liable for any issues arising from incidences of flooding'. A document entitled 'A Guide to the Role of Community Flood Wardens', which had been produced by the Environment Agency and the Local Resilience Forum was circulated to members and it was confirmed that liability lay with the agencies, not Wardens. Having considered the evidence, the Panel agreed that the draft recommendation should not be included in its final report.

The Panel agreed that the following recommendations and reasons be included in its final report:

Flood Wardens

1. The Panel welcomed the creation of a single list of all Flood Wardens in Charnwood and of flood risk areas not covered by wardens and recommended that:
 - a) the list be publicised as much as possible.
 - b) that Flood Wardens be advised of their responsibility to regularly liaise with their local Ward Members and Town/Parish Council representatives.
 - c) that the Flood Wardens list be reviewed at least twice a year to ensure that details are up to date.
2. Currently, Flood Wardens only cover around 50% of the Borough. The Resilience Forum should prioritise increasing this through the following means:
 - a) Send information on the role of flood wardens to all parish/town councils and to Charnwood Borough Council members representing Loughborough wards.
 - b) Proactively approach parish and town Councils of areas that don't have Flood Wardens;
 - c) Holding further events to promote the role of the Flood Warden and to encourage volunteers.
3. That officers from Charnwood Borough Council's Development Management team be requested to attend future flooding awareness events.
4. That further work is undertaken with Parish and Town Councils and residents groups in Loughborough to develop the Flood Warden scheme including holding regular network meetings to update Flood Wardens, give Flood Wardens the opportunity to share experiences and to generally promote the scheme.

Communication

5. The Panel welcomed the creation of the Leicestershire County Council produced 'Flood: Who to contact' leaflet detailing which agency to contact

for each type of flooding and suggested that it be promoted in the following ways:

- a) Two copies should be sent to every Town/Parish Council in Charnwood to allow both sides of the leaflet to be displayed on notice boards.
 - b) One copy should be sent to every member of Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council members representing Charnwood Divisions.
 - c) Through the Charnwood Borough Council website.
 - d) Through Charnwood News.
6. That agencies involved in responding to flooding incidents develop a common practice that seeks to provide a prompt acknowledgement of information received by the public, whatever the means of communication used, which includes an explanation of what has been done with the information.
 7. That agencies involved in responding to flooding incidents develop a common practice to accept and pass on to the appropriate agency information that does not relate to their specific role.
 8. That the Resilience Forum look into the development of a single contact number for reporting flooding incidents.
 9. That the Resilience Forum investigate new ways to keep the public informed about flooding incidents, including:
 - a) increased utilisation of IT, such as mobile apps and social media.
 - b) developing links with the local media e.g. Radio Leicester.
 10. That publicity be created with regard to the circumstances in which sand bags and gel bags are likely to be effective and the process for making them available when those circumstances occur.

Signage in relation to flooding incidents

11. That, should the scheme being trialled on the Warwickshire border which enabled local residents to deploy flood warning signs be successful, such a scheme be rolled out to other areas across Leicestershire which were prone to flooding.
12. That agencies responsible for temporary signage during flooding incidents consider the following options for providing a more responsive approach to their deployment:
 - a) Making use of a greater variety of wording to describe the situation, for example including 'please take an alternative route' rather than simply road closed.

- b) Making use of automatic or remotely activated signs in areas prone to flooding which would not require staff resources to deploy and collect on each occasion they were required.
- c) Placing signs at the last feasible junction where drivers could take an alternative route.
- d) Advising of alternative routes where good quality information was held and seeking to develop that information where it was not held.
- e) Making use of the knowledge of local residents through the Flood Warden scheme.
- f) Ensuring that signs are removed promptly once flooding has subsided.

Planning Issues

- 13. That it be a priority for Charnwood Borough Council's Planning department to implement procedures to ensure that its GIS flood mapping information is updated at the earliest opportunity following receipt of amended maps from the Environment Agency and that the Lead Member for Planning & Sustainability monitor the matter on a continual basis.
- 14. That to provide greater clarity in planning application reports, Charnwood Borough Council Planners cite flood risk as a percentage chance in a given year in brackets after the industry practise one in 100 year or one in 50 year etc. probability is stated.
- 15. a) That the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water seek and document local knowledge and concerns with regard to flooding risks.
- b) That the Development Management team be encouraged to consult both agencies on a wider range of applications based on those concerns.
- c) That the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water be required to demonstrate how they have taken local knowledge into account when considering and responding to planning applications.

Other conclusions not requiring further action

- 16. That attention be drawn to the nationwide issue of responsibility for the maintenance of balancing tanks whilst acknowledging that it would require the law to be amended to require water companies to assume responsibility for maintenance once developers had ensured that tanks were fit for purpose.