

Report of:	Meeting	Date
Councillor Phil Orme, Chairman of the Flooding task group and Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation	Cabinet	28 November 2018

Flooding task group – final report

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To report the work of the Flooding task group to the Cabinet.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Councillors and local residents clearer about the roles and responsibilities of elected members before, during and after flooding events.
- 2.2 We will work with our partners (including Parish and Town Councils) to facilitate a different relationship with our residents and communities that encourages resilience, capacity and independence.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That ward councillors actively support the excellent work already being undertaken by Flood Action Groups (FLAGs) and provide a lead in exploring options with local residents for setting up FLAGs in other parts of Wyre.
- 3.2 That ward councillors advise, support and encourage residents to take whatever actions are necessary to make their own properties more resilient against the threat of flooding, perhaps to include the installation of flood gates/doors or the development of a Household Emergency Plan, for example. Actions should also include taking steps to improve resilience when household improvements are being made, such as new kitchens avoiding the use of chipboard or the installation of a flood-resistant front door.

- 3.3** That a campaign is undertaken by the Communications Team to ensure that the community is fully informed about the role of councillors before during and after flooding events. This should include clarity about what is included and what is not included within elected members' roles and responsibilities in relation to flooding.
- 3.4** That a system be put in place to ensure that ward councillors are provided with all essential information about flooding events, in a timely fashion, including the decisions made by the Strategic Coordinating Group and the implications for local communities.
- 3.5** That the role of the ward councillors as an 'information hub' for residents be reinforced at every opportunity, so that it is fully understood by councillors and members of the public.
- 3.6** That the council stops routinely providing sandbags with immediate effect, in recognition of the facts that their effectiveness is limited, they are labour-intensive to fill and distribute and that members of the public should be increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for making their own properties safe from floods.

Consideration should be given to continuing to provide a limited number of sandbags to protect critical assets and to support FLAGS for distribution to previously identified vulnerable residents.

- 3.7** That ward councillors be facilitated to contribute to the de-briefing session following a flooding event.
- 3.8** That the importance of ward councillors being involved in the medium- and long-term support of people whose properties have been flooded be encouraged by
 - (i) Advising residents that this is part of the agreed role of a ward councillor, and
 - (ii) Ensuring that ward councillors have the requisite skills and knowledge to carry out such a role effectively
- 3.9** That flooding event training be made available to councillors at least annually, perhaps by way of a presentation at a pre-Council briefing or by other agreed methods.
- 3.10** That a list of Dos and Don'ts for councillors be adopted and distributed to all members, in line with the training to be provided under recommendation nine (paragraph 3.9, above).

4. Background

- 4.1** A number of significant flooding events have occurred in Wyre over recent years and all the indications are that such events will become more frequent and more serious in years to come.

- 4.2** During a severe weather event, weather reports and flood warnings are very important, but not infallible. It is very difficult to predict the precise location where flooding might occur as a result of rainfall; predicting flooding from rivers is easier, by comparison.
- 4.3** Some parts of the borough are more at risk of flooding than others, so might be more prepared and experienced in dealing with such events. However, despite efforts to make warnings of severe weather more accurate it is impossible to know exactly where the main impact will be. All communities are potentially at risk and consequently the way in which flooding is dealt with is a matter of concern for all elected members.
- 4.4** The key responsible agencies (police, fire and rescue, Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council) all have clearly defined and understood roles. The Civic Contingencies Act 2004 sets out a single framework for civil protection in the UK. It creates two categories of responders and sets out clear expectations and responsibilities for frontline responders during an emergency. Category Two responders include utility companies, transport companies and other organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive and Clinical Commissioning Groups, who have a duty to cooperate and to share relevant information with Category One responders.
- 4.5** A series of multi-agency emergency plans and information are in place, including, for example:
- Generic Emergency Response Plan;
 - Multi Agency Flood Plan Part 1;
 - Wyre Flood Plan Part 2;
 - Rest Centre Plan.
- 4.6** Even with detailed plans in place the most important element remains effective communication at all levels, and this is something in which councillors should be centrally involved as far as links with residents are concerned.
- 4.7** Elected members have been involved in all recent flooding events to a greater or lesser extent. One theme that has been consistent has been that the roles and responsibilities of councillors are not clear and not always fully understood, either by councillors themselves or by members of the public.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1** The task group took the view that the roles and responsibilities of councillors before, during and after flooding events should be more clearly defined, councillors and local residents often having different perspectives. Communities may have unrealistic expectations, fuelled by lack of clarity.

- 5.2** The task group was very impressed with the work that has already been done by Flood Action Groups (FLAGs) across the borough, and concluded that they would like to see them set up more widely still. The role that FLAGs play in engaging the public, involving them in decisions and taking personal responsibility cannot be replicated as effectively by the council.
- 5.3** There is scope for residents to take further steps in making their own homes more resilient. The review concluded that this is something that should be encouraged by both local councillors and FLAGs.
- 5.4** The review found that it was vital that councillors leave frontline responders to carry out their own responsibilities during a flooding event, as detailed in the emergency plans. Councillors play a valuable role as a hub of information but such a role depends on them being kept informed or having access to the most up to date information, which the evidence showed did not always happen.
- 5.5** The key role for councillors was likely to be after a flooding event, the long-term impact of flooding being well-recognised with residents often unable to return to their homes for many months. Ward councillors can play a significant role in providing residents with medium- and long-term support and advice.
- 5.6** The task group concluded that councillors must be kept fully up to date about flooding issues and to have the opportunity to clarify aspects of their role on a regular basis. Work on flood prevention is always changing and any alterations to policy and practice need to be fully understood by councillors so that they can support communities effectively. A regular programme of training and briefings would assist in this respect.

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	The recommendations can be delivered from within current resources.
Legal	There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	✓
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
climate change	x
ICT	x

Processing Personal Data

If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in personal data being processed, a privacy impact assessment (PIA) will have been completed and signed off by the council's Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken (as required by the General Data Protection Regulations 2018).

report author	telephone no.	email	date
Peter Foulsham	01253 887606	peter.foulsham@wyre.gov.uk	26/10/2018

List of appendices

Appendix 1 Flooding task group –Final Report

dems/cab/cr/18/2811pf1