

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee	Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee	15 January 2008 (deferred from 6th November 2007)
Report Title	Emergency Response to Summer Floods in Warwickshire
Summary	An overview of the emergency response arrangements put in place during the summer 2007 floods, key lessons learnt and how these will be addressed.
For further information please contact:	Jeremy Lee Manager of the Emergency Planning Unit 01926 41 – 2589 jeremylee@warwickshire.gov.uk
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?	No.
Background papers	None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

Other Committees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Member(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Countywide matter
Other Elected Members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Councillors Richard Chattaway, Chris Davis and Gordon Collett
Cabinet Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Councillor Richard Hobbs
Chief Executive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Via the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum
Legal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Duxbury

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Finance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helen Murphy |
| Other Chief Officers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Brown, Strategic Director Community Protection and County Fire Officer |
| District Councils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Via the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum, the County/District Emergency Planning Forum and Multi Agency Flood debrief |
| Health Authority | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Via the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum and Multi Agency Flood debrief |
| Police | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Via the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum and Multi Agency Flood debrief |
| Other Bodies/Individuals | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional Resilience Team at GOWM, The Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water Ltd –
Via the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum and Multi Agency Flood Debrief |
- Michelle McHugh

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Further consideration by this Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To Cabinet | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To an O & S Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To an Area Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Further Consultation | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee
17 January 2007 (deferred from 6th November 2007).**

**Report of the Strategic Director of Community Protection
and County Fire Officer**

Recommendation

That the Committee endorses the proposals for addressing key lessons learnt.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Major flood events occurred across the Country this summer; often on an unprecedented scale. The combined May and June rainfall total for 2007 has been recorded as the highest on record for the UK. These exceptionally wet weather conditions continued into July. The weather patterns culminated in extreme conditions on 20th July when outstanding storm rainfall totals were reported across much of southern Britain including Warwickshire.
- 1.2 The most widespread flooding events in Warwickshire occurred on 20th and 21st July 2007. The floods were an extreme weather event and led to the requirement for a coordinated multi agency emergency response across the County.

2. Background

- 2.1 Flash flooding caused initial problems but as rivers rose and broke their banks significant flooding of many areas of the County was experienced.
- 2.2 At the height of the floods seven rivers in the County were on severe flood warning – the highest level of warning in use by the Environment Agency. Over 60 roads were closed or affected by flooding and some 20% of schools in the County were affected by the flooding to some extent or other.
- 2.3 It is estimated that over 2500 homes and businesses were affected by the floods although the actual total may never be known.
- 2.4 Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service took over 500 calls and carried out over 100 rescues over the weekend period which also saw the RAF carry out helicopter rescues in three parts of the County.
- 2.5 Rest Centres were established in Henley in Arden, Wellesbourne, Shipston, Stratford on Avon and Leamington Spa to provide for the needs of those either evacuated from their homes or stranded due to the weather.

2.6 A multi agency response was coordinated over the weekend by the Emergency Planning Unit from the Emergency Centre in the basement of Shire Hall.

3. Response

3.1 Initial multi agency meetings were chaired by Graeme Betts, Strategic Director of Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate. A decision was taken at 8pm on Friday evening to declare the flooding a Major Emergency. At this stage the multi agency Strategic Coordinating Group was chaired by Assistant Chief Constable Lewis Benjamin. As the emergency moved into the recovery phase the group was chaired by Marion Davis, Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families Directorate.

3.2 The Emergency Planning Unit called out relevant staff and established links with key partners such as District Councils, Fire and Rescue Service, Police, Ambulance, Parish Councils, the Environment Agency and many others.

4. Lessons learnt

4.1 A multi agency debrief was held on Monday 10th September to review the response and capture key lessons learnt from the floods.

4.2 The proposals for addressing key lessons included the following:

- (i) The EPU will review the severe weather warnings available from the Met Office to see if there is a means of accessing more Warwickshire specific information and will also monitor any Met Office review of warnings, accuracy, use of web sites etc
- (ii) Local Authorities will get together to look at planning and related issues which either impact on flooding or are impacted by flooding such as highways, housing and planning. Severn Trent and the Environment Agency will be involved in this review
- (iii) The floods re emphasised the need for a protocol for the declaration of a major emergency to clarify who declares it, what procedures then come into play, who attends, where is it held and the terminology used.
- (iv) A review will be held into the use of IT in emergency response particularly the use of email for sharing emergency information.
- (v) The debrief identified a need for a strategic information cell to collate and disseminate generically useful information to all partners in a reliable and timely manner. This would include information on road closures, flood warnings, severe weather warnings etc.
- (vi) There needs to be a Countywide policy involving all District and Borough Councils and WCC on resources such as sandbags. This needs to be clear and well publicised.

- (vii) Greater consideration needs to be given to the use of Customer Contact Centre in emergencies and the role they can play in the coordination of messages and information.
- (viii) All agencies should promote both community and individual resilience. In such extreme events there is little anyone can do to prevent flooding in certain areas but there is much that communities and individuals can do to prepare themselves.
- (ix) There is a need to clarify many of the issues around recovery from major emergencies. This is particularly relevant for issues such as government funds, information required to claim it, deadlines, clarity of what is required and who is being asked for the information.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The key lessons from the flood debrief have been reported to the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum. The Local Resilience Forum has tasked the Manager of the Emergency Planning Unit to ensure actions are followed up and reported back to future meetings.

5.2 Certain recommendations have already been followed up:

- (i) The strategic meeting to address planning and related issues met for the first time on 16th October. The group will meet quarterly to bring together relevant partners to ensure a coordinated approach across a range of issues.
- (ii) The Local Resilience Forum meeting on 14th September approved the establishment of a Recovery Working Group. This group will address a range of issues and will follow developments with the National Recovery Working Group program.
- (iii) The County and District Emergency Planning Forum met on 9th October to look at greater District Council involvement in the well established Community Emergency Planning initiative which is led by the EPU.
- (iv) The above meeting also reiterated the need for continuity over the issue of the use of sandbags during flooding emergencies. An initial costing to look at the provision of additional sandbags, sand, a bag filler and a hopper to store the sand in resulted in an approximate cost of £150,000 for over 200 Parishes in the County. Whilst all Parish or Town Councils may not wish to take up such an offer the cost will still be significant and cannot be met from the budget of the EPU. Any initiative with community resilience such as this also need to take account of the fact that there are no Parish Councils in Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council area. Discussions are ongoing with District Council colleagues and dependent on the outcome of this a report may be taken to Cabinet at a future date if required.

- (v) The Forum will also review the use of other flood prevention products which may provide an alternative to sandbags. The Emergency Planning Unit is looking at the feasibility of holding a Flood Fair in Warwickshire to showcase the wide variety of flood prevention products currently on the market. One of the aims of this event will be to encourage communities and individuals to take action themselves to be prepared for flooding.
- (vi) The Emergency Planning Unit is currently reviewing its own procedures for setting up and managing the Emergency Centre. This will be closely linked to the ongoing review of all Directorate emergency planning procedures.
- (vii) A paper has been prepared on the role of the Customer Contact Centre and its role in emergencies which will go to the Strategic Directors Management Team shortly.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That the committee notes the report on the lessons learnt from the July floods and endorses the processes put into place to ensure lessons learnt are built into future working practices.

William Brown
Strategic Director Community
Protection and County Fire
Officer
November 2007