

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY (DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES)

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT	
DATE:	19 th MARCH 2014	AGENDA ITEM: 10
TITLE:	2013/14 WINTER FLOODING	
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	EMERGENCY PLANNING	WARDS: BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Record levels of rainfall fell in January 2014 (wettest in 100 years), wet weather continued into February 2014 and any rain falling on already saturated ground ran off quickly causing rapid rises in river levels.
- 1.2 Flooding was experienced on the Thames, the Kennet and the Foudry Brook in Reading for an extended duration, starting with the dissemination of the first flood alert on 23/12/13. The River Kennet remains on flood alert at present time (over 10 weeks later).
- 1.3 Floodwaters peaked in January 2014 and again in February 2014, with a short lull in between.
- 1.4 During the more severe of the 2 floods in February 14, the floodwater levels on the Kennet/Holybrook in the Circuit Lane area appear to have exceeded the historic levels seen in 1971. Sandbag walls and High Volume Pumps (pumping up to 24Tons/minute of flood water) were employed to keep water levels low. Without these preventative measures it is estimated that another 12 properties would have internally flooded in Southcote.
- 1.5 The feedback from the Public to the Council's response has been overwhelmingly positive. Officers dedicated significant amounts of time/effort to liaising in person with local residents, keeping them informed with a mix of face to face dialogue and leafleting. This ensured that residents knew of the Councils response plan and understood what to expect.
- 1.6 This report covers the Councils response to flooding, and a further Floods & Water Management Act 2010 Section 19 report will be prepared and brought back to a future SEPT meeting.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

That:

- 2.1 This report is noted.
- 2.2 This instance of flooding is investigated and that a Floods & Water Management Act 2010 Section 19 report is prepared and brought back to a future SEPT meeting.
- 2.3 Flood extent maps are updated and provided to the RBC Land Use Planning Team.
- 2.4 The Council's Sandbag policy is reviewed and is subject to an annual review.
- 2.5 Work by the Councils Flood Recovery Group Continues, and in particular that the finance representatives on that group continue work to administer flood funding grants and discretionary powers.
- 2.6 The Committee note the positive feedback by the Public to RBCs flood response.
- 2.7 Volunteer groups, supportive local businesses, the military and the Fire Service are thanked for their support during the flooding.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 **Sonning Bridge Closure (River Thames)** - Although outside of the Borough boundary, the closure of this bridge due to flooding (one of only a small number of river crossings in the area) caused significant issues on Reading's road network. This was compounded by the long term closure of Whitchurch Bridge for repairs. Reading's network suffered from high volumes of traffic for many days as a result of this closure.
- 3.2 **Southcote Mill & Island Road "Dry Islands" and Circuit Lane (River Kennet/Holybrook)** - Southcote Mill can be accessed by 2 sections of private road off Southcote Farm Lane and Circuit Lane respectively. Both access routes have been flooded for a period over 10 weeks and remain flooded at the present time. Residents at Southcote Mill and its neighbouring apartments were cut off for this period and had to walk through floodwater on foot if they wished to leave their property.

Properties at the bottom of Circuit Lane, Sylvan Walk and neighbouring roads in Southcote were also at risk of flooding, with water entering gardens and outbuildings of a number and internally flooding 4 properties.

The Holybrook weaves in and out of the Railway Line at Southcote. During flood events it empties vast quantities of floodwater north of the railway line towards properties at Circuit Lane before weaving back under the railway line to the South. The railway line then acts as a bund, preventing the free flow of floodwater, and this exacerbated the flooding of Circuit Lane.

Island Road was closed during the February 2014 flood, restricting access to both the Municipal Waste site and 4 residential properties. These 4 properties internally flooded and all residents were "received" as evacuees.

- 3.3 **Lower Caversham Flooding** - Low lying areas of lower Caversham flooded, causing internal flooding to a small number of residential and commercial properties in the area, and also further upstream at Scours Lane. Some of these flooded properties were water compatible developments such as boat yards, and are therefore designed to deal with floodwater.
- 3.4 **Reading Gate Retail Park/Green Park/Pingewood Business Estate Flooding** - The retail park next to Madjedski Stadium and home to B&Q, McDonalds etc flooded for the first time since its construction. The Foudry Brook and River Kennet both link to this area of flood plain via various ditches and streams that connect via Longwater Lake in Green Park, and onwards to the retail park, before moving back into the Kennet/Foudry Brook. Several of these businesses flooded internally. Businesses on the east side of the A33 in Bennet Road and Acre Road also suffered from flooding. Pingewood Business Estate around the rear of Green Park also suffered flooding of 1 residential property and 6 business premises.
- 3.5 **Emergency Response Team** - The Councils Emergency Response Team is comprised of 2 full time staff and approx 30 volunteers from across the Council.
- 3.6 **Sandbag policy** - Sandbags were distributed in accordance with our sandbag policy to properties on our historic flood extent maps.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Flooded properties

Internally Flooded (TOTAL 32)

- 1) Reading Rowing Club (Jan/Feb14)
- 2) Reading Canoe Club (Jan 14)
- 3) No 2 Bridge Street (Bridges Bar & Grill) - Jan 14 (likely Feb 14 but unconfirmed)
- 4) 97 Queens Road (Water entered basement) - Jan 14 (unconfirmed Feb 14)
- 5) Rivers Gym (Scours Lane) - water entered lift shaft and back door (Jan 14)
- 6) Christchurch Meadows Toilets (Jan/Feb 14)
- 7) Better Boating Co - Mill Green - Water entered ground floor (Jan & Feb 14)
- 8) 95 Circuit Lane - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 9) 110 Circuit Lane - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 10) 112 Circuit Lane - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 11) 1 Sylvan Walk - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 12) 16 Island Road - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 13) 17 Island Road - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 14) 18 Island Road - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 15) 19 Island Road - Whole ground floor flooded (Feb14)
- 16) London Street Brassiere (Water entered basement) (Feb14)
- 17) 16 Cowper Way (Water entered basement) (Feb14)
- 18) Buckside Cottage (Near Griffin Caversham - water entered basement) (Feb14)
- 19) 3 Church Road (Feb 14)
- 20) B&Q, Reading Gate Retail Park (Flooded inside garden centre, building yard and trade point) (Feb 14)
- 21) Cordwallis - Bennet Road (Feb14)
- 22) TK Max, Reading Retail Park (water entered lift shaft and seeped through front windows/doors) (Feb 14)
- 23) LD Distribution, No 36 Bennet Road - (Feb 14)
- 24) Reading Pneumatic services, No 38 Bennet Road (Feb 14)
- 25) Reading Marine Services - (Jan 14) Flooded internally in their workshop in Jan 14. Likely to have flooded in Feb 14 also, but unconfirmed)

- 26) Pynning - Smallmead Road (RG30 3UR) - Round the back of Green Park - single storey property and water entered whole ground floor (Feb 14)
- 27) No 5 Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Polishcar) - (Feb 14)
- 28) No 6 Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Polishcar) - (Feb 14)
- 29) No 7 Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Polishcar) - (Feb 14)
- 30) No 8 Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Polishcar) - (Feb 14)
- 31) No 9 Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Polishcar) - (Feb 14)
- 32) No 10 Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Polishcar) - (Feb 14)

Surrounded by water and underneath (TOTAL 45)

- 25 Scours Lane (Jan 14)
- 26 Scours Lane (Jan 14)
- 27 Scours Lane (Jan 14)
- No`s 1 to 12 Riverside Court Flats (Jan 14)
- No`s 14 to 31 Riverside Court Flats (Jan 14)
- Southcote Mill (Jan/Feb 14)
- Southcote Mill apartments x 2 (Jan/Feb 14)
- Pingewood House, Smallmead Road (Feb 14)
- Celtic Steels, Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Feb 14)
- John Pratley's, Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Feb 14)
- Thomas Car Services, Pingewood Business Estate, Smallmead Road (Feb 14)
- PC World - Reading Gate Retail Park (Feb 14)
- Smyths Toy Superstore - Reading Gate Retail Park (Feb 14)
- Paul Simon Carpets - Reading Gate Retail Park (Feb 14)
- Carpetright - Reading Gate Retail Park (Feb 14)
- McDonalds Reading Retail Park - (Feb 14)
- Oak Furniture Land, Reading Gate Retail Park (Feb 14)
- Pizza Hut, Reading Gate Retail Park (Feb 14)
- KFC, Reading Gate Retail Park (Feb 14)

Water in gardens/sheds/garages (TOTAL 100+)

- Queens Road - water in back gardens of properties (ODD NUMBERS 1 TO 109)
- 22 Mill Green
- 22A Mill Green
- 24 Mill Green
- 24A Mill Green
- 26 Mill Green
- 26A Mill Green
- 28 Mill Green
- 28A Mill Green
- 30 Mill Green
- 32 Mill Green
- 34 Mill Green
- 36 Mill Green
- 40 Mill Green
- 42 Mill Green
- 55 Mill Green
- 60 Mill Green
- 62 Mill Green
- 64 Mill Green
- 37 Send Road
- 39 Send Road
- 41 Send Road
- 43 Send Road

45 Send Road
 110 Circuit Lane - Water in back garden
 112 Circuit Lane - Water in back garden
 Hatford Road (properties nearest Brimpton Road)
 Shepley Drive
 Stapleford Road
 Brunel Road
 The Warren (Unknown numbers - hard to ascertain due to large secluded private gardens)

4.2 Flooded Roads/paths/pavements

Scours Lane (slipway, under bridge and access to Rivers Gym)
 Paddock Road (30m stretch flooded to a depth of 3inches)
 Island Road (
 Napier Road (100m stretch flooded to a depth of 3inches)
 Honey Meadow Close (Junc with Amersham Road/Nire Road) - flooded to depth of 1inch for 50m stretch)
 Thames Towpath from Scours Lane to Thames side promenade
 Christchurch Meadows
 Kings Meadow (Section closest to Luscinia View)
 Mill Green footpath
 Fobney Lock towpath to Southcote Mill (various sections)
 Foudry Brook cycle path adjacent to A33 (various sections)
 Private Access Road to Southcote Mill + Private section of Southcote Farm Lane

4.3 Flood Alerts/Warnings for the Reading area

23/12/13 09:23am	- Flood Alert	- River Kennet
23/12/13 09:38am	- Flood Alert	- Foudry Brook
24/12/13 07:28am	- Flood Alert	- River Thames
24/12/13 16:20	- Flood Warning	- River Kennet
25/12/13 07:08am	- Flood Alert no longer in force	- Foudry Brook
26/12/13 12:30	- Flood Warning no longer in force	- River Kennet
28/12/13 10:48am	- Flood Alert no longer in force	- River Kennet
2/1/14 07:32am	- Flood Alert	- Foudry Brook
2/1/14 07:32am	- Flood Alert	- River Kennet
4/1/14 05:47am	- Flood Warning	- River Kennet
7/1/14 07:24am	- Flood Warning (small area)	- River Thames
9/1/14 13:07	- Flood Alert no longer in force	- Foudry Brook
14/1/14 11:29am	- Flood Warning no longer in force	- River Thames
14/1/14 16:23	- Flood Warning no longer in force	- River Kennet
1/2/14 10:34	- Flood Alert	- Foudry Brook
1/2/14 15:24	- Flood Warning	- River Kennet
2/2/14 10:43	- Flood Alert no longer in force	- Foudry Brook
3/2/14 12:18	- Flood Warning no longer in force	- River Kennet
5/2/14 14:46	- Flood Alert	- Foudry Brook
5/2/14 15:23	- Flood Warning	- River Kennet
7/2/14 16:48	- Flood Warning	- River Thames
18/2/14 16:46	- Flood Alert no longer in force	- Foudry Brook
19/2/14 10:20	- Flood Warning no longer in force	- River Thames
22/2/14 17:27	- Flood Warning no longer in force	- River Kennet

4.4 Partner Agency Assistance

4.4.1 The Military & Police & Fire Services provided assistance to Reading Borough Council and its residents following their activation through the Strategic Command (GOLD) process.

4.4.2 Several substantial sandbag walls were constructed with Military & Fire Service assistance at Crane Wharf and Circuit Lane. A further sandbag wall was created to plug a breach at Southcote Weir which threatened a nearby Electricity Distribution Station, and several areas of erosion of the Kennet & Avon Canal Towpath were repaired with military assistance.

4.5 School Closures

4.5.1 Caversham Children's Centre was closed during the flooding period, due to water levels affecting the toilets/unable to flush.

4.6 Use of Volunteers

4.6.1 Several volunteer groups offered their assistance during the floods. Not all offers of assistance were needed, but several groups were used to good effect as follows:

a) Sandbag filling

- a. South East Berkshire Emergency Volunteers
- b. Natwest
- c. Thames Water
- d. Quintiles
- e. Muslim Youth project

b) Provision of Hot Food/Drinks

- a. British Red Cross

c) Building of sandbag wall/flood defences

- a. South East Berkshire Emergency Volunteers

4.7 Flood related calls

4.7.1 All flood related calls received by the Council were handled by the Councils Emergency Operations Centre.

4.8 Website/Search engine/Social Media

4.8.1 The Council received 7768 unique visits to the Councils Flooding webpages, between 7th February and 28th February, with over 1000 visits on each of the 10th and 15th February.

4.8.2 Social media was used to great effect during the floods, and up to ~50% of the website visits were generated through links from Twitter or Facebook.

4.8.3 The You Tube Flood Response video received 1473 unique views.

4.9 Local Businesses

A significant number of local businesses have suffered during the floods as a result of access restrictions.

Many of the boat operating companies on the Thames have suffered as the river has remained on a red board (advised not to navigate) for many months and as such they

are unable to operate their business. Many other businesses remained on dry land, but their customers or suppliers were unable to access them through deep floodwater.

The closure of Sonning Bridge has caused many delays for members of staff trying to get to work places in and around Reading, and additional miles for those trying to find alternative routes.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The strategic aims are:

- To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit
- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

5.2 The Councils response to flooding helps to maintain a safe environment for its residents.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

6.2 The Council provided a significant officer presence in and around the flooded areas, to allow appropriate monitoring of river levels and liaison with the public.

6.3 Local residents in some riverside areas at risk were informed of the Councils flood response activities via targeted leafleting & door knocking, such that they were aware of our flood response strategy, and in particular aware of activities associated with the erection of sandbag walls and High Volume Pumps.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decisions required within this report.

7.3 The Floods & Water Management Act 2010 requires the preparation of a section 19 report following flooding. A recommendation to prepare a separate report for this specific purpose is present within section 2.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A detailed analysis of costs incurred during the flooding has not yet been collated.
- 8.2 The Council has registered for the Bellwin Scheme, but it is unclear at the moment if we have exceeded the expenditure limit above which costs can be reclaimed.
- 8.3 Several grants and discretionary schemes are available and the details of these are currently being worked through.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None

