

Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:
A.2

Meeting Date: 9th June 2016
Portfolio: Cross Cutting
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and
Budget Framework NO
Public / Private Public

Title: FLOOD UPDATE REPORT
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive
Report Number: SD 08/16

Purpose / Summary:

This report is part of a series of update reports prepared for Overview and Scrutiny Committees on flood recovery activities and future programmed work.

The reports contain a generic section designed to give all Committees an overview of flood recovery work and a more specific section tailored to the work areas of each Committee.

This Community Overview and Scrutiny Report provides specific updates relating to:

- Customer Services (including web, phone and face to face)
- Housing support
- Sport, play and leisure facilities and partnership activity
- Arts activity (focused on the Old Fire Station)
- Parks and open spaces
- Community Centres
- Resident support via the Carlisle Flood Partnership (led by Cumbria County Council)

Recommendations:

1. That members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee review this report and give consideration to the progress made to date and the recovery plans going forward.

Tracking

Executive:	-
Overview and Scrutiny:	09.06.16
Council:	-

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The full Background to the flood event in December 2015 can be found in the first Flood Update report presented to Community Overview and Scrutiny (COSP) 31.03.16. This covered the emergency period and immediate aftermath of the floods.
- 1.2 Since the last COSP report, members of the Council have received an update from leading flood agencies at the Informal Council (07.04.16). The County Council and Environment Agency have also published a number of Section 19 Flood Investigation reports, covering the whole County (late April 2016). (<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/536/6181/42494151257.pdf>) These reports have been the subject of two public forums held in Carlisle during May.
- 1.3 Following on from the Section 19 reports the Environment Agency (EA) is working alongside other public and non-government organisations (e.g. Eden Rivers Trust) to establish plans for improving flood defences within the district. In March the Chancellor announced that £25m capital would be made available for improving defence systems in Carlisle once the EA had concluded a review of the needs of the district.
- 1.4 Further to all of the above the City Council continues to play a key role in supporting district and county wide groups who are focused on different aspects of flood recovery – transport infrastructure, housing, grants and community support.

2. FLOOD RECOVERY ACTIVITY: DECEMBER – JUNE 2016

2.1 Local Environment:

As previously reported the clean-up of Carlisle started as soon as the flood waters receded. Due to the heavy rain in previous months the rivers had been full of sediment which meant thick deposits of mud were left behind by the flood waters. Some of the mud had to be cleared by hand with shovels before the street cleaning machines could go in.

Skips were provided in flood affected areas for residents and emptying these was made more difficult by the temporary closure of Eden Bridge which meant getting to the drop-off sites took much longer than usual.

Overnight road closures were put in place for several nights on Warwick Road to enable local streets to be cleared while minimising disruption and avoiding danger to the public and our staff / contractors.

Up to 18th December, in excess of 1,064 tonnes of flood material was disposed of from flood affected streets in Carlisle. A further 75 tonnes was collected from Bousteads HWRC and 17 tonnes from Brampton HWRC. During this time around 350 skips were provided across the flood affected areas to deal with the initial volume of flood damaged contents.

These works were carried out in addition to the normal services still being provided across the rest of the District. Staff from Local Environment also provided tremendous assistance in emptying the ground floor of the Civic Centre and a range of other flood damaged properties.

The clean-up operation has continued well into 2016 with the street cleaning services gradually returning to business as usual, but continuing to respond to ad-hoc requests for support from residents affected by flooding. By the end of March, it was estimated that up to 3,000 tonnes of flood material had been collected and in excess of 500 skips provided.

2.2 Customer Contact and access to services:

Following the flood the Civic Centre was initially inaccessible to staff and members of the public. The Council was temporarily left without IT systems, phone and web services and has no facilities for meeting and assisting residents and customers.

The recovery of key customer services was one of the first priorities for the CMT. A temporary Customer Services Centre was operational in the Old Town Hall on Monday 7th December (complete with phone lines and functioning web service). The team continued to operate from this site until access to the Civic Centre was secured and arrangements were made for the relocation of this service to Committee Rooms A, B and C on 21st December. Telephone services had also then been fully restored (14th December) in the first floor IT Training Room.

Since this point a more appropriate facility has been secured via the temporary contact centre and Civic reception in the members' car park to the side of the Civic Centre, this facility opened 29th February. This provides all of the services we normally provide and is accommodating some of our partners such as the DWP and passport office. The Customers Services team will continue to occupy these facilities whilst a full recovery of the ground floor and basement of the Civic Centre takes place.

Temporary Customer Contact Centre and Civic Reception continue to operate out of the Portakabin located in the Member's car park. The Call Centre is currently still located on the first floor. The facility is functioning well, efficiently maintaining access to the Council's front of house public services, and delivering other public sector partner services. The Customer Services team will continue to deliver their services from this accommodation until the Civic Centre ground floor and basement refurbishment takes place.

2.3 Flood grants and household payments (Figures as of 20th May 2016)

Community Support Grant -£500 household scheme:

Further to the floods the Government announced an immediate assistance scheme targeted to support households affected by the event. This offered a one off Community Support Grant payment of £500 to each household.

Up to 4th March, 1,667 households have been confirmed as flooded by Storm Desmond, of these 1,598 are eligible for the £500 community support grant. The Council has made payments made to 1,553 households equating to 97.2% and totalling £776,500.

This is being recovered from the County Council upon submission of fortnightly grant claims.

£5,000 flood resilience grant:

Flood resilience grants are available to assist householders and business to make their properties more flood resilient in future. The grants can be used to cover costs associated with resistance products such as flood doors and barriers or they can be used to make properties more resilient, so water proof plaster, moving electric, boilers etc. above the flood water. Since the introduction of the scheme, the Housing team have provided advice to over 500 flood affected property owners, through online enquires, telephone, advice sessions. The scheme has also been widely publicised through partner agencies, local press and social media.

The Council are also now working in partnership with JBA consulting, which are able to provide independent Property Protection reports. The report costs are covered by the £500 allowance within the grant and the Council are arranging payment on behalf of the owner through the process, so there are no upfront costs for the property owner. The report will be invaluable for those who require advice on what measures might be best to future protect their properties.

The Council has received 374 grant applications and granted funded measures to 277 properties (5 were not eligible and 92 were incomplete), totalling £1,230,544. Of these the Council has paid out - 77 totalling £262,642.61.

Council Tax & NNDR discount schemes:

County wide schemes have now been approved with the DCLG paying £400,000 to the County Council to fund the local discretions (second homes/empty properties/flood affected businesses) contained within the County wide schemes.

Districts are submitting monthly claims to recover the costs incurred. Funding for discounts offered in line with the Government Scheme will be paid through a S31 grant directly to us. Council tax discount awarded to 2,084 householders which amounts to £773,086 for financial year 2015/16. Business rates discount awarded to 100 properties amounting to £311,231 for 2015/16.

The total number of businesses affected was 205, with 90 properties now being re-occupied.

2.4 City Council property assets recovery

The 2015 flood inflicted widespread and severe damaged to City Council property assets. Since the flood significant effort and expense has been incurred in making safe, assessing, stripping, drying and preparing facilities for full recovery. During this period the Council has been actively involved with our insurance brokers, loss adjusters and insurers to develop our claim for property and contents.

The Council (guided by our insurers) have also employed WYG as programme managers for the first phase of our property recovery.

WYG have assisted the Council to develop a property recovery plan and tackle immediate recovery issues such as making safe and stripping / drying our assets.

A central part of this work to date has been the surveying exercise to establish the post flood condition and reinstatement costs of over 60 assets ranging from the Civic Centre to minor items such as walls and open spaces. The completion of these surveys is now imminent and the next phase of works procurement has begun. This will be the focus of attention during the next month as contractors are secured for key recovery projects.

As of mid-May all the Council's flood affected premises have now been stripped out and dried in preparation for the works of reconstruction. Reinstatement surveys, undertaken on the Council's behalf by WYG, have all been completed, and are now with the Insurer's Loss Adjuster for approval prior to the reinstatement work going out to tender.

A number of buildings, where the most extensive damage arose, have also been inspected by Flood Risk Analysts from the Insurance Company. For these buildings advisory reports have been prepared recommending resilience and flood prevention

measures which could be incorporated into the works of reinstatement. These surveys, together with advice from the Council's own experts, will be fed into the recovery process.

The next phase of the recovery plan involves the implementation of a programme of construction works to reinstate the flood damaged buildings. To assist with this task WYG have been appointed to act alongside the Council to project manage the work and oversee the appointment and management of contractors. This piece of work covers reinstatement planning, undertaking the design and specification, preparation of tender documentation, contractor appointment and contract/construction administration until handover and close out is achieved.

A procurement process has been undertaken to select and put in place a short list of suitably qualified contractors. These contractors will be invited to tender for the reinstatement works and the Procurement Panel will oversee the award of contracts as the programme progresses. A draft programme has been established with prioritisation around the recovery of essential buildings and services. The recovery of the Civic Centre and Sheepmount leisure facilities demand more comprehensive treatment and consideration, and reinstatement planning for these assets together with partner organisations and stakeholders is now underway.

2.5 Housing and Homelessness

To date following the aftermath of the flood the Homelessness and Accommodation services have assisted 258 households to find temporary accommodation. This includes accommodating and supporting 18 households within the hostel service. The services have successfully rehoused 17 households in to permanent accommodation; with one flood affected family residing in Water Street pending rehousing.

Further to these efforts the Hostel team is continuing to work with male clients who would previously have been accommodated in John Street Hostel. This facility was severely damaged by the flood and the Council is currently preparing a specification for the full recovery of the site. The residents of this facility are currently being housed in the Council's array of dispersed temporary accommodation. This is adding further demands on staff that now need to support clients at arms-length whilst our normal service is recovered. The reinstatement of the John Street facility is a primary action for the Assets Recovery Group. Due to demand the service needs to increase the number of units pending reinstatement of John Street and is working with local contractors McKnights to source additional units.

2.6 Sport and leisure facilities and partnership activity

The recovery of sports and leisure facilities continues across the whole leisure estate.

The focus at of the Sports Development Team and GLL in recent weeks has been on the recovery and bringing back into use as much of the sporting elements of facilities as possible (i.e. pitches, courts, golf course etc.).

The buildings at the various sites are being addressed as part of the Council's wider reinstatement of buildings following the floods and negotiations with insurers are continuing.

In terms of the actual sporting elements the following progress has been made:

- The squash courts at the Sands have now been reinstated and have reopened to the public.
- Stony Holme Golf course has reopened to the public and club members, with porta cabins providing temporary ancillary facilities. Ground works continue to further improve the condition of fairways and greens, and maintenance equipment has now largely been replaced.
- Swifts and the driving range remain closed but course ground works at Swifts will commence in the coming weeks.
- At Bitts Park four full size tennis courts and 4 mini courts are open to the public and for coaching sessions.
- Clearance work for rubble and debris on the football pitches at the Sheepmount has been scheduled, with contractors undertaking some works and 'Give a Day' volunteers undertaking further work. A drainage inspection on all pitches is schedule for early June and plans are also being developed for an interim clean-up of changing rooms. We are hopeful of having the majority of pitches available for the new season along with interim changing provision. We are also working with local athletics clubs, GLL and 'Give a Day' volunteers to delivery a clean-up of the track and temporary and limited opening of athletics facilities for training purposes. In the meantime the improved athletics facilities have opened at Caldew School via funding from Sport England and the loan of a portable track from England Athletics.

2.7 Arts activity (Old Fire Station)

The City Council's Procurement Panel has approved the appointment of Thomas Armstrong to undertake reinstatement of the Old Fire Station (Thomas Armstrong were still under contract and completing works when the floods hit).

Due to the prior relationship with Thomas Armstrong recovery of the Old Fire Station is running ahead of the other assets. The content of the works of reinstatement have been agreed with the Insurer's Loss Adjuster, and a contract for

the work awarded to Thomas Armstrong (the original scheme contractor), who will be making a start on site 13 June 2016. The construction period is estimated at 16 weeks.

2.8 Parks and open spaces

As in the paragraphs above the impact of the flood on our key parks and green infrastructure has been severe.

Bitts Park play area was badly damaged by flood water in December 2015 and is currently still closed to the public.

The flood water penetrated the electronic and mechanical components of the splash zone and lifted the safety surfacing across the site. The safety of children using the site is paramount and we had no option but to take steps to remove damaged equipment, this work is ongoing.

We have ordered (26.05.16) new equipment for an exciting new central play zone and we will be replacing the water play feature. A full reinstatement programme is currently being developed and will be communicated as soon as it is available.

Bitts Park's grounds are still open and the paths and open spaces are still accessible.

Urban Adventure is back up and running and the tennis courts are open to the public too. Bitts Park will also host Cancer Research's Pretty Muddy event on Saturday 9 July and Race for Life on Sunday 10 July.

2.9 Community Centres

Botcherby Community Centre was severely damaged by flood waters and remains closed for the moment. The Community Centre is currently sharing accommodation and delivering services from Petteiril Bank Community Centre. The reinstatement of this site features prominently in the assets recover programme highlighted in the paragraphs above.

Downagate Community Centre Committee have also drafted plans for redevelopment of the centre. They have held a public meeting to discuss these proposals and are now seeking funding to help them realise the new build project. They have requested an extension of the lease of land at the site (Carlisle City Council land) in order to facilitate grant applications. Discussions on this lease extension are underway between officers and representatives of Downagate.

3.0 RECOVERY PROGRAMME – FUTURE ACTIONS

- 3.1 Further to the above update information, views are again requested from Scrutiny members on the future format and content of recovery programme updates.

As the programme develops it is clear that key areas such as costs of recovery, community issues, facility reinstatement will all be of interest to members however to avoid unnecessary work a guide to future areas of interest would assist officers to prepare a useful set of updates.

Contact Officer: Darren Crossley PA Ext. 7003 Ext: 7003

**Appendices
attached to report:**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:

Chief Executive's -

Deputy Chief Executive –

Economic Development –

Governance –

Local Environment –

Resources -