

Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:

A.3

Meeting Date: 31 March 2016
Portfolio: All
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and
Budget Framework NO
Public / Private Public

Title: December 2015 Flood Update Report
Report of: The Deputy Chief Executive
Report Number: SD0.04/16

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 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:	31.03.16
Council:	-

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In December 2015 Carlisle, other places in Cumbria and number of other areas in the North of England and Scotland suffered widespread and severe flood damage as a result of Storm Desmond and the subsequent storms during the Christmas and New Year period.
- 1.2 From Friday 4th December onwards a multi-agency emergency response was required to deal with the initial and on-going stages of the event. The City Council, amongst others, significantly contributed to Gold, Silver and Bronze command centres at Penrith Police HQ and in the Durrhill police station in Carlisle.
- 1.3 On Monday 7th December the City Council set up its own Crisis Management Team (CMT) at Bousteads Grassing Depot. The Civic Centre was severely damaged by the floods and at this point in time was still under water (to the first floor level), without power or other key services. Bousteads Grassing was used as a temporary centre for Council activity. The Crisis Management team consisted of Senior Officers and a full range of other key staff, all of whom played a vital role in coordinating the City Council response to the flood and our on-going recovery activity.
- 1.4 The initial work arising from this CMT focused on:
- enabling our Business Continuity Plans for service recovery (customer contact, access to services, delivery of key services, re-starting ICT infrastructure, communications, asset recovery)
 - ensuring clear communication with residents, staff, members, press and media of the key issues arising and our multi-agency responses
 - liaison with emerging County wide recovery groups for housing, infrastructure and community issues
 - handling offers of assistance and donations for flood victims
 - Developing plans for assets and wide spread service recovery
- 1.5 The CMT continued to meet on a daily basis in the run up to the Christmas break and frequently during the early part of January 2016. After this initial crisis period the recovery work was then taken on by a range of other focused groups relating to property, services, finance, insurance and legal issues.

- 1.6 Whilst the impact of the floods and the on-going implications continue to be a major concern for residents, businesses, visitors and public sector providers the purpose of this report is to focus on the recovery efforts of the City Council and its constituent services. The rest of this report will focus on these areas of work.

2. FLOOD RECOVERY ACTIVITY: DECEMBER – MARCH 2016

2.1 Local Environment:

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.

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. 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.

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.

2.3 Flood grants and household payments (Figures as of 4th March 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, 1,648 households have been confirmed as flooded by Storm Desmond, of these 1,625 are eligible for the £500 community support grant. Of these, 1,484 properties have so far received a payment of £500 each, equating to £742,000 of grant. This is being recovered from the County Council upon submission of fortnightly grant claims.

£5,000 flood resilience grant:

This Government scheme covers both residential and commercial properties (204 businesses were affected by the flood) and is being administered by the Housing Department.

99 applications have been received and payments made to 3 applicants (as of 4th March). 53 applications have been approved equating to approx. £239,213. This is recoverable from the County Council.

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. To date Council tax discounts have been awarded to 1,661 householders which amounts to £648,987.17 up until 31st March 2016.

Business Rates discount has been awarded to 84 businesses, amounting to £230,417.81 to 31st March 2016.

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.

2.5 Housing and Homelessness

In the aftermath of the flood the Homelessness service has assisted 256 households to find temporary accommodation. This includes accommodating and supporting 18 households within the hostel service.

Of these 256 households:

- 32% rehoused with friends / family
- 23% rehoused with private sector landlords
- 8% rehoused by Carlisle City Council
- 19% supported with temporary accommodation including residential care
- 12% into hotel / bed and breakfast
- 6% chose to remain in their own property

Further to these efforts the service team is now also working with those male clients who were previously accommodated in the 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.

2.6 Sport and leisure facilities and partnership activity

Of all the assets damaged by Storm Desmond the City Council's sport and leisure facilities suffered the most severe impact.

The following facilities have been severely damaged:

- Sheepmount Athletics and Football facilities
- Stoney Holme and Swifts Golf facilities
- Bitts Park Tennis and associated leisure facilities

Additionally the Sands Centre also suffered widespread damage across the ground floor and the Pools also had plant room damage as a result of drainage water rising.

Immediately prior to the flood the Council had been engaged in the early stages of a new procurement process for the long term management of all these facilities. This exercise has been paused during the initial recovery period and will now be re-started early April.

Condition and reinstatement surveys for all these facilities are now almost complete with costs expected to run into several million pounds. A full and on-going negotiation is now underway with insurers to establish claim levels at each facility.

The Council has sought to keep facility partners GLL fully engaged in this on-going process and likewise our partners have also maintained good communications on service recovery and reinstatement works on facilities such as the Pools, Sands and Stoney Holme.

Together the Council and GLL have also sought to keep customers fully briefed on joint recovery work and delivery temporary facilities and services were possible. A new temporary athletics facility (with £25k financial support from Sport England) will soon be open at Caldew School, Dalston and tennis coaching services are also now back operating at Bitts Park.

Finally the Council and GLL have also held discussions with a range of sports governing bodies (Tennis, Athletics, Football) and Sport England. These bodies are helpfully assisting the Council will recovery plans for our facilities and a number of voluntary sports clubs in the City.

2.7 Arts activity (Old Fire Station)

Like the Cities sports facilities the Old Fire Station (OFS) was severely damaged by the flood. Initial estimates suggested that the facility may be re-opened in May 2016, however it is now expected that the OFS will not be available until August.

Council officers are liaising with the Arts Council and performing artists to put together a comprehensive programme for late summer onwards. The Council has also sought to protect some bookings by relocating them to the theatre at the new Harraby Community Centre.

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 and Rickerby Park have both been damaged by the flood and whilst green open space is now naturally recovering to some extent, play equipment, paths, lighting, fencing, monuments and depot buildings have all been affected.

Survey work (as part of the WYG commission above) is now almost complete and early, safe removal of damaged equipment has begun. However it will still be some months before new play equipment and reinstatement of key paths such as the Hadrian's Wall trail are fully recovered.

2.9 Community Centres

Community Centres played an important role during the immediate aftermath of the flood. Greystone Community Centre was the key reception centre following the first 24 hours of the emergency and acted a beacon of support and community activity during the whole emergency period.

Botcherby Community Centre was severely damaged by flood waters and remains closed for the moment. Survey work has been completed on the site and stripping and drying activities are complete. Alongside John Street Hostel and the Civic Centre this building is a top priority for recovery works.

In addition Downagate Community Centre (not a building owned by the City Council) at Warwick Bridge was also significantly affected by flood damage. The management committee of this centre are currently appraising their options and working with insurers to recover the facility.

2.10 Resident support via the Carlisle Flood Partnership (led by Cumbria County Council)

During the initial (emergency) stages of the flood Carlisle City Council and other partners such as the University of Cumbria, Greystone Community Centre, Round Table, Carlisle Food Bank and a long list of other charitable organisations worked together to try and assist those affected by the storm.

The City Council working with these groups organised a distribution centre for donated goods and services via Fusehill Street campus and Greystone Community Centre. This exercise was operational in the run up to Christmas and involved a huge effort to manage, store and deliver donated items. The NHS supported this effort by providing the City Council with a 20,000 sqft warehouse facility at Kingmoor Park to store donations.

As the emergency period passed the County Council organised and continue to lead a community focused flood recovery group.

This group contains a range of partners (The City and County Councils, British Red Cross, Carlisle Parish Councils Association, Environment Agency, Greystone Community Centre, CVS, Rotary, Cumbria Community Foundation) who are all focused on delivering joined up support service to local residents.

Paul Hendy (a member of this group) is also leading on delivering support services from the Flood Advice Centre based in the Nisi Prius building adjacent to the Courts in the City centre.

Finally in addition to this County led work a member of the local community Stephen Higgs has also organised a Community Flood Action Group. This group is made up of residents and businesses who have been affected by the flood. Liaison between these two groups is now taking place to ensure a coordinated response to key issues and individual requirements.

3.0 RECOVERY PROGRAMME – FUTURE ACTIONS

- 3.1 Further to the above initial information, views are 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.

- 3.2 In addition to this request it should also be noted that an Informal Council session is planned for April 2016 (dates still to be determined) where representatives from key

agencies such as the Environment Agency will be invited to present their flood reports and position / direction on future resilience projects and programmes.

Contact Officer: Darren Crossley

Ext: 7004

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**