

Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:

A.3

Meeting Date: 30th 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.10/16

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 Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Report will provide specific updates relating to:

- Local Environment
- Customer contact and access to services
- Flood grants and household payments (figures as of 3rd June)
- City Council property and asset recovery
- Financial claims / recovery
- Car Park recovery
- Liaison with Environment Agency, County Council and other appropriate bodies

Recommendations:

1. That members of the Environment and Economy 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: | 30th June 2016 |
| 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 Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny 14.04.16. This covered the emergency period and immediate aftermath of the floods.
- 1.2 Since the last 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. The City Council is also playing a full role in the development of a Winter Flood Plan 2016/17. This plan is focused on finding ways to improve the preparedness and resilience of the city region during the winter months.

2. FLOOD RECOVERY ACTIVITY: DECEMBER – MAY 2016

2.1 Local Environment:

Green Spaces: The new play area in Bitts Park has been ordered with improved flood resilient equipment and surfacing. The damaged equipment and surfacing has been removed, and work has started on repairing the splash park. The new equipment is due to be installed in July, which will be followed by re-surfacing the play area and splash park. The exact opening date is yet to be confirmed, but will be communicated as soon as it is established.

We are currently working with engineering consultants Bingham Yates to look at options regarding the damaged river banks in Bitts Park and the Sheepmount, and the damaged access track at the Sheepmount.

Charlotte Terrace play area in Botcherby, which was damaged in the floods is about to be replaced

The flooded allotments are now up and running, following help from the City Council providing skips, relocating washed away sheds and rubbish removal.

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.

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.

2.3 Flood Grants and Household Payments (Figures as Of 3rd June 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 3rd June 2016, 1,669 households have been confirmed as flooded by Storm Desmond, of these 1,600 are eligible for the £500 community support grant. Of these, 1,553 properties have so far received a payment of £500 each, equating to £776,500 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 (205 businesses were affected by the flood) and is being administered by the Housing Department.

The Council has received 394 grant applications and granted funded measures to 295 properties (5 were not eligible and 94 were incomplete), totalling £1,312,068. Of these the Council has paid out 85 grants totalling £289,308. 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 2,090 householders this amounts to £773,749.75 up until 31st March 2016; with a further £2.2million awarded in respect of 2016/17.

Business Rates discount has been awarded to 101 businesses, amounting to £239,046.01 to 31st March 2016; and a further £325,000 awarded in respect of 2016/17.

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

The total number of households still unable to return to their properties as a result of Storm Desmond is 991.

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 insurance brokers) 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 Financial Considerations and Activities

Bellwin Claim

Further to the flood event the Government informed authorities affected that they would be entitled to seek financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme.

The Bellwin scheme was introduced in 1983 by Lord Bellwin of Leeds, the then Environment minister. This was later incorporated into Local Government and Housing Act 1989, section 155.

A Bellwin scheme may be activated, at the discretion of the environment secretary,

- when an emergency or disaster involving destruction of or danger to life or property occurs
- and, as a result, one or more local authorities incur expenditure on, or in connection with the taking of immediate action
- or to safeguard life or property or to prevent suffering or severe inconvenience in a local authority's area or among its inhabitants

The current Government has now circulated Bellwin scheme terms for this flood emergency (covering 5th – 28th December 2015).

The Bellwin claim has been submitted and the City Council's total eligible expenditure is £404,398 of which the Council has to meet the first £26,486 (this has been included in the 2015/16 outturn).

The claim also includes £14,984 submitted on behalf of Greystone Community Centre for costs they incurred during the response to the flood.

Along with the claim 257 copy invoices and spreadsheets of overtime claims and additional fuel costs have been submitted as supporting evidence. DCLG will now examine the claim and supporting information. No details are available regarding settlement timescales but hopefully the claim will be settled quickly.

2.6 Car Park recovery

As a result of the flood the following car parks have been damaged across the City Centre:

- Lower Viaduct
- Town Dyke Orchard
- Civic Centre
- Lowther Street
- The Sands
- Bitts Park
- Devonshire Walk
- Paddy's Market
- Swifts Bank

The damage to these sites has been significant with surfaces, lighting, fences and most ticket machines all being affected.

In the immediate aftermath of the event the Council sought to make clear to the public that although our capability to charge for parking had been damaged the city was still open for business and car parks could be used.

Our ability to recover the ticket machines has been hampered by a difficulty in obtaining maintenance support and repair parts from the suppliers. To alleviate this issue our officers have made short term repairs to ensure at least one machine per car park is operational.

A full survey of the car park machines has now been completed noting that 16 of the 27 car park ticket machines were flooded beyond repair. The City Council's Insurance Company have agreed to pay to replace the flood damaged machines. The current model we use the MP 104 has been superseded by the CWT-C. The ambition is to replace both the flood damaged machines and then phase in the replacement of the other 11 machines, to upgrade the 27 to card and cashless payment facilities

We are now procuring the 16 flood damaged machines, the remaining 11 that are out of action (having been scavenged for parts to make the other machines operational) and upgrade 13 of those machines to include card facilities to improve service for our customers.

In addition to the procurement of replacement (but updated) machines Council officers have also undertaken surveys of all car park surfaces, lighting and fences. Repair work has already been completed on a number of sites and a programme of repair and improvement is being prepared. This will come forward to members as part of the car parking business plans for the district.

2.7 Liaison with Environment Agency, County Council and other appropriate bodies

During this last period (March – May 2016) the City Council has played a full role in liaising with the Environment agency, County Council and other groups and bodies.

- Responses to the County Council/Environment Agency on the Section 19 report for Carlisle. The S.19 Report is a statutory report which sets out why Carlisle flooded. A further separate report is expected on the rural areas.
- Cumbria Housing Recovery Sub-Group – Chaired by the City Council's Director of Economic Development and is attended by representatives of all the District Council's; Chair of the Cumbria RSL Group; Environment Agency; DCLG; Cumbria Community Fund and the Development Agency. The group meets monthly and co-ordinates the delivery of the Property Resilience Grants and feeds back to the EA, DCLG and DEFRA on any issues relating to the grant.
- Cumbria Flood Group – led by the Environment Agency the group which has representatives from all organisations including Community groups, Districts and County is involved in developing an Action Plan which will include responding to the Section 19 report.
- Business and Economy Recovery Group led by the Chamber responsible for administering grants to businesses affected.
- Community Recovery Group – Carlisle Community Action Plan. The City Council are working with the EA and the County on a Community Action Plan.

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.

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**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 -