

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 19th July 2018, Committee Room 2 – Actions

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors Kath Hartley, Timothy Huxtable and Hendrina Quinnen

Also Present:

Alex Mortlock, Business Planning Infrastructure Manager, Severn Trent Water and Tim Smith, Flood Partnerships Lead

Brian Norton, Indestructible Paints Ltd

Councillor Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader

Councillor Lou Robson, Hall Green North Ward

Councillor Nicky Brennan, Sparkhill Ward

Councillor Peter Fowler, Harborne Ward

John Clayton, Selly Park South, Flood Action Group (FLAG)

Edward Clarke and Howard Smith, Selly Park Residents Community Association (SPRCA)

Kevin Hicks, Assistant Director, Highways, Birmingham City Council

Michael Enderby, Head of Resilience, Birmingham City Council

Mike Grimes, Director, West Midlands and Ian Jones, FCRM Manager, West Midlands, Environment Agency

Paul Cobbing, Chief Executive, National Flood Forum

Richard Cowell, Assistant Director, Development and Jacob Bonehill, Principal Planning Policy Officer, Birmingham City Council

Nina Bal, Harborne Resident

Charles Wong, Harborne Resident

Dorothy Carlos Ferreria, Harborne Resident

Baseema Begum, Research & Policy Officer, Scrutiny Office

Rose Kiely, Overview & Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Office

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised those present that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE AND CHAIRMAN

The appointment of the Chair and Committee was noted.

3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Councillor Josh Jones was confirmed as the Deputy Chair.

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors David Barrie, Zaker Choudhry, Josh Jones and Chaman Lal.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

The Chair reminded members to declare all relevant interests.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee's Terms of Reference were noted as set out in the City Council Constitution.

7. MANAGING THE RISK OF FLOODING IN BIRMINGHAM

(See document No. 1)

The Chair, Cllr Clements outlined the purpose of the session following a motion to the meeting of the full City Council on 12th June 2018 calling for an inquiry into the floods of May 2018. Cllr Clements explained that a separate full detailed investigation would be carried out in accordance with Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act and a report will be produced in due course. The session today would allow for agencies and residents to share their issues and experiences that would help the Committee in producing a report for debate at the September City Council meeting. During the discussion the following points were made:

- Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) Birmingham City Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The City Council is responsible

for the management of surface water flood risk, groundwater flood risk and the flood risk from ordinary watercourses.

- As LLFA the City Council is required to work closely in partnership with other agencies and authorities to manage flood risk including the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water, Emergency Service Providers and other public agencies and bodies.
- The main causes of the flooding were from rivers and watercourses, sewer surcharging and surface water flooding as a result of the extreme rainfall event. The Environment Agency is currently undertaking a detailed analysis of the event.
- Where properties have flooded internally the City Council along with partners undertake a full investigation in accordance with the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- It was highlighted that there are a number of areas where further work is needed and improvements can be made, in particular to the way the incident was managed and co-ordinated, communication and collaborative working in responding to the event on the day and in the immediate aftermath of the incident in terms of support provided to residents.
- Residents need to be clear about who to contact in case of flooding. In the event of a flood, the main reporting route is using 999, making contact with the fire service or police to report an incident. In addition communities are able to contact the Environment Agency floodline. It was highlighted that there was a lack of strategic organisations notifying the City Council of the flood in some areas. The result was that City Council officers were not aware of damage in some areas until days after the event.
- Although not categorised as a major incident it was acknowledged that the response system needs to contain the right triggers to instigate action to check certain areas or places or watercourses that have flooded in the past in similar circumstances.
- The devastating impact of the floods and the frustration caused by the delay in the completion of some flood alleviation schemes was acknowledged by Cllr Brigid Jones, the Deputy Leader. The City Council's Emergency Response arrangements are already under review to enhance the City Council's response to major incidents with a view to enhancing triggers and lowering the thresholds where the City Council's resilience team would intervene to support the response. In addition, the City Council's Emergency Plan is also about to launch a much more robust command and control structure to support its response to Major Incidents.
- The process of recovering from a flood is unique due to the longevity of the process. The National Flood Forum stated that this could be anywhere on average between 6-18 months and that people face a range of varied and complex issues during this time and subsequently due to the impact on the lives and wellbeing of these residents. The support provided to residents needs to recognise the different stages in the recovery process.
- Measures to mitigate against future risk to businesses such as working more closely with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership

to see what can be done to protect businesses in affected areas need to be progressed.

- Residents charged or expected to pay two lots of Council Tax due to being displaced from their own homes due to flooding should contact the City Council. Any instances where there are issues of this nature should be satisfactorily resolved as this is not line with City Council policy and should not be happening.
- Flood Action Groups (FLAGs) are an organised and co-ordinated way for community groups that are led by volunteers to help residents in a neighbourhood to prepare for flooding and cope with flooding incidents.
- The City Council encourages the development of FLAGs but responses and stages of development vary in different areas of the city. FLAGs do need to be supported and co-ordinated and the National Flood Forum has expertise and experience in this area and offered to liaise with the City Council to support local residents wishing to set up a FLAG.
- The current flood alleviation scheme at Selly Park North has been delayed for technical reasons with completion now scheduled for the end of 2018. The project will reduce the risk of flooding in the Selly Park area from very significant to low.
- There is a considerable area surrounding the River Cole which has been designated by the Environment Agency as 'Flood Zone 3' which means that the land and property in the area has a high probability of flooding.
- The Environment Agency acknowledged that delivering flood warnings in catchment areas with a history of flooding that can be acted on in time to give communities time to respond is challenging but they are working on it. They have installed cameras with an automatic alert in some areas but, for example, the Bourn Brook, which was the main cause of the flooding in Selly Park North has no gauges or monitoring system in place to measure the depth of the water.
- In some locations the effects of flooding was made worse by traffic continuing to attempt to pass through the floodwater creating bow waves which exacerbated the effect of the floodwater.
- Another aspect of traffic management which was also raised relates to buses. There does not appear to be any mechanism in existence to alert bus operators to re-route buses away from flooded areas during a flooding incident.
- The River Rea Partnership, led by the Environment Agency is delivering flood risk management schemes in the city. They are working with Calthorpe Estates, Birmingham City Council and other organisations to develop the Selly Park North Flood Risk Management Scheme and have completed the Selly Park South Flood Risk Management Scheme. There is also a Strategy for the River Tame with a Perry Barr and Witton Scheme being delivered over 2 phases.
- It is important to give consideration at the outset of any development, as part of the planning process, to what green infrastructure measures (such as living walls, tree planting, balancing pools etc) which are also flood defence measures and have a positive effect on the environment, should be incorporated into development plans.

- It was suggested that the pursuit of planning contributions towards the cost and implementation of flood alleviation schemes should be continued.
- In addition it was suggested that aspects of planning control could be strengthened by translating some of the relevant planning guidance, into planning policy.
- Other possible measures were also raised, such as increased levels of planning enforcement in cases where construction has taken place without planning consent and the adoption of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), where developers can sometimes be reluctant to adopt them due to the cost of the ongoing maintenance obligations. It would be possible for the City Council to develop its own adopting body, which would make the maintenance operation easier in new developments, however both of these measures would require a significant level of financial subsidy from the City Council.
- All Elected Members and in particular newly elected Members need to have a clear understanding about what to do and who to contact in the case of a flooding emergency. Information about the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in responding to a flooding event, what support is available on the ground in a flooding emergency and how residents can access that support needs to be made available to Members, in the most appropriate way through the induction process.
- The Sustainability & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue to keep flooding on its agenda including receiving the annual flood risk management report in January 2019.

RESOLVED:-

A report highlighting the key issues raised will be produced for debate at the 11th September City Council meeting.

8. SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No. 2)

The work programme was noted.

9. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Future meeting dates of the 2018/19 municipal year of were noted.

10. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS (IF ANY)

None.

11. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

12. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

RESOLVED:-

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1230 hours.