

## **Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee**

**3 NOVEMBER 2015**

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors S Jenkins (Vice-Chairman), M Bateman, A Bond, A Cole, B Everitt, T Hunter-Watts and S Lambert

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors S Chapple, S Cole and A Hetherington

### **1. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Lambert declared a Personal Interest in Item 3 – Update report on the Flooding on the Willows Development as he is the Ward Member for Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council.

Councillor Andrew Cole declared a Personal Interest in Item 3 – Update report on the Flooding on the Willows Development as he is the Ward Member for Aylesbury Vale District Council.

### **3. UPDATE REPORT ON THE FLOODING ON THE WILLOWS DEVELOPMENT**

The Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee received an update on the flooding at the Willows development during December 2013 and February 2014. The Willows estate was located to the West of Aylesbury and was bounded by the A418 Oxford Road, Ellen Road and the Stoke Brook. The Stoke Brook, which was classed as a 'Main River' by the Environment Agency, was an open watercourse throughout the estate. The Environment Agency were responsible for managing the flooding from the Brook, and Aylesbury Vale District Council had responsibility for the east bank of the Brook abutting the Willows Estate.

In December 2013, the Willows Estate experienced a number of flooding incidents and, although no properties were affected, car parking areas were flooded with surface water. In February 2014, the South East of England suffered extreme rainfall. This affected the Willows and 80 properties suffered internal flooding. Following the flooding, Buckinghamshire County Council produced a Section 19 Flood Investigation Report, which was published on 30 April 2014.

Following the flooding, Central Government promised funding for the residents affected, which was available in two streams. Firstly, Council Tax or Business Rate Rebates for the time residents were out of their homes or businesses, and secondly a 'Repair and Renewal Grant', which was a maximum of £5,000 to each flooded property to help improve their resilience to future flood events. From the Repair and Renewal Grant, £500 per property can be used towards studies and/or flood risk reports. This allowed the Council to spend £40,000 on feasibility work.

The feasibility study included the whole of the upper catchment of the Stoke Brook to ensure that any works carried out in the Willows did not have an adverse effect upstream. This increased the cost of the original estimate from £16,000 to £27,000, which led to a delay as Aylesbury Vale District Council attempted to identify match funding for this from partner organisations. The financial impact of the study was decreased using funding from HS2 and the Environment Agency.

Temporary flood defences were put in place and were stored on the estate in a compound maintained by Transport for Bucks. Additional monitoring of the Stoke Brook was put in place upstream of the flooding. Aylesbury Vale District Council, the Environment Agency and Buckinghamshire County Council would be notified by text and email should the water level in the Brook rise above an agreed level. The feasibility report also produced a long term capital scheme that could be commenced if funding were available at a later date.

Buckinghamshire County Council also invested in flood prevention measures, and used part of the Repair and Renewal Grant to install a trash screen to prevent fly tipped rubbish from blocking the culvert on Oxford Road. This measure was maintained by the Environment Agency and was inspected every two weeks. It would be a permanent structure and had flood defence consent. Aylesbury Vale District Council would also carry out monthly checks.

Members of the Committee stated that the coordinated response between Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, the Environment Agency and the community groups was a great success and should not be understated. The response to the flooding on the Willows was the first nationally to pool the money received in the Repair and Renewal Grant to provide improvements for the community, and this would not have been possible without the majority of households agreeing to pool the money. The partnership work between the authorities also allowed some works to be fast tracked so that work could be started using time restricted funds. It was also noted that the temporary flooding defences stored at Rabans Lane were portable, and therefore were an asset to all residents in Aylesbury Vale not just those on the Willows estate. Members felt that the report underplayed the efforts of all parties involved. The Section 19 Flood Investigation Report was produced by the County Council in six weeks, and it was noted that they were one of the first authorities in the country to produce a report.

Councillors were advised that, as a result of the investigations and reports, this Council and partner organisations were more knowledgeable about flooding. It was asked that a further report be provided for consideration by the Committee detailing further risks identified and lessons learned. The report should also give further detail of the partnership work that took place between the different authorities and also with the community. It was noted that Buckinghamshire County Council were currently carrying out an in-depth scrutiny review of the response to the flooding, and it might be useful to this Committee if a representative from the County were able to attend the Committee meeting.

RESOLVED -

That a further report detailing lessons learned, and the partnership work between the authorities be considered at a subsequent meeting of this Committee.

#### **4. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee was provided with a work programme outlining the items that would be considered at future meetings. It was noted that the following items were currently on the work programme:

##### **8 December**

- Community Safety Partnership update, to include Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Violence.

##### **11 February**

- Five Ways to Wellbeing and Mental Health Update
- Encouraging the use of parks and open spaces

### **23 March**

- Right to Buy Policy
- VAHT update
- Aylesbury Homelessness Action Group

Councillors also asked that the following items be added to the work programme.

- Private rented accommodation
- The adoption of the riverine corridor in Fairford Leys
- A further update report on the response to the flooding on the Willows Development
- The policy and maintenance programme for trees in the Vale.

RESOLVED –

That the work programme of the scrutiny committee as discussed at the meeting be agreed.