

**CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET 6 MAY 2014**

Background Papers, if any, are specified at the end of the Report

UPDATE ON THE RECENT FLOOD IN CHILTERN DISTRICT

Contact Officer: Martin Holt 01494 732055 mholt@chiltern.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet note the report and

agrees to the delegation to the Head of Health and Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing to amend the Housing Financial Assistance Policy to enable the Repair and Renewal Grant to be provided to businesses and homeowners by 1st April 2014.

agrees to the delegation to the Head of Health and Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing to approve and administer the Business Support Scheme

Relationship to Council Objectives

Efficient and Effective customer focused services.

Safe, healthy and cohesive community

Implications

- (i) This is a key decision within the forward plan.*
- (ii) It is within the policy and budgetary framework*

Financial Implications

The costs of meeting local authority expenditure under an emergency planning situation may be recoverable from the Government in accordance with the Bellwin Formula. The Council can recover any expenditure over the threshold amount, which for CDC is £20,000.

The costs of the government Repair and Renewal Grant to enable homeowners and businesses whose properties have been flooded is fully recoverable from the government.

Risk Implications

The Council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies

Act and is required to coordinate the emergency planning response in its area, with other partners such as the Police, Fire and Rescue and Bucks County Council. It can require Category 2 responders such as the Environment Agency and Utilities to cooperate.

Equalities Implications

None

Sustainability Implications

None

Report

- 1 Members of the Community and Environment Committee have requested an update on the recent flooding in Chiltern and the response provided by the community.
- 2 Flooding in Chiltern District occurred as a result of a period of intense rainfall which lasted from 30th December 2013 to approximately 21st February 2014. This has resulted in very high river and ground water levels, which are still prevalent and surcharging of the public and highway sewer networks. The situation was further aggravated by a number of culverts being partially blocked and silted impeding the rivers Misbourne and Chess.
- 3 Initial concern arose in Old Amersham following rising levels to the river Misbourne. CDC worked with the Town Council and Environment Agency to secure an action plan leading to the culvert being cleared and water being pumped from The Maltings, School Lane, Amersham to back in to the river. CDC provided access to Floodsax by both residents and businesses.
- 4 On the 7th February following significant rainfall, the Council started to receive several incidents of flooding in Great Missenden, Chesham, and Amersham. The Council evoked the Emergency Plan to ensure resources were allocated to the areas of concern.
- 5 Old Amersham was particularly affected with flooding affecting properties in the High Street and The Maltings, School Lane, Amersham. Further downstream, Tesco's reported flooding to the cellar, Ambers of Amersham reported water penetration to the shop and the bank of the River Misbourne collapsed flooding part of Merrits Garage. Officers worked with Transport for Bucks, the Environment Agency (EA) and Amersham Town Council (ATC) to sandbank the river and pump flood water from various properties. The prompt action by officers prevented a serious environmental contamination of the river from oil storage containers.

- 6 The Council Offices were opened Saturday 8th January to coordinate an on-going response and provide support to Amersham Town council and affected properties.
- 7 The EA successfully cleared the Amersham culvert at The Maltings by the 11th January, reducing the impact of flooding at the Maltings and to the properties in the High street.
- 8 12th January the Council received reports of flooding from groundwater in Chalfont St Giles; action was initiated with TfB and Bucks Fire and Rescue to pump water from the BT Exchange. BT is still pumping ground water from the exchange at the time of writing the report. The pumping from the exchange caused further flooding in to the High Street, which was resolved in later weeks following the provision of additional hoses and ramps.
- 9 Chalfont St Peter was adversely affected by ground water and the main sewer being unable to cope with the influx of ground water in to the system. Additionally the culvert under St Peters Square was partially blocked and a further sewer blockage impacted on the A413 and the High Street. The EA successfully cleared the culvert after taking enforcement action against the Riparian Owners.
- 10 Council officers worked with the County Council, Town Council, EA, TfB, members of the public, and traders to pressure Thames Water in to action. Thames Water later removed the blockages and cleared the road and pavement surfaces. Thames Water also created a temporary sewer overflow system to manage the flow from the sewer to the river.
- 11 Chalfont St Peter has repeatedly experienced flooding to the High Street from the sewer impacting on businesses and visitors to the town. This is an on-going issue that requires investigation by Thames Water as to the cause and extent of the ground water ingress in to the sewer. It is recommended that the council together with its other partners seeks a long term solution to the repeat flooding from the Thames Water sewer.
- 12 Other incidents throughout the period that were either river flooding or ground water or surface water run-off.
- 13 In total the authority is aware of the following numbers of premises impacted by the flooding.

Chiltern District Council	Number	Comments
The total number of households flooded – where water has entered the property at the ground level - between 5 December 2013 and 6 March 2014.	6	

Of those, the number of households who have been evacuated from their homes, and where people have been unable to return home	0	
The total number of affected houses where people are still resident but key issues remain eg no sanitation / running water / electricity / gas	0	
The total number of businesses affected (including farms) and their operational status (not operational / partially / fully operational)	11	As of 7 th March: 1 is still not operational 10 now operational
Services / amenities affected e.g. health services / transport / schools	1	Telephone exchange flooded but continuous pumping enables continued service

- 14 The Council was involved in coordinating emergency responses, communicating with agencies, businesses and residents, and providing materials and equipment to prevent/reduce damage by flooding. Examples of action taken includes; providing 28 builders bulk sand bags to rebuild the banks of the River Misbourne; issuing 6 pallet loads of Floodsax and provided empty sandbags to businesses and residents in identified 'at risk' areas; coordinated activity with the EA to clear culverts; provided business and residents with advice on flooding and recovery.
- 15 It is estimated that the Council incurred £18,000 directly as a result of the flooding in providing materials and equipment. Additional expenditure will be incurred as result of staffing during the emergency period. Further impact may occur as a result of the recovery phase through the provision of financial assistance to businesses and residents impacted.
- 16 Recovery is on-going in some areas such as the recovery of spent floodsax, supporting businesses and residents to access the various financial assistance offered by the government.
- 17 It is unlikely that the Council will secure any resources through the Bellwin Scheme as the level of expenditure did not reach the £20,000 threshold for Chiltern District Council.

Financial assistance

- 18 The government has announced various schemes to support residents and businesses impacted by flooding. This includes Council Tax and Business Rate rebates and the creation of a Repair and Renewal Grant.

- 19 The Repair and Renewal Grant to be administered by Housing authorities will enable homeowners and businesses whose property has been flooded access to a grant of up to £5,000 to pay for measures to improve a property's ability to withstand future flooding.
- 20 The grant will require the Council to establish a procedure by which funding may be allocated to property owners affected by flooding. It is recommended that the current Housing Financial Assistance Policy is amended to enable businesses and homeowners whose properties have been flooded access up to £5,000 for the flood resilience measures. It is recommended that the Head of Health and Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing is delegated to amend the Housing Financial Assistance Policy to enable the Repair and Renewal Grant to be provided to businesses and homeowners by 1st April 2014.
- 21 Additionally, the Government is providing money to support small and medium sized businesses in flood affected areas that have been affected by flooding either directly or indirectly and have suffered a significant loss of trade. It will be for local authorities to administer this funding.

Central Government has provided provisional allocations to local authorities based on the extent of businesses affected by flooding in their area. Chiltern District Council has been successful in being allocated £75,000 as part of the Business Support Scheme

The initial tranche of money has been allocated based on the number of businesses directly affected in Old Amersham, including those in London Road and those indirectly affected in Chalfont St Giles and Chalfont St Peter which were affected by road closures due to flooded roads.

It is recommended that the Head of Health and Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing is delegated to approve and administer the Business Support Scheme.

***Background Papers:
Flood Support Schemes Guidance Note updated 24th February 2014***
