

MEETING: 21 JULY 2008

SUBJECT: PUBLICATION OF THE PITT REVIEW – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2007 FLOODS

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, FINANCE OFFICER AND CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of Sir Michael Pitt's review of the widespread flooding in England during 2007, entitled, 'Lessons Learned From the 2007 Floods'. (A copy of the report can be found at www.twfire.gov.uk).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Sir Michael Pitt was asked by Ministers to conduct an independent review of the flooding emergencies that took place in June and July 2007. In commissioning the report the Government asked that the review should be thorough, independent and provide a fair assessment of what happened and also suggest what might be done differently in the future.
- 2.2 Following a period of extensive work, Sir Michael Pitt published his final report entitled 'The Pitt Review: Lessons Learned From the 2007 Floods', at the end of June 2008 and the key findings, from a fire and rescue perspective, are set out below.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The final report consists of 31 chapters and seven appendices and Sir Michael Pitt has also made a total of 92 recommendations. However, the majority of these do not directly impact on the fire and rescue service.
- 3.2 Nevertheless, there are a number of sections of the report that do relate to the work of fire and rescue services, and these deal with mutual aid, the co-ordination of roles and the potential for an additional statutory flood rescue duty for the fire and rescue service.
- 3.3 More specifically, within sections ES 65 to ES 70 of the document, a number of examples of effective assistance are referred to, including the loan of equipment between services such as pumps, boats, and personnel and the effective arrangements that already existed for the provision of mutual aid between police forces and fire and rescue services. However, it was also noted that there were few structured arrangements for mutual aid beyond these organisations.
- 3.4 It was also noted that many other organisations carried out flood rescues in the summer, including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the Armed Forces. Additionally, voluntary organisations were sometimes first on the scene and added significantly to the response efforts.

- 3.5 However a lack of clarity as to which organisation was responsible for carrying out and co-ordinating the flood rescues placed both the public and responders at unnecessary risk. The timeliness and effectiveness of the various responses were diminished by the absence of common operational and command frameworks.
- 3.6 Given the multiplicity of co-ordinating organisations, responders were often unclear about the roles of each of the organisations and who was taking the lead and this caused delays and frustration on the ground in fast-moving and stressful circumstances.
- 3.7 The Review goes on to state that clarifying and communicating the role of each of these bodies would improve the response to flood rescues and that the fire and rescue service should take on the leading role in this area, based on a fully funded capability.
- 3.8 Consequently, the report, in Recommendation 39, states that: ‘The Government should urgently put in place a fully funded national capability for flood rescue with Fire and Rescue Authorities playing a leading role, underpinned, as necessary, by a statutory duty’.
- 3.9 Other recommendations which may also have implications for fire and rescue services in the future include;

RECOMMENDATION 17: All relevant organisations should have a duty to share information and co-operate with local authorities and the Environment Agency to facilitate the management of flood risk.

RECOMMENDATION 34: The Met Office and Environment Agency should issue warnings against a lower threshold of probability to increase preparation lead times for emergency responders.

RECOMMENDATION 36: The Environment Agency should make relevant flood visualisation data, held in electronic map format, available online to Gold and Silver Commands.

4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AUTHORITY

- 4.1 Recommendation 86 stated that The Government should publish an action plan to implement the recommendations of this Review, with a Director in DEFRA overseeing the programme of delivery and issuing regular progress updates.
- 4.2 The Government will clearly require time to consider such a comprehensive report and decisions on the action plan have yet been announced.
- 4.3 It is not possible, therefore to accurately predict the implications for the Authority of the Pitt report until the Government responds to the document and makes its intentions clearer.

5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of the content of this report.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no additional health and safety implications in respect of this report.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The financial implications are difficult to quantify as the Government's intentions are unknown at this stage. As they become clear they will be reported upon in due course.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no additional risk management implications in respect of the content of this specific report.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of this report:
- b) receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned background papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

Facing the Challenge www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/floodingreview

Fire Authority Paper - Review of Operational Response to the Flooding Of 2007

Sir Michael Pitt final report - [The Pitt Review: Lessons learned from the 2007 floods.](#)