

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 NOVEMBER 2010

FLOOD PLANNING IN SUNDERLAND

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Strategic Priority: SP5 - Attractive and Inclusive City

Corporate Priorities: CI01 – Delivering Customer Focused Services, CI04 – Improving Partnership Working To Deliver ‘One City’

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report follows the “FLOOD PLANNING – IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION REPORT” presented to the Scrutiny Committee on the 14 December 2009.
- 1.2 To give an overview of flood planning within the city of Sunderland

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the floods of summer 2007 a comprehensive review was undertaken by Sir Michael Pitt which resulted in recommendations for preparing and responding to flooding
- 2.2 A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was carried out independently by Jeremy Benn Associates Ltd (JBA) in 2009 for Sunderland City Council
- 2.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2010 Cabinet report work sheet presented on the 12 July 2010. The purpose of this report was to inform Cabinet of the Preparation and outcome of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2010.

3 INTRODUCTION TO FLOOD PLANNING

- 3.1 The Pitt review carried out in 2008 detailed 92 recommendations addressed to Government, Local Authorities, Local Resilience Forums, providers of essential services and the general Public. These recommendations and the Council’s response are detailed within the (Update on Local Authority Pitt Recommendations) Document.

- 3.2 A Sunderland Flood plan is in place detailing the local authorities' response to flooding. The plan identifies known high flood risk areas based upon the geography of Sunderland. Alongside this plan sits the Sunderland "Emergency Response plan" which holds specific information for Sunderland, and details the process in the event of an Emergency.
- 3.3 A Local Resilience Forum (LRF) flood plan is in place to detail known risks and appropriate responses for Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. This detail also includes the resources available to respond to a flooding incident. The plan details strategic information relating to the City of Sunderland and neighbouring local Authorities.
- 3.4 The LRF Flood Group meets every 3 months, with attendance from all category 1 and 2 responders and representation from voluntary organisations. These meetings are to discuss as a working group the local and national response issues including the "Flood Rescue National Enhancement Programme" and additional localised issues.
- 3.5 The Sunderland Resilience Group is chaired by Sunderland City Council, and meets every 3 months with attendance from local Emergency services and local organisations including Sunderland University, "The Bridges" shopping centre and utilities companies. This group discusses the outputs from the LRF Flood group allowing planning arrangements to be made at a local level.
- 3.6 Exercises are carried out periodically to test the resilience of Flood plans, and the cities preparedness. Sunderland carried out a "Noland 74" exercise in 2008. The exercise was based around the Houghton Le Spring area of Sunderland. The scenario focused on the flooding of low lying areas, and surface water flooding. The scenario included the flooding of houses, evacuation of members of the public, and the creation and management of Rest Centres. The Exercise was attended by members of the Sunderland Resilience Forum (SRF) and the environment agency. The aim of the exercise was to test the response and recovery to localised flooding.
- 3.7 The council has access to over 2000 sandbags, and has invested in 500+ Aqua-sacs. This product is a new revolutionary alternative to sand bags allowing the bag to both absorb water and become water proof. The Aqua-sac is also re-useable making it highly efficient. The Council also has access to a wide range of machinery to cope with flooding and drain clearance. In 2008/2009 £350k was allocated by the SIP (Strategic

Improvement Plan) to address flash flooding and improve drainage across the city.

- 3.8 Flooding is detailed on both the Northumbria Community Risk Register, and the Sunderland Risk Register. The Environment Agency is currently exploring the possibility of expanding it's public flood warning scheme, and will work closely with Local Authorities to increase the awareness of those in flood risk areas.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Early next year Sunderland City Council is taking part in a nationwide exercise called "Watermark", organised by the Department of Environmental Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The aim of the exercise is to conduct a wide ranging and publically engaging exercise that tests the arrangements across England and Wales to respond to all aspects of severe, wide-area flooding.
- 4.2 Further to this work is always ongoing to refine and revise flood planning in line with new procedure, technology and technique

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That Members consider and comment on the information provided.

6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Pitt Report 2008
- The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2010
- Update on Local Authority Pitt Recommendations document
- Sunderland City Council Local Resilience Flood Plan
- Exercise Watermark: -
www.exercisewatermark.co.uk