

## **Item 12**

### **Report on the recent flooding in Surrey Heath**

#### **SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE**

**19<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

#### **KEY ISSUE:**

This report details the recent floods in Surrey Heath and gives guidance as to how local residents can protect themselves and who they should contact in the event of a flood.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Sudden extreme rainfall led to severe flooding affecting many areas of Surrey Heath on the night of August 13<sup>th</sup> 2006. This report gives some background and seeks to clarify the role and responsibilities of different agencies in flood protection, warning and emergency action. The report also contains contact details for the relevant agencies.

#### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Surrey Heath Local Committee notes this report.

#### **Contact Details**

Report by: Jane Biscombe  
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Contacts: Richard Collins - Surrey Heath Borough Council  
Lucy Jones - The Environment Agency  
Ian Haller – Local Transportation team

#### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

1. On the afternoon and night of 13<sup>th</sup> August 2006 the area suffered from severe floods. The floods were caused by heavy rainfall and thunderstorms across the region that resulted in flooded homes and businesses, power cuts and road closures.
2. Due to recent hot weather the land in the region was parched and so rain falling on it could not easily penetrate to soak away into the groundwater. This caused the rainfall to run across the land to local watercourses and low-lying areas. Two months rainfall fell in one night and local watercourses were unable to cope with the run off and so flooded adjacent land, buildings and roads.
3. In the Surrey Heath area Chobham, Lightwater, Bisley and Mytchett were severely affected. The Environment Agency has written to homes in the

affected areas to ask them to provide information about what happened which could help improve flood warning systems and defences in the future. The survey will also enable the Environment Agency to update its records and increase the accuracy of its flood maps. The Environment Agency is also interested to hear from people whose gardens were flooded. To contact the Environment Agency please call 08708 506506 or email [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk).

4. A meeting has been arranged for the residents of Lightwater and Windlesham to discuss the recent flooding with representatives from Surrey County Council, Surrey Heath Borough Council, The Environment Agency and Surrey Police. This meeting will be held in the Lounge at Lightwater Leisure Centre, Lightwater Country Park, The Avenue, Lightwater, on Wednesday 8th November from 4.00pm until 8.00pm.

## **ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY**

### **What do I do if I want to know if I am at risk from flooding?**

5. The Environment Agency runs a Floodline service that enables residents to access information about the risk of flooding and also gives guidance on protecting properties from flooding. Flood warnings can be sent out by The Environment Agency to landline phones, mobile phones, pagers and faxes and are also available on their website which is updated every 15 minutes.
6. To find out more about the Floodline scheme or to register to receive warnings please call The Environment Agency on 0845 988 1188 or visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/). Flood Warnings may not be available in all locations. Flood warnings are currently available for The Bourne, Mill Bourne, Windlebrook and the River Blackwater.

### **What should I do if a flood starts?**

7. If water is rising and likely to flood into your home please refer to the contact numbers below and to the information from the Environment Agency website in Annex 1 of this report. Unfortunately the responsibility for drainage and flooding problems can be complicated, and the following is not definitive, but should, in most cases, direct you to the correct agency.
8. If your enquiry relates to a **main river** you should contact the Environment Agency:
  - General enquiry line: 08708 506506- To be put through to the local office
  - Emergency hotline: 0800 807060 - To report emergencies
  - Floodline: 0845 988 1188 - For information on flooding
  - Website: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)
  - Email: [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)
9. If your enquiry involves **land drainage, 'non-main river', private sewer, private land or a private road** then it is the responsibility of the property/land owner. To find out who owns an area of land or property, contact the Local Land Registry Office for Surrey Heath which is Durham on 0191 301 2345 website: <http://www.landreg.gov.uk/> or in an emergency contact the Environment Agency's Incident Hotline on 0800 807060
10. If your enquiry relates to a **public sewer** please contact Thames Water via their 24hr hotline - 0845 9200 800

11. If your enquiry involves **highway drainage**, including road gullies and highway culverts (large pipes running under a road as part of a water course) then please contact Surrey County Council telephone 08456 009 009 or you can report an emergency on 0870 126 6060.

12. A summary of contacts can be found in Annex 2.

#### **What should I do if I need sandbags?**

13. Surrey Heath Borough Council has used its discretionary powers to strategically place green containers containing a limited supply of sandbags and associated equipment within the Borough. The containers are located in areas that are susceptible to flooding in severe weather conditions for residents on a self collect basis and are unlocked in the event of a flooding emergency. Sandbag containers are located at:

- Lightwater Country Park (Car Park immediately left through entrance)
- Chobham (Fire Station Car Park)
- Windlesham (High Street entrance to public footpath opposite 'The Sun' public house)
- Bisley (Shaftsbury Road Car Park)

14. In the circumstance of extreme flooding the Council's contractor may be called upon to deliver sandbags at the Council's discretion – **Note: there may be a charge to the homeowner for this service - 01276 707100**

#### **Who cleans up after a flood?**

15. Responsibility for cleaning up after a flood lies with the landowner. This includes ditches that cross or adjoin their land. Roads and pavements are dealt with by the Borough Council as part of its street sweeping responsibilities although some accumulations of rubbish are the responsibility of the Highway Authority, particularly where they block highway drains. Surrey County Council is responsible for clearing road drains of debris after a flood.

16. If your house is flooded then it is your responsibility, or your landlords, to clear up. Please contact your insurance company as soon as possible for advice and information. If properties are not cleaned up and start to cause a nuisance to others then Environmental Health may serve a notice on the property to ensure it is cleaned up. Large objects (carpets, furniture etc) can be disposed of at a local civic amenity site (Wilton Road, Camberley or Swift Lane, Bagshot) or by contacting the Borough Council on 01276 707303 (There is a charge for the Borough Council to remove bulky items).

#### **CONSULTATION**

17. Partners involved in the management of flooding have been consulted on the information in this report.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

18. The financial implications of floods to local people can be huge. Local residents are able to find out from the Environment Agency if they are at risk from flooding, and if they feel it appropriate, sign up to the Floodline early warning scheme, where available.

#### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

19. None

**CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

20. None

**EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

21. None

## **What can local residents do to protect themselves?**

The following is taken from the Environment Agency website:

### **What to do When you Hear a Flood Warning**

- Listen out for warnings on radio and TV and phone Floodline on 0845 988 1188 for more information.
- Move pets, vehicles, valuables and other items to safety.
- Alert your neighbours, particularly the elderly.
- Put sandbags or flood boards in place - but make sure your property is ventilated. Plug sinks/baths and put a sandbag in the toilet bowl to prevent backflow.
- Be ready to turn off gas and electricity (get help if needed). Unplug electrical items and move them upstairs if possible.
- Co-operate with emergency services and local authorities - you may be evacuated to a rest centre.
- Do as much as you can in daylight. Doing anything in the dark will be a lot harder, especially if the electricity fails.

### **Stay Safe in a Flood**

- Floods can kill. Don't try to walk or drive through floodwater - six inches of fast flowing water can knock you over and two feet of water will float your car. Manhole covers may have come off and there may be other hazards you can't see.
- Never try to swim through fast flowing water - you may get swept away or be struck by an object in the water.
- Don't walk on sea defences, riverbanks or cross river bridges if possible - they may collapse in extreme situations or you may be swept off by large waves. Beware of stones and pebbles being thrown up by waves.
- Avoid contact with floodwater - it may be contaminated with sewage.

**Who to call in the event of a flood.**

	<b>Working Hours</b> (Mon – Fri: 9 – 5pm)	<b>Out of Hours</b> (Including weekends & Public Holidays)
Highway Drainage	Surrey County Council <b>08456 009 009</b>	Surrey County Council <b>0870 126 6060</b>
Main River	Environment Agency General Enquiry Line <b>08708 506506</b>  Floodline <b>0845 988 1188</b>	Environment Agency <b>0800 807060</b>
Land Drainage, Non-Main River, Private Sewer, Private Land or a Private Road	Land Registry Office <b>0191 301 2345</b>	Environment Agency <b>0800 807060</b>
Public Sewer	Thames Water <b>0845 9200 800</b>	Thames Water <b>0845 9200 800</b>
Flood Warnings / Flooding Information	Environment Agency Floodline <b>0845 988 1188</b>  Surrey Heath Borough Council <b>01276 707100</b>	Environment Agency <b>0800 807060</b>  Surrey Heath Borough Council <b>Environmental Health Duty Officer</b>
Sandbags	Surrey Heath Borough Council <b>01276 707100</b>	Surrey Heath Borough Council <b>Environmental Health Duty Officer</b>