Select Committee Task and Finish Group Scoping Document

The process for establishing a task and finish group is:

1. The Select Committee identifies a potential topic for a task and finish group
2. The Select Committee Chairman and the Scrutiny Officer complete the scoping template.
3. The Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the scoping document
4. The Select Committee agrees membership of the task and finish group.

Review Topic: Flooding Task Group
Select Committee(s) Environment & Transport Select Committee (with representation from severely affected divisions and Council Overview and Scrutiny and Communities Select Committees)
Relevant background In December 2013 the County of Surrey was hit by extreme weather conditions resulting in a prolonged spell of flooding affecting several district and boroughs. Major incidents were declared on 24 December 2013 and 8 February 2014 to coordinate the response to flooding across the County. A coordinated multi agency response was implemented involving officers from the Environment Agency (EA), District and Borough Councils, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Surrey Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), Her Majesty's Armed Forces, Surrey County Council (SCC), various utility companies including Thames Water and Public Health England (PHE). As a Lead Local Flood Authority, Surrey County Council has a number of responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA). This includes investigating significant local flooding incidents and playing a lead role in emergency planning and recovery after an event.
Why this is a scrutiny item Although it is widely regarded that the Council's Emergency Management Team and Emergency Services responded well in response to recent flooding given the severity of the event and limited resources, Members feel that now would be an appropriate time to reflect on the impact of flooding and learn lessons as to how the Council can be better prepared should a similar event take place in the future. Approximately 2130 homes in Surrey were affected by the flooding, with widespread damage to County infrastructure. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that sufficient plans, strategies and resources are in place so that residents are

adequately protected in such events. In many cases County Councillors were at the centre of helping communities respond to the recent flooding and so are well placed to work with partners to draw conclusions and make recommendations as to how we can deal with future events as effectively as possible.

Flooding is a topic of both national and local significance and a scrutiny review of the Council's contingency and emergency response arrangements is timely and would benefit residents, partner organisations and the County Council itself.

What questions are the task group aiming to answer?

- What are the key lessons to be learnt from the County Council's response to recent flood events?

- With the benefit of hindsight, what could the County Council do better should future flood events take place?

- How were local communities affected by flooding and what did they see as the key issues on the ground?

- What 'business as usual' activities can be carried out more effectively to help prevent flooding?

- What schemes for Surrey are being included as part of the River Thames Scheme, how are they being funded and do they represent the best possible protection for the County?

Aim

To consider the key lessons learnt from recent flood events and establish how the Council can respond as effectively as possible to future incidences of flooding, to ensure the safety of residents, businesses and infrastructure in the County.

Scope (within / out of)

The Task Group will chiefly consider lessons learned from the planning, crisis and recovery stages of recent flooding events.

Issues surrounding Central Government sources of funding for flood alleviation/prevention will be out of scope.

Initial lines of Enquiry

Planning:

- Who are/were the Council's key partners and what aspects of the flooding were they planning/prepared for?

- Did other significant events (e.g. high winds) impact upon planning for the flood events?

- With the benefit of hindsight, what would you do differently in terms of planning?

Crisis:

- What elements of the flood event were you unable to prepare for?

- With the benefit of hindsight, what would you have done differently in your response to the crisis?

Recovery:

- To what extent had the recovery process been planned for both before and during the flood events?

- How do we prioritise recovery plans?

Outcomes for Surrey / Benefits

The recommendations of this Task Group will enable the Council to respond as effectively as possible to future incidences of flooding.

The following corporate objectives will benefit in particular from the work of the Task Group:

Value – 'we will create public value by improving outcomes for residents'

The Task Group will make recommendations that enable the Council to strengthen its planning for flooding events and therefore strengthen its protection of key pieces of infrastructure including highways, homes and businesses.

Partnerships – 'we will work with our partners in the interests of Surrey'

The Task Group will consider how well the Council worked with partners such as the emergency services, Central Government Departments and Districts and Boroughs, and will make recommendations as to how we can strengthen these relationships to improve how we can work together in future cases of flooding.

People – 'we will equip our officers and Members to provide excellent service'

The Task Group will review the current resource and arrangements in place for emergency planning in terms of flooding, and will make recommendations that help to equip officers to provide as effective a service as possible in future flood events.

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Proposed work plan

It is important to clearly allocate who is responsible for the work, to ensure that Members and officers can plan the resources needed to support the task group.

Timescale	Task	Responsible
TBC	Initial witness sessions/evidence gathering from internal officers and Councillors	Task Group
TBC	Witness sessions/evidence gathering from external partners	Task Group
TBC	Report writing and submission of recommendations to Select Committee/Cabinet	Task Group

Draft list of Witnesses

- Assistant Chief Executive (Silver Commander)
- Assistant Director, Highways
- County Council's Emergency Management Team
- Department for Communities and Local Government
- Environment Agency
- Emergency Services – Fire Service, Police, Ambulance
- Her Majesty's Armed Forces
- Members representing the most affected Divisions, together with relevant Borough & District members or officers and/or leaders of affected Community groups
- Public Health England
- Thames Water

Useful/Source Documents

- Report to Environment & Transport Select Committee: Flooding update (24.04.14).

- Task Group report to Environment & Economy and Transportation Select Committees: Review of Flooding in Surrey (10.01.2008).

Potential barriers to success (Risks / Dependencies)

- Progress of the Task Group is dependent on officer availability. Given that the flood events have only very recently taken place, a number of teams are still involved in debriefs and the recovery process. Therefore, timescales at this stage are indicative.

- Following announcement of the Task Group at Full Council on 18 March 2014, there has been significant public and media interest in the work of the Group. As such public expectations will have to be carefully managed.

Equalities implications

No discernible impacts have been identified; however the Task Group will want to consider the impact of recent flood events on disabled/elderly individuals and how the Council can be better prepared in future.

Task Group Members	David Harmer Mark Brett-Warburton Stephen Cooksey Peter Hickman	Chris Norman Denise Saliagopoulos Nick Skellett
Co-opted Members		
Spokesman for the Group	David Harmer	
Scrutiny Officer/s	Thomas Pooley	

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