

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (TANDRIDGE)

DATE: 07 MARCH 2014
SUBJECT: MEMBER QUESTIONS
DIVISION: CATERHAM VALLEY



1. Flooding in Whyteleafe – Ms Sally Marks (Caterham Valley)

“Currently (during this Flood Crisis), we have a road closure on the A22 at Whyteleafe which is not being 'policed' adequately such that vehicles are still able to drive through the flood waters - if their vehicle is able to do so. The result of this is that the bow-waves caused by the vehicles is actually causing water to flood homes and businesses. Vehicles are ignoring Road Closed signs and because there are not sufficient road barriers in place the drivers seem to think that passage can be effected.

The Police passed over 'control' of this road closure to SCC on Saturday afternoon (8th February). It was only this morning that SCC Highways took over this control, thus there is a missing 36 hours when no-one was in control.

Many vehicles were simply ignoring the road closed signs. The only measures to prevent vehicles from driving along this part of the A22 was one lorry with one member of SCC staff remonstrating with drivers and occasionally taking photos of the car registration numbers.

Even though the A22 was closed to traffic some days ago, Croydon Council did not erect sufficient signs on the A22 southbound from Purley to indicate that this road was closed, hence 2 miles further south drivers were frustrated in their attempts to continue to move southwards. This made things worse when they either had to turn around and travel all the way back OR to determinedly drive through the floodwaters.

How can we can improve communication between our Services and other partners (such as Surrey Police, Surrey Highways, The District Council, Croydon Council and Croydon's Police) during events such as the Flooding Crisis in Whyteleafe and improve the contingency plans to improve a) Road Signage and b) to prevent vehicles from passing through 'Closed Roads' with a better form of Physical Barriers?”

Response:

The recent flooding and high winds had a significant impact on a number of residents and businesses across the County. The County Council provided a range of services, co-orientated by our Emergency Planning Team to ensure residents were kept safe, had shelter and as far possible general day to day life could continue. The County Council deployed significant resources with many staff and contractors working hard in challenging situations.

There are established processes and procedures for dealing with major incidences. Surrey Gold and Silver command (chaired by Surrey Police) ensure all service providers (including the District Council, Surrey Highways, Environment Agency, Public Health etc) have the opportunity to contribute, helping to ensure efforts are coordinated at both strategic and operational levels. These procedures operated with success across the County.

The closure of the A22 was impacted by a number of factors including the need to protect critical national infrastructure (Kenley Water treatment works) within Croydon's Command area and maintain access to Surrey residents and businesses. Despite appropriate road closed signs some drivers chose to ignore these and drive at inappropriate speeds through floodwater, with scant concern for any impact this would have on adjacent properties. Due to this inappropriate behaviour, from the 10 February additional contractor resources were

diverted from other important tasks to assist in manning the closure. Gold command made the decision access needed to be maintained for residents from the south, hence it was not appropriate to install immovable concrete barriers to physically prevent all traffic. During any event many agencies work together helping residents. The Command structure is very clear and operated with success, but nevertheless there is always scope to improve on how some operational measures transpire. Protection of the Kenley Water treatment works is ongoing with the deliberate diversion of flood waters to the fields adjacent to Woldingham Road. After the event when then situation has returned to normal, there will be appropriate wrap up and learning discussions between the relevant organisations.

Contact Officer:

1. Richard Bolton, Local Highway Services Group Manager, 0300 200 1003
-