

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (RUNNYMEDE)

DATE: **9 JUNE 2014**

LEAD OFFICER: **SUSIE KEMP – ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

SUBJECT: **SURREY FLOODS**

DIVISION: **ALL**



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

In December 2013 the County of Surrey was hit by extreme weather conditions resulting in a prolonged spell of flooding affecting several districts and boroughs.

Surrey declared major incidents on 24 December 2013 and 9 February 2014 to coordinate the response to flooding across the County, which saw over 600 households and nearly 30 commercial premises in Runnymede being internally flooded.

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).

This report provides background information on the incident and the flood recovery to restore affected communities to ensure that they are more resilient going forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Committee notes the multi-agency response to the flooding event and the flood recovery work taking place.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To keep the Runnymede Local Committee informed of progress.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE SURREY FLOODS

The Surrey Picture

- 1.1 On 21 December 2013 forecast reports were received of potential strong winds and heavy rain raising the potential for wide area flooding on the tributaries of the River Mole and River Wey.
- 1.2 Flood warnings were issued for the stretches of the River Mole at Dorking through to Leatherhead and the entire length of the River Wey on 23

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December 2013. Warnings were also issued for other areas such as the Gatwick and Burstow streams. These are issued when it is expected that properties will flood.

- 1.3 On 24 December 2013, a major incident was declared when a severe flood warning was issued for the River Mole at Leatherhead and Fetcham. During this period partnership coordination at both a strategic and tactical level was implemented (as per the agreed response arrangements).
- 1.4 In reaction to the rainfall across the County, on 3 January, water levels on the River Thames rose and flood warnings were issued for communities on Surrey stretches. Through partnership coordination isolated evacuations were undertaken for communities at risk, some roads were closed, and sewage systems were also impacted due to high river levels.
- 1.5 The majority of flood warnings were removed by mid January but the County continued to experience higher than average rainfall. On 6 February, the National Flood Forecasting Centre warned that further property flooding was likely across Surrey and flood warnings were issued for areas along the River Thames.
- 1.6 Rising river levels resulted in 9 severe flood warnings being issued on 9 February due to the risk to life. A major incident was declared with strategic coordination at Mount Browne, the Surrey Police Headquarters. At this time, due to the expected impact on residents and partner resources, a request was made for military support.
- 1.7 The severe flood warnings remained in place until 17 February and during this time the resources and arrangements to support this major incident were maintained.
- 1.8 Following the removal of the severe flood warnings the declaration of major incident was removed and a phased handover to recovery was undertaken.

Flooding in Runnymede

- 1.9 The flooding that has taken place in Runnymede has resulted in over 600 households and nearly 30 commercial premises being internally flooded.
- 1.10 In January, roads were closed and some businesses were affected. From February 9th onwards, there was extensive flooding of homes at Egham Riverside, Egham Hythe, Penton Park, Laleham Reach, and Chertsey Bridge. The emergency response led by Surrey Police involved agencies such as Surrey Fire and Rescue, Surrey Highways, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, and Runnymede Borough Council. Information and support was provided by Runnymede Borough Council at an emergency centre in Woodham (away from the flooded areas), with Surrey's Adult Social Care supporting a number of vulnerable residents. Voluntary, Community and Faith sector organisations such as the Chertsey Flood Volunteers, St Paul's Church Egham Hythe, St Peter's Church Chertsey and others were also involved in supporting affected residents.
- 1.11 From 19 February to 1 March, Runnymede Borough Council and partner organisations opened and staffed drop-in centres at the Hythe Centre (Egham

Hythe) and Chertsey Hall (Chertsey), publicising the availability of these centres to residents through a leaflet drop in affected areas.

FLOOD RECOVERY

- 2.1 On Friday 21 February official sign over into recovery stage from Surrey Police to Surrey County Council took place. The incident room at Mount Browne was closed down and the County Emergency Centre at County Hall deemed operational from Saturday 22 February to deal with recovery activity.
- 2.2 A Recovery Plan has been implemented and work has begun to restore the affected communities. The recovery is a multi-agency effort, with a Recovery Coordination Group overseeing the recovery programme to ensure that communities and District and Borough councils receive the support that they need. This group consists of representatives from all those who had been involved in the response to this incident and is chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive of Surrey County Council. The group met daily for the first two weeks of the recovery programme and meeting frequency has now reduced and the group met on 10 April to look at the medium to long term recovery plan. The flood recovery is being managed through a programme of workstreams, which include:
 - **Environment**, including waste collection, skips and sandbag removal.
 - **Infrastructure**, opening and repairing council buildings and roads.
 - **Humanitarian**, establishing Flood Recovery Centres, dealing with sanitation and safeguarding issues.
 - **Communities and mutual aid**, working with partners and voluntary agencies.
 - **Communications and engagement**, ensuring adequate information is provided.
 - **Economic**, assessing the insurance and business impact.
 - **Resources**, collective assessment and coordination of resources and funding.
- 2.3 Whilst most of the immediate clean-up work in affected communities has been carried out, there is much ongoing activity, ensuring that support and advice is at hand for those individuals and families who are still getting over the effects of the flooding or who still need to get back into their homes.

Recovery in Runnymede

- 2.4 During March, the National Flood Forum had a mobile trailer, funded by Surrey County Council, which moved into flood affected communities to provide advice and information (see **Annex 1** example poster). The trailer visited 9 locations in and near to Runnymede between 3rd and 28th March, namely:
 - Green Street Car Park, Sunbury
 - Shepperton Village Hall, Shepperton
 - Runnymede Pleasure Ground Car Park, Egham
 - Chertsey Lane, between Coopers Close and Timsway, Egham
 - Recreation Ground, Pond Road Area, Egham
 - Chertsey Lane by Trusses Island, Chertsey
 - High Street, Staines Upon Thames
 - Laleham Park, off Shepperton Road
 - The Kingfisher Pub, Chertsey Bridge Road, Chertsey

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- 2.5 Building on this engagement with flood affected communities; a flood surgery is planned in Runnymede within the next few weeks. The Recovery Coordination Group's recovery plan is also aiming to develop flood forums in flood affected areas to build resilience within communities for the future.

Runnymede Housing Provision

- 2.6 There were 80 flood affected properties owned and managed by Runnymede Borough Council. The majority of these have required a minimum of three months to dry out and begin repairs to become habitable again.
- 2.7 73 households approached the emergency centre for housing help when the floods occurred (64 being RBC tenants), and from 13 February onwards 34 households were moved into bed and breakfast accommodation, mainly at the Aurora Hotel in Hounslow. A further 12 were placed in supported accommodation by Adult Social Care, 16 chose to stay with family/friends, and 11 decided to remain in their flood-affected property.
- 2.8 30 Ministry of Defence properties in Hounslow were made available for up to six months to provide temporary housing, of which 12 were occupied and 18 remained vacant (as at 8 April) as some families were reluctant to stay in Hounslow because of the journey to take children to schools in Runnymede. The borough has been able to place some of the affected households in voids within the borough, having suspended its choice-based-lettings policy to prioritise flooded residents. Addressing the property-related and human consequences of the floods continues to dominate the workload of the housing department and other programmes of works have had to be put on hold, whilst demand for housing advice remains very high.

Support from the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors and Corporate Organisations

- 2.9 Voluntary organisations have helped in the response and recovery, providing information and advice to affected residents. Organisations involved include:
- Runnymede & Spelthorne Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Voluntary Support North Surrey
 - Salvation Army (Addlestone)
 - Cornerhouse
 - Surrey Furniture Reuse Network
 - Churches Together (Egham)
 - Chertsey Flood Volunteers
 - St Paul's Church Egham
 - St Peter's Church Chertsey
- 2.10 Corporate donors who offered gifts in kind to assist flood-affected households in the Runnymede area included the following:
- Chappells Removals & Storage of Byfleet
 - Waitrose West Byfleet
 - Storage Geeks of Chertsey
 - Save the Children Fund facilitated deliveries of cleaning products and toiletries from Reckitt Benckiser and Unilever
 - Ashford Carpets
 - Dixons

2. FINANCIAL RELIEF AND SUPPORT FOR AFFECTED RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

Council Tax and Business Rate Relief

- 2.11 Runnymede Borough Council is administering council tax and business rate relief schemes for flood affected residents and businesses. To date, 674 households have been granted discounts on their council tax (minimum of three months). Full details of the relief and flood recovery advice can be found at www.runnymede.gov.uk

Repair and Renew Grant

- 2.12 From 1 April flood affected residents have been able to apply for a £5,000 Repair and Renew Grant (RRG) to better protect their homes or businesses against future flooding. The funding from DEFRA is primarily administered by Surrey County Council, with support from borough and district local authorities.
- 2.13 More information, guidance and a secure online application form is now in place through the Surrey County Council website. Residents can also contact Surrey Council on 0300 200 1003 for paper based forms. For more details see: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/emergency-planning-and-community-safety/flooding-advice/repair-and-renew-grant>

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 3.1 The Environment Agency have confirmed that the incident on the Lower Thames is the worst flooding that has occurred in Surrey since 1947.
- 3.2 The Surrey Local Resilience Forum held a flooding de-brief on 22 April 2014 to review the response and will continue to monitor the actions required to implement the lessons learnt from the flooding incident to improve future response.
- 3.3 An Environment Agency and Met Office detailed report on the incident will be drafted and published by the end of May 2014. There is also ongoing work through the Flood Risk Partnership Board to look at flood defences going forward.
- 3.4 It is recommended that the Local Committee may like an update on flood recovery progress in September 2014.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

Runnymede Borough Council & Environment Agency

Annexes: Flood Forum Poster

Sources/background papers:

- Surrey Recovery Plan

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