

CABINET RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE**INTERIM REPORT OF THE FLOODING TASK GROUP
(considered by E&TSC on 17 July 2014)****SELECT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

- a) That a review of the communications arrangements between the County Council, Districts and Boroughs and relevant partner organisations be carried out, with a view to avoiding duplication of effort and to improve communication as perceived by residents. This should include keeping County and District & Borough Councillors informed.
- b) That the County Council determines how the River Thames Scheme can be implemented as soon as possible.
- c) That, in order to reduce the quantity of water entering the fluvial system, priority be given to the clearance of all ditches and soakaways in the County, and, where appropriate, the reinstatement or creation of ponds.
- d) That utility companies be encouraged to keep up to date plans of their networks and other protocols.
- e) That the County Council explores alternatives to the use of sandbags in flood defences.

RESPONSE

Generally Environment and Infrastructure are supportive of the recommendations of the Task Group, and we look forward to working with them to support the development of their final report. A few comments on each recommendation are provided below:

- a) Communication between the various organisations involved in flood risk management has been reviewed as part of the lessons learned exercise undertaken by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). However, I understand from the discussion at the select committee that this recommendation covers wider communication issues. Whilst the LRF will consider communications improvements relevant to them, we will ensure that the communications issues raised by the Task Group relevant to Environment and Infrastructure are also reviewed.
- b) We are working very closely with the Environment Agency, and the other Local Authorities affected, to support this scheme. We can provide further information to the Task Group on the details of this support, if required.
- c) As part of the County's £23m flood recovery programme, we are undertaking work to highway drainage systems, including ditches and soakaways, to restore them, following the flooding. As part of our longer term 'Highways for the Future' programme, we are reviewing service levels for our highways, and will consider the investment into drainage assets as part of this review. We are working with a Member Reference Group (comprising members of the Environment and Transport Select Committee) on this programme.
- d) We agree that this is important, however our powers in this area are quite limited. We do have some powers, as Highway Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority, and we will review how effectively we are using these powers to get information from statutory undertakers. We believe that lobbying Government on this issue may be beneficial, and would ask that the Task Group consider this.

- e) We are looking at options for temporary flood defences, and will make recommendations to the Task Group and Select Committee.

John Furey
Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding Recovery
22 July 2014