

## **ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE**

### **Item under consideration: REPORT OF THE FLOODING TASK GROUP**

**Date Considered: 27 October 2014**

#### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

- 1) The Select Committee recognised a great amount of effort had gone into the work of the task group from members, officers, partners and witnesses who attended flooding task group sessions.
- 2) The issue of sewage flooding was recognised as a major issue during the flooding events in Surrey. It was recognised that the County Council had limited powers in relation to privately run water companies. Members agreed that government should be lobbied to ensure privately owned water companies were regulated effectively.
- 3) The Committee recognised that the River Thames Scheme would be of significant importance for Surrey and would require planning permission. It was noted that a number of Local Authorities had asked the Environment Agency to put forward an all encompassing flooding scheme to the National Infrastructure Planning Association. Members also recognised the importance of ensuring that local planning permission allowed for work to be permitted in a timely manner.
- 4) It was understood that work which did not require planning permission was currently being undertaken at flooding 'wetspots'. Going forward Members recognised the need to monitor ongoing flood 'recovery' work.
- 5) The relationship the County Council had with various partners including the Environment Agency was recognised as being essential for guaranteeing better outcomes for residents of Surrey.
- 6) A number of bids had been made by officers to secure funding contribution for Surrey flooding schemes. Officers were currently in the process of forwarding a bid to the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC). Concern was raised around the prioritisation given to the 'index of multiple deprivation' and the effects this could have on the funding Surrey received.
- 7) Communication was recognised as a key issue for residents. It was crucial to ensure good working relations were maintained with local flood forums, partners and residents.
- 8) Members believed that the Task Group should reconvene following recommendations made to Cabinet to monitor the implementation of recommendations.
- 9) Subject to an additional recommendation regarding the immediate submission of planning consent for flooding schemes, the Select Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Task Group.

**Recommendations:**

- a) Surrey County Council should lobby Central Government to change the powers of the Water Company regulators, such that proper investment in the drainage networks of the water companies can be directed, until such time as the Secretary of State is satisfied that those drainage networks fully comply with current standards.
- b) The Environment Agency should be pressed to give strong consideration to a programme of selective, tactical dredging of specified areas of the Thames.
- c) Surrey County Council should work with partner organisations to make significant improvements to the arrangements for communications in emergencies, and in particular to provide for communication structures between residents and the relevant authorities. Particular attention should be made for special arrangements in holiday periods.
- d) Surrey County Council should work with all the Boroughs and Districts and with residents in the relevant areas to establish flood fora.
- e) That flood alleviation schemes which require a planning application should be submitted as soon as possible for planning consent to the relevant boroughs or district councils or, in the case of the River Thames Scheme, if so agreed by the Environment Agency, to the appropriate National planning authority, or both.

**David Harmer**

**Chairman of the Environment & Transport Select Committee**