

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 8 October 2014

FLOODING EVENTS IN MAIDSTONE

Issue for Decision

To consider the issues that Borough residents, visitors, businesses and the Council faced during the flooding emergency phase between December 2013 and February 2014.

Decision Made

The actions and progress made to date were noted as detailed in Appendix A to the Report of Environment and Shared Services and of the work facilitated through a range of organisations including the parish councils, the National Flood Forum and Environment Agency.

Reasons for Decision

Between the 24 December 2013 and 17 February 2014, significant flooding occurred in several parts of the borough. The report focused on the lead up to the events, the key issues that arose during the emergency phases and the steps that have been taken subsequently as part of the recovery phase. This included identifying some of the key areas where arrangements worked well, as well as those where there are lessons to be learnt and recommendations for the future.

The Council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act with a duty to ensure both our services are maintained and to plan for emergencies so that humanitarian and environmental effects can be mitigated.

The Council's activities around emergency planning are continuous and extensive as a district and as part of the police chaired Kent Resilience Forum (KRF). This is a partnership of all the organisations that have a role to play in the response to a major emergency in the county such as the County Council, all districts, blue light services, the Environment Agency and the voluntary sector.

Like most districts Maidstone has adopted the "One Kent" approach to emergency planning, training and exercising. This along with the formal structure of the KRF and its various working groups ensures all partners work together towards a true multi agency response.

The One Kent approach clearly defines roles and responsibilities. For example the Environment Agency warn of floods, the Police warn and inform the public, the fire service executes rescues. Kent County Council

arranges transport and the local authorities provide humanitarian assistance with the voluntary sector to displaced persons by running rest centres and providing temporary accommodation for homeless persons.

Although the report considered the response of the Council, it can be seen that very often that response requires an integrated approach and joint working by all agencies.

In order to be effective, the One Kent approach needs to extend down to community plans and KCC have a senior planning officer tasked with liaising with parish councils. To date plans are in place or in progress for Boughton Monchelsea, Boughton Malherbe, Collier Street, Staplehurst, Tovil, Lenham and Yalding.

Over 300 residential and 60 business properties flooded at Christmas and at the start of the year resulting in several hundred people being placed in temporary accommodation. The following report identifies some of the key issues across the borough and for the Council. Although many communities were affected, it is not the intention in this report to cover in detail all the areas that were flooded.

The report was being presented as it was felt to be a timely moment to reflect on the work that has taken place and report to Cabinet before we enter into the autumn period.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The recommendations in the report satisfy the Council's duty under The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to plan and act to mitigate the effects of a major emergency incident.

The recommendations also satisfy the duty of The Act and the Council's commitment to partners to plan at a county level as part of the 'One Kent' approach.

It is important that lessons learned from this response are put into place. Not actioning the recommendations could be deemed a failure to satisfy the Council duty under The Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Policy and Communications by: 17 October 2014
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