

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

6.00 P.M.

20TH APRIL 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors Nigel Goodrich (Chairman), June Ashworth (Vice-Chairman), Lucy Atkinson, Alan Biddulph, Brett Cooper, Rob Devey, Caroline Jackson, Roger Mace (substitute for Phillippa Williamson) and David Whitaker

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillor Phillippa Williamson

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Eileen Blamire – Leader of Council

Councillor Karen Leytham – Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Housing

Superintendent Nikki Evans – Lancashire Constabulary

Inspector Geoff Tagg – Lancashire Constabulary

Andy Brown – Coastal & Flood Risk Manager - Environment Agency

Paul Bircham – Director – Electricity North West

Mandy Ingham – Risk & Emergency Planning Manager – Electricity North West

Tim Murrell – Area Manager – Lancashire Fire & Rescue

Steve Roberts – Station Manager – Lancashire Fire & Rescue

Mick Mayfield – Operations Manager – North West Ambulance Service

Alan Wilton - Head of Emergency Planning – Lancashire County Council

Paula Bull –Senior Emergency Planner - Lancashire County Council

Officers in attendance:-

Andrew Dobson

Chief Officer (Regeneration and Planning)

Suzanne Lodge

Chief Officer (Health and Housing)

Stephen Metcalfe

Principal Democratic Support Officer

Mark Bartlett

Civil Contingencies Officer

Jenny Kay

Civic & Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer

82 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of Urgent Business.

83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interests.

84 THE IMPACTS OF STORM DESMOND AND EVA

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting.

The Chief Officer (Regeneration and Planning) presented a report which gave details of the impact that Storm Desmond and later Storm Eva had on the Lancaster District. The District Emergency Control Centre had been opened and manned by Council officers throughout the weekend of the floods and the following week.

Environment Agency

The Committee heard a presentation from the Environment Agency which illustrated the devastation the flooding caused.

The high levels of rain that fell in the Lake District fell onto already saturated land and rivers where the River Lune originated.

It was reported that the River Lune, on the day of the floods, had been recorded as the highest flow ever recorded on the Lune and any English river. It breached its banks at Skerton Weir.

The main cause of the flooding in the city centre was surface water and the areas most affected in the city centre were Damside Street and North Road. A boundary surrounded this area which would have acted as a barrier for the surface water causing it to back up. The surface water could not drain off into the River Lune due to the high levels of water in the river which forced the drainage flaps shut backing up the water onto the streets.

It was noted that the River Lune at the Skerton Pool Flood Warning Area and the Storm Desmond flood outline was as expected by the Environment Agency.

Members were advised that 617 properties were flooded in Lancaster, 32 properties in Halton and also 38 properties in Slyne and Warton.

It was reported that the businesses on Caton Road had been badly affected. The Environment Agency and City Council were working together on a bid to secure funding to protect the area.

Electricity North West

Electricity North West provided the Committee with details of the work they had undertaken during the flooding devastation in December.

It was reported that when the severe flooding of the River Lune adjacent to the Lancaster Grid took place, engineers were on site pumping the station out until it became completely overwhelmed and the sub station had to be turned off.

In 2009 additional defences had been installed in the site which had been envisaged to withstand a 'once in a hundred years' flood.

Members were advised that the electric supply had been lost to 60,987 customers at 22:39hrs on 5th December 2016. Engineers had returned to the station the following day and restored electricity at 04:28hrs on 7th December 2016. At 15:56hrs a further fault resulted in further power loss to 45,525 customers.

The flooding had seen the biggest deployment of generators by Electricity North West in history with 75 lowloaded mobile generators being brought into the district to reconnect the district's electricity.

It was reported that Electricity North West were planning on spending £2.5 million on the sub station to make it water tight in the next few years.

The Committee were advised of the company's communication strategy throughout the floods which utilised Social Media as well as conventional methods. The fantastic work of

Bay Radio was highlighted who were the main source of information for many local residents.

The Committee discussed the problems that had occurred with the mobile phone networks failing and the impact this had on local residents especially young people. It was noted that the resilience of the networks had been highlighted by Electricity North West but this was a national problem not just in the District.

Members went on to discuss vulnerable people which included University students as well as older people and those who required medical attention within their homes that required electricity.

It was reported that Electricity North West had a register of vulnerable people but as this was voluntary, not all those they wanted to reach were included. It was suggested that information about the register should be circulated to Councillors who could promote this to people in their wards.

Lack of Communication/Dissemination of Information

Members discussed the issue of communication throughout the floods. The work undertaken by Bay Radio was highlighted again as outstanding with the Bay relaying information from the agencies to the district.

Emergency Response

It was reported that the Police led on the multi-agency response with Gold, Silver and Bronze commands working well during the floods, with the plans that had been rehearsed falling into place.

Problems had arisen for the Emergency Services travelling between Lancaster and Morecambe as the bridges had been closed for safety reasons.

The Fire Service had deployed all of its 57 pumps that weekend and had evacuated Lancaster Fire Station due to it being flooded.

Disruption of Businesses

John O'Neil, Chamber Manager highlighted the problems for the businesses especially on Caton Road including increasing insurance premiums. It was felt that many businesses could not survive an episode of this scale again. It was suggested Lancaster needed to protect these businesses as they were local businesses run by local people.

It was reported to the Committee that the Government was undertaking a National Resilience Review which would result in a long term strategy on flooding. This would have to take into account businesses as well as people's properties.

Disruption of Residents

It was noted that this had been covered earlier in the meeting.

The Future

It was agreed by those present that the floods had highlighted the need for community resilience.

With the Committee's Task Group that had been set up to create a Resilience Commission for the District, it was felt that local communities could be assisted with creating emergency plans. Many Parish Councils had contacted the City Council to ask for help with resilience planning since the floods. The Resilience Commission would pull all these communities together creating an infrastructure for the future.

Resolved :-

- (1) That the Committee notes the report.
- (2) That the Officers and organisations present be thanked for their input and attendance at the meeting.
- (2) That the organisations in attendance be requested to assist with the work of the proposed Resilience Commission.
- (3) That any major flooding works be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (4) That information of Electricity North West's vulnerable people register be circulated to Councillors who could promote this to people in their wards.
- (5) That an update be provided for the Committee in 6 months time.
- (7) That the Committee requests the proposed Resilience Commission to review the City Council's current policy on the provision of sand bags in emergency flooding situations.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.06 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Jenny Kay, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582065 or
email jkay@lancaster.gov.uk**