

# **TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**4 February 2014**

### **Report of the Management Team**

#### **Part 1- Public**

#### **Executive Non Key Decisions**

#### **1 RECENT FLOODING EMERGENCY**

##### **Summary**

**This was a terrible time for a number of our communities, at what should have been a special time of year. This report has set out actions taken, but also importantly identifies areas where we and other agencies can learn from this emergency to make further improvements to our plans to support residents. The Council is committed to continue to work with our communities and partner agencies to deliver the highest level of response in such circumstances.**

##### **1.1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 The Christmas and New Year period saw Kent, and elsewhere in England, battered by strong winds and sustained heavy rain. The already water-logged ground was unable to soak up the ongoing rainfall which led to significant flooding in several of our communities which called for a multi-agency response.
- 1.1.2 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council worked alongside other agencies, each having a clearly defined role in responding to the emergency and supporting our residents. These roles are set out and defined in the multi-agency Emergency Plan.
- 1.1.3 This significant emergency has been dealt with at a time when services were disrupted to a certain degree by the bank holidays over the festive period. Nevertheless, a total of 100 Borough Council staff (many of whom did repeat shifts) were involved in this emergency. 66 of whom, through shift rotas, had an active role either in our Emergency Centre, a Rest Centre or on site in our communities in accordance with the Council's Emergency Plan. Other staff were held on standby rotas to assist should the flooding have lasted longer. And still more staff volunteered but were not needed for the reserve rotas. These volunteers assisted to ensure that we provided the best possible service for our residents. We also deployed our contractors to support local actions.



**Old Road, East Peckham**



**Holford Street, Tonbridge**

## **1.2 Who is Responsible for Flooding?**

- 1.2.1 There are a number of agencies with varying responsibilities relating to land drainage and flooding and these are summarised below.
- 1.2.2 In Kent, the County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), pursuant to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, and has a number of duties and responsibilities relating to the management of local flood risk. Sources of local flood risk include: groundwater flooding, surface water (rainfall), ordinary watercourses and small reservoirs.
- 1.2.3 However the Environment Agency (EA) is the lead authority for flooding from main rivers and the sea. The EA also has a strategic overview on all forms of flooding and coastal erosion, as well as flooding from reservoirs. The EA works with all relevant Risk Management Authorities. These include Lead Local Flood Authorities, District and Borough Councils, and the Water Companies. The EA has permissive powers to carry out works to reduce flood risk on main rivers and the coast in England & Wales.
- 1.2.4 District Councils have no statutory duties with regard to land drainage, except where they own the land. However they do have permissive powers to ensure that watercourses are properly maintained across their District, and that Riparian Landowners undertake their responsibilities.
- 1.2.5 Southern Water Services (Thames Water in the parishes of Fairseat and Stansted) is the statutory sewerage undertaker for our area with a duty to effectually drain sewers. The purpose of sewers is to drain building development and not agricultural or undeveloped land. Sewers are designed to nationally agreed standards and will become overloaded when rainfall exceeds this or when they are inundated by water running off of undeveloped land.
- 1.2.6 In this Borough we also have two Internal Drainage Boards, one for the Upper Medway and one for the Lower Medway. An internal drainage board (IDB) is a type of operating authority which is established in areas of special drainage need

in and have permissive powers to undertake work to secure clean water drainage and water level management within drainage districts.

- 1.2.7 It is worth noting that the Civil Contingencies Act requires local public services to form Local Resilience Forums. In Kent it is known as the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) which is formed by emergency responders and specific supporting agencies and is required to plan and prepare for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. Tonbridge and Malling is an active member of the KRF.

### **1.3 The Borough Council's Emergency Plan**

- 1.3.1 The Borough Council's Emergency Plan sets out how we will respond to a request for help from any emergency service or any other agencies. It is used as a reference manual for dealing with incidents that comply with a major emergency, and contains contact details of staff trained for specific roles in Emergency Planning.
- 1.3.2 The Plan outlines the systems which are in place to enable us to respond in as calm and professional a manner as possible, and to take positive action quickly to mitigate the effects of any incident.
- 1.3.3 A key and specific function for the Council is to open and manage rest centres and assist recovery. That responsibility featured strongly in the recent flooding events but of course the Council's wider community support role was also important in providing a range of assistance where we had the capability.

### **1.4 Local Multi-Agency Flood Plan**

- 1.4.1 This is a specific multi-agency plan developed by the KRF to help organisations who are involved in responding to a flood work together better. The EA, on behalf of the KRF, has led on this work. The plan sets out the various responsibilities of each agency with a role to play in a flooding event and is an important document for us.

### **1.5 Parish Council Flood Plans/Wardens**

- 1.5.1 Several Parish Councils across the Borough have their own Flood Plan and volunteer Flood Wardens. These arrangements enable a community to respond promptly and effectively to a flood emergency. Parish Flood Plans have the opportunity to provide guidance at a very local level on what to do in an emergency, who to contact and what support is available in the local community. The County Council's Emergency Planning team is able to provide assistance to Parish Councils in writing these plans.

### **1.6 Flood Risk**

- 1.6.1 In total, some 70,000 residential properties in Kent are situated in the floodplain. In addition, many more people work in, visit or travel through potentially vulnerable areas and could be unfamiliar with the risk. Within this Borough there are 3396 properties of varying age and type in the floodplain.

- 1.6.2 As a consequence of climate change, both the chance and consequence of flooding are increasing. Sea level rise, more frequent and higher storm surges, and increased winter rainfall and more intense summer rainfall will add to existing risk.

## **1.7 The Leigh Barrier**

- 1.7.1 The Leigh Barrier, built in 1982, was designed to reduce the risk of flooding in Tonbridge by controlling the amount of water flowing through the town. It also provides some protection for communities downstream such as East Peckham and Yalding, but that is not its primary purpose.
- 1.7.2 The Barrier includes three massive steel gates across the River Medway which can be moved to either let the river flow normally, or to restrict the flow of the river and hold water in a large storage area. The gates are always open to some degree, depending on how much water needs to be released or stored.
- 1.7.3 There is usually enough capacity in the storage area to prevent flooding downstream of the Barrier in Tonbridge. In more severe flooding events there may be flooding downstream, but this will be far less than if the Barrier were not in place.
- 1.7.4 When the peak flow has passed and the upstream water levels drop, the EA releases the stored water at a controlled rate in order to reduce flooding downstream.
- 1.7.5 Between 21st and 23rd December around 90mm of rain fell in the Upper Medway river catchment. Over half fell on the 23rd December onto ground which was already saturated. This resulted in exceptionally high river levels and flooding to Tonbridge, East Peckham, Hildenborough, Yalding and the surrounding areas.
- 1.7.6 The EA issued flood alerts and warnings to the areas affected at least three hours in advance of flooding.
- 1.7.7 Between 24th and 27th December, over 5.5 million cubic metres of water were held behind the Leigh Barrier. This greatly reduced water levels on the River Medway and the extent of flooding in Tonbridge, as well as reducing water flows in the Medway through East Peckham, Yalding and other communities downstream. Without the Leigh Barrier and other flood defences, flooding would have been as bad as that seen in 1960 and 1968, when Tonbridge High Street was under 2 metres of water.

## **1.8 The Area of our Borough Affected**

- 1.8.1 The following list is of properties which were flooded. It has been compiled from information currently available to us and may not be exhaustive at this stage.

### 1.8.2 Hildenborough

- Bramble Close – 46 properties
- Brookmead - 7 properties
- Byrneside – 12 properties
- Copse Road – 16 properties
- Elm Grove – 7 properties
- Hawden Close – 7 properties
- Leybank – 22 properties

### 1.8.3 Tonbridge

- High Street – estimated 20-25 properties
- Danvers Road – 42 properties
- Barden Road – 21 properties
- Avebury Avenue – 2 properties
- Postern Lane – estimated 5 – 10 properties
- River Walk – 1 property
- River Lawn Road – 1 property

### 1.8.4 Golden Green - estimated 2 properties

### 1.8.5 East Peckham

- Little Mill – estimated 20-25 properties
- Snoll Hatch Road – Estimated 15-20 properties
- Pinkham – estimated 5 properties

## 1.9 Multi-Agency Command Structure during Emergencies

- 1.9.1 A **Gold–Silver–Bronze command structure** is used by the emergency services to establish a hierarchical framework for the command and control of major incidents and disasters.

- 1.9.2 Our officers participated in the Gold (strategic planning) and Silver (tactical planning) command briefings arranged by the emergency services throughout 24, 25, and 26 December, and in several “recovery” meetings led by the County Council following the main flooding.
- 1.9.3 Other agencies involved included the Met Office, the EA, KCC, Police and other affected Councils to ensure we had the most up to date information and, where appropriate, offer assistance to neighbouring authorities.
- 1.9.4 **Council activities – The following commentary provides a summary of the main Council activities during the flooding events. It points out the main thrust of our efforts but inevitably cannot possibly cover the myriad of calls and tasks that were handled and put in place.**
- 1.9.5 **Monday 23 December**
- 1.9.6 Staff started to mobilise this Council's response when it was apparent from information received from the Met Office and the EA that flooding was expected in a number of our communities across the Borough.
- 1.9.7 Early liaison with East Peckham Parish Council re flood warning in Little Mill. Sandbags deployed locally.
- 1.9.8 **Tuesday 24 December**
- 1.9.9 Monitored flood alerts on EA website and via KCC Emergency Planning team.
- 1.9.10 At 10am we deployed Incident Liaison Officers (ILOs) to check the conditions in East Peckham, Little Mill and Golden Green.
- 1.9.11 We activated our Borough Emergency Centre mid-afternoon. We opened two Rest Centres as requested by KCC. Rest Centres at East Peckham and Tonbridge were open before dark. The Red Cross and Salvation Army provided assistance in the Rest Centres and the local Co-op supermarket in East Peckham donated some food (The Rest Centre at East Peckham closed at 11.25pm as there had been no evacuees and supplies were transferred to the Tonbridge Rest Centre.)
- 1.9.12 We also had ILOs on site during the flooding in Tonbridge. They coordinated some of the volunteer 4x4 activity and bus transport in Avebury Avenue to rescue residents from beyond the flood water to the Tonbridge Rest Centre. We also assisted KCC highways to close Danvers Road with cones from the parking team.
- 1.9.13 Advice was provided to residents by phone re precautions they should take using EA advice (move things up in house, watch flood alerts, listen to radio, turn power off, move to friends and family if worried, or if they were advised to leave by emergency services). All sandbags at the Council's disposal were deployed and

we secured additional supplies from KCC. Advice was given to residents wishing to arrange their own sandbags.

- 1.9.14 First residents arrived at Tonbridge Rest Centre (Weald of Kent School) at 6.20pm. Hotel accommodation was arranged for those who needed it at the Vauxhall Premier Inn and the Rose & Crown.

### **1.10 Christmas Day Wednesday 25 December**

- 1.10.1 On the morning of 25 December two Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council staff were dispatched in a Landrover to Yalding at the request of KCC to evacuate stranded residents. However the water was too deep (1.2m) for the Landrover and by then Kent Fire and Rescue were on site utilising a boat to get people out.
- 1.10.2 Last evacuees arrived at the Tonbridge Rest Centre at 1.20am on Christmas Day.
- 1.10.3 In agreement with KCC the Tonbridge Rest Centre was closed at 11.15am and the emergency centre at approx 1.15pm. The Rest Centre kits were left in place as it was anticipated that there would be more flooding during the night of Thursday 26 and the morning of Friday 27 December. Further shifts of emergency staffing were put in place. Fortunately these were not needed.

### **1.11 Boxing Day, Thursday 26 December**

- 1.11.1 Conference call set up for 12 noon. Meteorological Office changed rainfall forecast to min 13mm and max 25mm for early hours Friday. Over 20mm would still have caused flooding so we had to prepare for this scenario. Concern was for potentially new evacuees i.e. those returning home after Christmas to find homes flooded.
- 1.11.2 We set up rotas for Rest Centre and the Emergency Centre, ILOs etc. This was done on the understanding that there was a probability of more flooding.
- 1.11.3 Recovery was not the Council's main focus on Boxing Day as it would have potentially been overtaken by further flooding. However, Friday's rainfall was at the minimum level so no more flooding occurred that day.

### **1.12 Friday 27 December**

- 1.12.1 We then began the recovery phase, providing emergency refuse advice and services and road cleaning to residents in most affected areas, also major street cleansing operation in Tonbridge Town centre. During this phase there remained a concern about the ability for some people to return to their properties or find alternative accommodation so rest centres were still on standby and other measures such as food supply was put in hand. The Council published information on the website. Staff and Councillors visited those areas worst hit.
- 1.12.2 A community clear up commenced on Friday morning, and the Council attended to give full advice and support by removing some damaged goods on the day.

- 1.12.3 Again the voluntary sector provided assistance through our Emergency Plan arrangements and volunteers from St John Ambulance located in Danvers Road during the afternoon providing hot drinks and “fish and chip” meals to residents.
- 1.12.4 Arrangements were made for bulk collections of damaged goods over the following week. This allowed people to make contact with their insurance companies, and also catered for those who may have been returning home after days away from home over Christmas.

### **1.13 Saturday 28 December**

- 1.13.1 Further sandbags were ordered and distributed over this extended emergency.
- 1.13.2 Incidentally, some sandbags were also used in early December to protect residents of Wouldham and Aylesford from the tidal flooding experienced in the north of the borough, when we also had the Emergency Centre in operation and opened a Rest Centre to accommodate people evacuated from their homes in Aylesford. Our sandbag stock was replenished twice over the Christmas/New Year period and in total some 6000 sandbags were distributed to residents over this extended flooding emergency.

### **1.14 Monday 30 December**

- 1.14.1 We engaged with Business in the Community, who were supporting retailers.

### **1.15 New Years Day, Wednesday 1 January**

- 1.15.1 With further flood warnings issued, and in liaison with KCC Emergency Planning, we again opened the Emergency Centre at 8am. Further flooding was possible and although not predicted to be as bad as 24/25 December the EA advice, through teleconference calls, was that further (repeat) flooding of property was possible in Tonbridge, Hildenborough and the Little Mill area of East Peckham.
- 1.15.2 ILOs were out on the ground again from early morning until late into the evening when the Emergency Centre was closed down again. The ILOs visited all areas at risk, providing advice and guidance to residents.
- 1.15.3 Discussions took place with Ministers and a representative from DCLG, to advise on arrangements on the ground.

### **1.16 Thursday 2 January**

- 1.16.1 Two teleconference calls were held with the Met Office, EA, KCC and the Police. River levels, although high, were now stable and no further problems anticipated then. ILOs present in Tonbridge to provide reassurance to residents and monitor river levels.

### **1.17 Friday 3 January**

- 1.17.1 Further teleconference calls with Met Office, EA and emergency services indicated potential flooding on 4 & 5 January. Volunteers were again sought to work over the weekend on a shift rotation basis.

### **1.18 Saturday 4 January**

- 1.18.1 The Emergency Centre was reopened and manned from 8am on with staff (ILOs) on the ground throughout the day and evening. Rest Centres (and staff to man them) were put on standby. Further sandbags were distributed to vulnerable areas (Danvers Road, Hildenborough and one pallet of sandbags was left at the Castle). ILOs, with the Police, provided advice and guidance to residents. KCC sought assistance from the Military for the distribution of sandbags across affected areas in Kent. Although mobilised this was not needed and was stood down.
- 1.18.2 In the event the rainfall was less than expected and no further flooding occurred. ILOs returned to the Emergency Centre which closed at 9.30pm.

### **1.19 Sunday 5 January**

- 1.19.1 Three further telephone conference calls with the Met Office, EA and emergency services. Rivers were stable but further severe weather warnings for Kent remained in place. Teams of staff remained on standby throughout the day to open emergency centre and rest centres if required.

### **1.20 Monday 6 January**

- 1.20.1 On the Monday two staff, ILOs, were again out all evening dealing with local flooding concerns and providing reassurance to residents.

### **1.21 Friday 17 January**

- 1.21.1 Alerts of heavy rainfall received from the Met Office led to further teleconference calls with them, the EA, KCC and the Police to try and quantify the extent of any problems. In the event the rain fell mainly in the Sevenoaks area where they experienced flooding in some of their communities along the River Darent.
- 1.21.2 A Flood warning was issued for the River Bourne with potential impact in Hadlow and Little Mill. Staff were on the ground throughout the day and late into the evening providing sandbags and advice to residents through the catchment including Ightham, Plaxtol, Hadlow and East Peckham. The Emergency Control Centre was open from 5pm to approximately 9pm. Although we had some localised problems we were fortunate not to see further extensive flooding.

### **1.22 Saturday 18 January**

- 1.22.1 Staff worked again on Saturday monitoring water levels along the Medway and kept in contact with the EA to ensure we were ready for any problems. As

Members are aware, there was extensive flooding in the low-lying land areas within Tonbridge including the Racecourse sportsground and Lower Castle Fields car park.

- 1.22.2 The EA also alerted us to the potential flooding of two properties in Postern Lane, Tonbridge and an ILO attended to assess and offer assistance if needed.

### **1.23 Tonbridge Swimming Pool**

- 1.23.1 At midday on Christmas Eve the staff at Tonbridge Pool were advised by the Police to evacuate the facility following notification from the Environment Agency that the Leigh Barrier needed to release water at a greater frequency. Prior to this notification, water was already up against the floodwall and gates protecting the front of the building. Within just half an hour the water was two feet in depth against the flood wall. Before the pool was evacuated the flood defences constructed after the flood in 2000 were secured including the closure of all the flood gates around the building.
- 1.23.2 In 2000 the flood resulted in water levels of over 2 feet throughout the building and a closure of 14 weeks. Despite the flood in 2013 being more severe than 2000, the building only flooded to the level of 3-4 inches, with the exception of the plant room, which is located below ground level.
- 1.23.3 Every effort is being made in close liaison with the Council's Insurers and the Leisure Trust to re-open the facility as soon as possible, and Members will be updated verbally at the meeting when a clearer timescale will be available. If feasible, the health suite and café area will be re-opened first, followed by the pools.
- 1.23.4 The cost of the reinstatement is being met in full by the Council's Insurers. The loss of income resulting from the closure will be met by the Insurers representing the Leisure Trust.
- 1.23.5 Whilst it is clear that the flood defences assisted greatly in protecting the pool, further consideration is being given to additional modifications in case of future flood. A meeting has been arranged with the Council's Insurers and it has already been agreed that a number of items of plant will be raised to a higher level within the plant room.
- 1.23.6 An update report on progress with the reinstatement works, including more detailed information on timescales, will be reported to the next meeting of the Leisure & Arts Advisory Board.

### **1.24 Community Leisure Facilities**

- 1.24.1 In addition to Tonbridge Pool a number of other community leisure facilities within Tonbridge were affected by the floods. Tonbridge Indoor Bowls Club, Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Club and the Riverside Bowls Club have all been flooded and are

currently in the process of reinstatement. The Council has met with all the Clubs concerned and is offering assistance as appropriate, including help with the clear up and temporary accommodation. Close contact will be maintained with the Clubs in liaison with Tonbridge Sports Association.

- 1.24.2 The main building at Haysden Country Park was also flooded and it is hoped that the toilet facilities will be back in operation by the time of this meeting.

## **1.25 Communications**

- 1.25.1 Communication during an emergency period is strategically managed through the multi-agency communications team at 'Gold Command', who manage the release of multi-agency information to the media. Our own media team was copied into these news releases. Regular updates were provided to Members of the Council and there was frequent contact with Parish Councils in affected areas.
- 1.25.2 During the emergency our media team provided three press releases (**Annex 1, 2 & 3**), regular updates via our website and links to other relevant websites.
- 1.25.3 Twitter was also used to provide key updates.

## **1.26 Further Recovery Actions**

- 1.26.1 Details of any other properties who reported that they needed assistance were collated and collection of soiled furniture and goods was arranged, having given advice to residents to liaise with insurance companies prior to disposal of goods.
- 1.26.2 Advice was provided to residents affected in roads in Hildenborough and East Peckham by a leaflet drop on Monday 30 December. Tonbridge roads were advised by leaflet drop on Saturday 28 December.
- 1.26.3 The collection schedule was also provided on our website and "tweeted" on social media.
- 1.26.4 Residents who were affected by the flooding were provided with details of the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS).

## **1.27 Resident Engagement**

- 1.27.1 A significant degree of public engagement took place during the flooding events. This was of course highly charged at times with people understandably very distressed at their situation. We have also had some positive feedback in response to the Council's actions.
- 1.27.2 As with any event of this type it is important that community engagement is continued and that there is the opportunity to reflect on the extent of the problems, the reasons why it occurred and what lessons may be taken for the future response.

- 1.27.3 To that end, multi-agency meetings are being set up with East Peckham, Tonbridge and Hildenborough residents affected by the flooding so that feedback can be obtained which will help to inform any future response to similar events. The role of the EA, KCC, Parish Council's and ourselves will inevitably be subject to scrutiny and it will be an opportunity to explain and learn from what happened

## **1.28 Insurance**

- 1.28.1 Some residents may find that insurance companies may require more information relating to flood risk before renewing a policy if a property falls within an area at risk of flooding.
- 1.28.2 The EA will provide a standard letter to help an insurer decide on the risk when renewing a housing insurance or provide a new quote. It provides information about:
- whether there are any defences in the area and the standard of protection that they provide
  - how likely flooding is, taking into account any risk management measure such as flood defence barriers in the area
  - whether there are any plans for flood risk management measures in the area

## **1.29 Resilience Advice**

- 1.29.1 The EA's website provides comprehensive advice to those who need to prepare for flooding. This includes issues such as flood-proofing a property, registering for warnings and getting insurance for flood risk.
- 1.29.2 Our own website "signposts" to a number of sites with relevant flooding information.
- 1.29.3 In September 2010 Borough Council staff provided support to the EA's Flood Awareness event held in Yalding. This was published widely across our Borough and provided an excellent opportunity for residents from Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone Borough Councils to understand the flooding risks in their area, view products which might assist in protecting property and obtain advice from professionals.



**The Tonbridge and Malling Flood “Stall”**

- 1.29.4 We will be meeting on a regular basis with the Environment Agency at a senior and operational level to explore what options may be available to improve the situation for those who live in areas susceptible to flooding. We will also be concentrating on how the agencies might be even better coordinated, particularly at the local and front line level (Bronze). In this respect we have already been discussing plans for an earlier establishment of formal local coordination particularly in Tonbridge.
- 1.29.5 Other areas we are discussing include options to streamline the warning alerts, neighbourhood planning and engagement, the role of flood champions and a clear sharing of accurate mapping data.
- 1.29.6 The EA encourage residents in flood risk locations to register for flood alerts/warnings and we will work with the EA to see if we can improve the alert system and our local communications in emergencies.

### **1.30 The Bellwin Scheme**

- 1.30.1 This is a discretionary scheme for providing central government financial assistance in exceptional circumstances to affected local authorities in the event of a major emergency. The Scheme may be activated in any case where an emergency or disaster involving destruction of or danger to life or property occurs, and where as a result local authorities incur expenditure in connection with the response. However, there is no automatic entitlement to assistance and each case is judged on its circumstances. It is important to note that payment would only be made for expenditure where insurance cover is unobtainable, and historically the scheme has usually been used to cover weather-related claims.

- 1.30.2 Bellwin has traditionally been seen as a response to incidents in which bad weather caused threats to life and property beyond all previous local experience. Although the law does not rule out other types of incident, Central Government expects that the scheme will continue to apply predominantly as a response to bad weather incidents that occur within the area that the scheme covers. We have been advised that this flooding emergency, together with the tidal emergency at the start of December, will be eligible for assistance pursuant to the Bellwin scheme.
- 1.30.3 Central Government will normally pay grant at a rate of 85 per cent of eligible expenditure above a threshold set for the applying authority, which for us is £26,262.
- 1.30.4 We have advised DCLG that we will be making a claim and have three months to submit full details.

### **1.31 Future Actions**

Parish Councils and Local Community Forums will be encouraged to work with us and other agencies to develop their own local Flood Plans and identify local Flood Wardens. Through these 'grass-root' groups, communities should be able to:

- a) - be constantly in touch with what is intended for their community
- b) - know procedures that are already in place regards routine maintenance
- c) - address their concerns over malfunctioning assets/and other issues
- d) - have a voice as to the future flood risk of their community through consultation
- e) - instigate 'flood watchers'
- f) - create awareness of flood risk to the wider community
- g) - prepare to reduce the impact on the community should a flood event occur

- 1.31.1 Of course Tonbridge is unparished and as such the establishment of Local Community Forums will be a key issue. The options for local engagement will be discussed at a local level as solutions will vary depending on the nature of the flood risk and the nature of the community.
- 1.31.2 This process has already commenced with the first of the community meetings being scheduled for the 4 February in Hildenborough with the Danvers Road area meeting following on the 5 February.
- 1.31.3 Review the communications strategy to include the use of Social Media.

1.31.4 Tonbridge Forum on the 17 Feb is devoted solely to flood issues, with a multi agency presence.

1.31.5 There are actions that we at Tonbridge & Malling, and others, will reflect on in the light of local experience including better solutions for local co-ordination between the agencies on-site, in the run up to, and during any flood emergency. We have had preliminary discussions to explore options to have a more visible multi agency presence on the ground.

1.31.6 On a broader scale there is a multi agency debrief planned in March which will be the opportunity to discuss improvement actions across the organisations involved in the response.

### **1.32 Legal Implications**

1.32.1 As described in the report.

### **1.33 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.33.1 As set out earlier in the report, under the Bellwin Scheme, Central Government will normally pay grant at a rate of 85 per cent of eligible expenditure above a threshold set for the applying authority, which for us is £26,262.

1.33.2 The Council will therefore need to meet the 'threshold' costs of £26,262 plus 15% of costs above the threshold, in addition to any costs which do not qualify for the Bellwin Scheme.

1.33.3 It is difficult at this stage to estimate how much this might be as costs are currently being collated, but a total cost to the Council in excess of £50,000 might be a prudent estimate at this point. Members are advised that the final cost will be reflected at Outturn and will need to be funded from the Council's reserves."

### **1.34 Risk Assessment**

1.34.1 It is important that we have systems and processes in place so that we are in a good position to be able to advise and support our communities in times of emergencies.

### **1.35 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.35.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

### **1.36 Policy Considerations**

1.36.1 Community

### 1.37 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1.37.1 This was a terrible series of events for a number of our communities, at what should have been a special time of year. This report has set out actions taken, but also importantly identifies area where we, and other agencies, can learn from this emergency in order to make further improvements to our plans to support residents.
- 1.37.2 We are committed to continue to work with our communities and partner agencies to deliver the highest level of response in such circumstances.
- 1.37.3 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the report **BE NOTED** and the future actions listed in the report **BE ENDORSED**.

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Environmental Health and Housing

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Preparing for emergencies will assist all residents equally
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	[Please explain your answer]
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*