

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**4 June 2014**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 FLOOD RECOVERY**

**This is a progress report on and the process of flood recovery within our borough following the events over the Christmas/New Year period and focussed primarily on the technical matters that have been put in place and that are emerging.**

**1.1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 Recovering from a major flood is not a quick or easy process. Five months on from the worst of the events, many of our residents are still not back in their homes. Even those that were flooded but did not evacuate may still be carrying out repairs or looking for ways to make their homes more resilient to future flooding.
- 1.1.2 The Borough Council's role is to support the recovery of homeowners and businesses by the means available to us; administering the government flood support grants and working with the other agencies involved in emergency planning and flood risk management to reduce the risk of flooding where possible and improving preparedness and resilience where it is not.
- 1.1.3 This report therefore provides an update on the aspects and issues relevant to our involvement in the flood recovery.

**1.2 Multi-Agency Recovery Strategy**

- 1.2.1 The Borough Council is participating in the county-wide Strategic and Tactical Recovery Coordinating Groups chaired by Kent County Council. The aim of these groups is to work in partnership to support affected individuals, communities and organisations to recover from the floods and to return to a state of normality.

### **1.3 The Multi-Agency Technical Working Group**

1.3.1 The Technical Working Group was set up in February following the various public engagement meetings across the Borough. It consists of representatives from the organisations with an involvement in flood risk management:

- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- The Environment Agency
- Southern Water
- Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board
- KCC Highways and KCC Flood Risk Management

The meetings of the group are also attended by community representatives from Tonbridge, Hildenborough and East Peckham.

1.3.2 The Group's workload to date includes the following:

- Maintaining an overview of local recovery and resilience issues
- Investigating flood events and collecting data on flooded properties
- Promoting and assisting Flood Warden Schemes and Flood Plans
- Asset inspection and maintenance
- Sandbag provision and locations
- Improved Flood Warnings
- Emergency Road Closures
- Promoting and progressing appropriate flood risk management schemes

1.3.3 An action plan is currently being produced to illustrate the work and timetable of the group which is intended for general dissemination.

### **1.4 Potential Flood Risk Management Schemes**

1.4.1 The Borough Council has been engaged in significant lobbying in order to raise the profile of the need for major capital investment in flood risk schemes in the area. Letters from the Leader and Chief Executive were sent to five Government Ministers and the Chairman of the Environment Agency in April seeking commitment in this respect. At **[Annex 1]** is a copy of the letter from the Leader and Chief Executive and also a letter from Sir John Stanley that supports the Council's efforts.

1.4.2 Also in April, the Leader and Chief Executive also wrote, on behalf of the Council and local committees, to members of the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) in support of future flood defence work in the Borough. Subsequently, the RFCC, at its meeting on 30 April, allocated funding to the following schemes (**Annex 2**):

- Hildenborough flood defence £200,000
- Tonbridge, Avebury Avenue flood defence £ 80,000
- Leigh Flood Storage improvement feasibility £100,000

1.4.3 It is important to note that this is purely an allocation of available funding rather than a green light to start work. Economically and technically sound schemes will still need to be produced by the Environment Agency for the funding to be released.

1.4.4 In addition, the Environment Agency, in conjunction with the Technical Working Group, where appropriate, is also investigating:

- Tonbridge, Racecourse Sports Ground – improved flood drainage
- East Peckham, Coult Stream Dam enhancement
- East Peckham, Hatches Lane & Addlestead Road drainage improvements
- East Peckham, River Medway Flood Defence Scheme

## 1.5 Flood Fairs

1.5.1 Two flood fairs have been held in the Borough organised by the Borough Council in conjunction with the local flood groups and parish councils. The fairs were held at East Peckham Village Hall on 5 April and at Hildenborough Village Hall on 12 April.

1.5.2 The core of the fairs was provided by The National Flood Forum who had large displays of information and flood products and were able to offer impartial advice on many aspects of flood resilience. Also present were several manufacturers and suppliers of flood resilience products. The Borough Council was very busy advising on 'Repair & Renew grants' as were the Environment Agency discussing flood warnings, flood risk and potential defence schemes. The events were supported by the Tonbridge Area Flood Support Group, East Peckham Flood Group and Hildenborough Parish Council.

1.5.3 The flood fairs were well attended and were a valuable and effective way of informing residents how homes can be made more flood resilient particularly with the advantage of the government grants.

- 1.5.4 The Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP visited the East Peckham flood fair in his role as Flood Envoy for Kent reporting directly to the Prime Minister. He also visited Hildenborough on 23 April and was able to visit a flood damaged home and talk to the owners about their experiences during and after the floods.

## **1.6 Flood Warden Schemes & Parish Flood Plans**

- 1.6.1 The appeal for Flood Wardens has generally had a good response and we now have sufficient volunteers for separate schemes in East Peckham and in Hildenborough. To date we have had one volunteer for Tonbridge but hopefully more will come forward when more people are able to return to normal home life.
- 1.6.2 The Wardens for Hildenborough and East Peckham will operate under the parish flood/emergency plans and these are being updated with assistance from the Environment Agency and the Kent Resilience Team as necessary. For Tonbridge, a flood plan or procedure will be developed by the Borough Council.
- 1.6.3 Flood Warden Training is being made available and will cover issues such as roles, before, during and after a flood, emergency planning and water safety. The first training day will be held at Kings Hill on Saturday 12 July. A new flood warden handbook is being prepared by the Environment Agency and this will be issued on the training day together with a kit of basic equipment appropriate for the role.

## **1.7 Flood Support Schemes**

- 1.7.1 The details of the government's flood support schemes being administered by the Borough Council were reported to Cabinet at the meeting of 25 March and an update reported to the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board on 14 May:  
<https://democracy.tmbc.gov.uk/documents/g290/Public%20reports%20pack%2014thMay2014%2019.30%20Finance%20Innovation%20and%20Property%20Advisory%20Board.pdf?T=10>.
- 1.7.2 I have, however, listed below for completeness of the report a concise status of the implementation and uptake of the grants at the time of writing:
- 1.7.3 In respect of support for businesses,
- 86 businesses granted rate relief for 3 months
  - 63 businesses receiving the flat rate business support grant
  - 2 applications for Repair and Renew Grant
- 1.7.4 In respect of homeowners,
- 111 homes granted council tax rebate for the period home is uninhabitable
  - 168 homes granted council tax rebate for 3 months

- 12 applications for Repair and Renew Grant

## **1.8 Legal Implications**

1.8.1 None arising from the report

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

1.9.1 None arising from the report

## **1.10 Risk Assessment**

1.10.1 Not required.

Background papers:

contact: Steve Medlock

Nil

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