

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 29 September 2016 in the Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30 pm
Concluded 8.30 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
BM Smith Pollard Rickard	Arshad Hussain Green T Hussain Watson Warburton	J Sunderland

Observers: Councillor Ross-Shaw (Regeneration, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder and Councillor Love (Chair of the Environment & Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Councillor Arshad Hussain in the Chair

32. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Councillor Rickard disclosed an interest in the item relating to the Flooding Scrutiny Review (Minute 35) as he was a board member on the Airedale Drainage Commissioners.

ACTION: City Solicitor

33. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

34. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to this Committee.



35. FLOODING SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Chair stated that at its meeting on Tuesday 19 January 2016, Council agreed that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake an in-depth Scrutiny Review, into the effectiveness of Bradford Council and its partners in dealing with the floods across the district in December 2015.

As part of this Scrutiny Review, Members looked to explore how we could learn from the approaches taken during the Winter 2015 floods, to assist the Council and its Partners to better deal with future floods.

It was also agreed that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive the final review report, prior to its submission to full Council.

Document “P” contained the draft findings from the Flooding Scrutiny Review.

The Environment and Waste Management Overview Scrutiny Committee will also be undertaking a wider scrutiny review into water management across the district. Information gathering sessions for this review will take place in October 2016.

The winter 2015 floods affected several areas and communities across the district and Members of this Committee shaped the Flooding Scrutiny Review by discussing and agreeing the terms of reference for the review at its meeting in March 2016.

The key lines of enquiry for the Scrutiny review were to:

- Evaluate Bradford’s preparedness for serious flooding and response to December’s floods;
- Identify how Bradford Council and other Local Authorities and Partners could share learning and strengthen joint working;
- Explore follow-up activity, in relation to supporting affected communities in the aftermath of the floods;

Members had received and gathered a range of information from a number of different sources, including:

- two information gathering sessions with residents, businesses and voluntary groups;
- information gathering session with Bradford Council and external officers and;



- an online questionnaire survey.

The engagement as part of this Scrutiny review had been wide and extensive and included:

- discussions at Council on 19 January 2016, when this resolution was made that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertakes a review;
- that this Committee receives the final report prior to its submission to full Council. This would give Councillors another opportunity to consider and comment on the report;
- an online survey;
- two information gathering sessions with Councillors, residents, businesses and voluntary groups who had been affected by the floods.
- one information gathering sessions with Councillors, Councillors Officers and officers from the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and West Yorkshire Police.
- engagement with Councillors whose wards were affected by the floods, such as Baildon, Bingley Rural, Craven, Ilkley, Shipley, Keighley East and Idle and Thackley;
- information gathering sessions were widely publicised in the Media through press releases and through Social Media, (Facebook and Twitter)
- coverage of the review in the T&A.
- posters about the information gathering sessions/ Scrutiny Review being circulated; and
- use of Social Media, (Facebook and Twitter)

Throughout the course of the information gathering phase, Members were made aware of various issues and concerns.

Some of these focussed specifically on flood prevention by looking into river dredging, drainage management, clearing debris from the River Aire, maintaining flood plains, rivers and reservoirs and upland management through tree planting.

Areas such as these would be referred to the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for those Members to consider as part of their wider Scrutiny Review into Water Management across the district.



A number of residents affected by the winter floods were present at the meeting and they made the following points:

Silsden Resident:

That a few points could be added to recommendation 1 including having a dedicated Council Officer dealing with flooding or appointing a local community representative.

In relation to recommendation 2, large posters in prominent locations advising residents what to do in case of flooding, similar to the fire safety posters would be helpful.

That in relation to recommendation 3 and developing a “flood buddy” approach, that a practice drill was needed in order for this approach to be effective.

That in relation to recommendation 4 relating to support mechanisms for businesses, in order for this to be effective, barriers and funding needed to be in place.

That in relation to recommendation 5 relating to developing personal emergency plans for future flooding events, that the Council should produce a model plan.

That in relation to recommendation 6 on the Environment Agency developing a flood alert system, this should be a joint approach with the Council and having a dedicated call centre to deal with flooding events.

Silsden Town Councillor:

A Silsden Town Councillor stated that sandbags offered only limited protection and that what was really required was a more permanent solution. In addition a communication back up system was required as well as the clearing of culverts.

Bingley Flood Support Group:

A group representative gave a synopsis of the issues that has arisen from the Boxing Day floods and stressed that in learning the lessons, more work was needed, however in talking to the Council, a lot of progress had been made and she was confident that a coherent plan could be put in place to deal with future flooding.



Bingley residents:

That although flooding could not always be stopped, it was important to ensure that drains were systematically cleared to minimise the impact of flooding.

That although drains were being cleared, there was confusion between the Fire Service, Environment Agency, the Council and Yorkshire Water as to who was responsible for what, and that in a flood situation there was uncertainty as to which of these agencies should be contacted.

That sandbags offered little resistance and more resilient measures such as diverting flood water to Myrtle park would offer a more viable solution.

Baildon resident:

That it was encouraging to see that the Council had made a start in clearing the drainage system, however there was a need to have more sandbags and also a dedicated flood line number, together with a team that would handle all flood related calls and deploy resources appropriately.

That getting the work done to repair a flood damaged property was a real challenge and information should be produced, such as how to appoint a loss adjuster to enable those affected to navigate the complex process from appointing a loss adjuster to undertaking building/ repair work. In addition how key messages were communicated should also be an area of focus as well as having a list of volunteers who had experienced flooding, that could advise others in the future.

During a lengthy discussion Members made a number of observations and asked a number of questions which are detailed below with the responses:

- A Member stated that the information gathering sessions, particularly with the Environment Agency and other partners had been useful, however the report was a work in progress and would have to draw inference with the water management scrutiny being undertaken by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He added that Calderdale had made a lot of progress in this area and he was concerned why it had taken Bradford so long to get to this stage and he suggested the need to have a strategic overview and position regards flooding.
- A Member suggested that a command and control centre was crucial and central to ensuring that the response to a flooding event was effective. In addition working effectively with partners, Town and Parish Councils as well as the Emergency Services to test the response systems.



- In response to a question on what had been done in respect to the desktop/literature review of flooding, the Emergency Planning Manager explained that a lot of lessons had been identified as a result of the flooding and that the service was liaising with the emergency services and the Environment Agency going forward.
- A Member commented that a lot of work had been done nationally to find solutions around flooding, however the Council had adopted a response model around Town and Parish Councils, and were we confident that the necessary support mechanisms were in place to support this response model. In response the Emergency Planning Manager stated that he was confident that the necessary support mechanisms were in place and were resilient. In addition he was working closely with the Bingley Flood Support Group as well as with our key partners and residents to ensure that the Flooding Resilience Action Plan was effective.
- A Member endorsed an earlier suggestion of having a dedicated flood line number, which would significantly improve the Councils' response and offer a more coordinated approach.
- A Member stressed that the Council had a statutory responsibility for civil protection and hence it was imperative that a clear chain of command and response existed. The Emergency Planning Manager confirmed that the Flood Action Plan would be tested to ensure its effectiveness.
- A Member stressed that the role of district councillors was crucial and this had to be made more prominent in dealing with flooding and its aftermath.
- A Member suggested that information regarding flooding should be made more accessible to residents, in addition large posters should also be displayed in public buildings. Information regarding insurance, utility companies and a list of builders should also be disseminated so that those affected can make informed choices, including a step by step guide on what to do if you are flooded.
- A Member stated that as part of the information gathering sessions for this Scrutiny, information had been collected from Councillors and she ascertained which Councillors had been contacted and what their response had been. She added that an update should also be provided on the progress made on the Flooding Resilience Action Plan. She also requested a list of the flood related work that had been signed off to date, and suggested that a dedicated officer should be responsible to assist vulnerable people affected by any future flooding.



- The Regeneration, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder commended all the people who had given evidence at the information gathering sessions, and stressed that the work done in Calderdale was being looked at to see what lessons can be learnt. In addition the Scrutiny process would help the Council with its future response to flooding.
- A Member expressed his concerns at the findings of the review, in particular that it did not portray an accurate picture of the issues. In response the Deputy Chair stated that this particular scrutiny had a specific focus and remit to look at the issues around the Boxing Day floods and that the terms of reference and the final report reflected the spirit of the decision from Council.
- The Chair of the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee was also present at the meeting and he confirmed that his Committee would soon be undertaking a Scrutiny into Water Management, and that the information gathering sessions would commence in due course and he extended his invitation to Members of this Committee to attend these sessions.

Resolved –

- (1) That the findings and recommendations contained within the draft Flooding Scrutiny Review Report be adopted subject to the inclusion of the following additional recommendations:**
- (i) That progress against the Flooding Resilience Action Plan be presented to this Committee in 6 months time.**
 - (ii) That further information be provided to Members on the flood related work that has been completed to date.**
 - (iii) That the Resilience Plan be developed in assisting those affected by floods, in conjunction with our partners.**
 - (iv) That there be dedicated officer support to assist vulnerable people both during and after flooding events.**
 - (v) That the Council explores the viability of implementing a dedicated flood line number.**
 - (vi) That there be more focused and pro-active communication to residents in flood affected areas.**
 - (vii) That a list of key contacts points be developed for residents, specifically with regards to links to insurance companies, utility providers and the building trade.**



- (viii) That the Council maintains a regular programme of cleaning culverts and drains in flood affected areas.
 - (ix) That progress against the officer debrief recommendations be presented to this Committee in 6 months.
- (2) The Flooding Scrutiny Review Report be submitted to Council for consideration.

ACTION: *Overview and Scrutiny Lead / City Solicitor
(Resolution 2 referral to Council)*

Chair:

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

