

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	25/8/2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Report on Flooding – December 2015 – Jan 2016
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/163
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the committee with an overview of the flooding events over December 2015 and January 2016 as they affected Aberdeen City.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That committee members note the efforts of staff in responding to the flooding events and to also note that recommendations and actions arising from the events will be carried forward by a group led by the Director of Communities, Housing and Infrastructure.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This actions identified in this report will require all Services of the council to dedicate staff time to ensure they are prepared to lead any emergency response and provide support to any corporate emergency response.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

December 2015 and January 2016 saw Scotland experience some of the most severe flooding in recent memory as a series of storms

passed over Scotland bringing sustained and persistent rainfall. This series of storms was influenced by the pattern of the Jet Stream.

Storm Frank (30 December) brought high intensity rainfall over a 24hr period falling on very saturated catchments and resulted in flooding impacts in many parts of Scotland. Over 100mm of rainfall was recorded in the Upper Dee catchment. SEPA recorded the highest water levels in 40 years (by a large margin) at many local river stations. SEPA recorded the highest flow at the Woodend gauging station along the River Dee, which has an 87 year long flow record.

SEPA's estimate is that the event of 30 December 2015 in Ballater is possibly as rare as having a half a percent chance of happening in any given year. There has been significant flooding in Ballater in the past (1951, 1937, 1829, 1768, 1642) with anecdotal evidence that the flood of 1829 was possibly larger and more devastating. However the flood of 30 December is certainly the largest flood in living memory.

Record rainfall and flows

- December was the wettest month on record for Scotland (351.4mm in December on average; source Met Office).
- Over 120mm rainfall in 24h over the Cree catchment in Dumfries and Galloway on 30th December.
- 364mm rain was recorded between 2-8 January in Tayside by SEPA raingauge in Waterside (North Esk in Glen Esk).
- Locally, record water levels were seen on the Dee (estimated to be the highest level over 87 year period of record) and Don (highest level over 45 year period of records).
- On the 30th Dec the River Dee at SEPA's Park Gauging Station was 1.5m above the previous high set in November 2002.
- For the River Don on 7-8 January, SEPA recorded its highest river levels on record at Parkhill station (43 year period of record) and Haughton station (45 year period of record).
- The River Don at Parkhill station in upstream of Dyce was 1.369m above the previous high (Nov 2002).

In summary, significant flooding occurred throughout Aberdeenshire and on the 30th December and 7th January within Aberdeen City. Further potential significant flooding from the River Don in the Grandholm area of the Bridge of Don was expected on the 7th January. Thankfully this did not materialise although a number of significant actions were taken to mitigate the potential effects.

Over the period, the Emergency Planning Unit represented the City Council at various Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) meetings and, as required, activated colleagues to respond. Roads and Infrastructure staff were heavily committed throughout, dealing with roads, bridge and

other infrastructure issues, supporting the emergency services and members of the public.

Housing and Social Care staff supported evacuees, particularly from Sheltered housing near the Bridge of Dee and from Care Homes in the Grandholm area. Other staff including members of the Media Team, Education and Facilities Management were also directly involved in supporting the response.

The Council Corporate Incident Management Team led by the Director of Communities Housing and Infrastructure was called together on 7th January to coordinate the Council's response.

Timeline of Events

On Wednesday 30th December 2015, A Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) – this is the multi-agency partnership grouping that coordinates overall emergency planning and response in the Grampian area – meeting was held at 16:00hrs in response to Met Office and SEPA warnings.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss/coordinate:

- Potential Impacts
- Agency Preparedness
- Warning & Informing
- Escalation Arrangements if required

The main concerns were the predicted level of the Dee within Aberdeenshire.

At this stage Aberdeen City Council reported:

No issues to report - usual call out process is in place and will monitor the situation appropriately. 2500 sandbags are available as required. Will monitor the lower Riverside Drive/ Duthie Park area of the River Dee for any potential localised flooding. Merchant Quarter area of Aberdeen City Centre has been given some additional attention and gullies have been cleaned.

By 07:30 on the 30th several calls had been received by the Emergency Planning Unit regarding flooding in Braemar and Ballater. Aberdeenshire Council were active and responding as required.

A further LRP meeting was called for 10:00 hrs. Advice from SEPA that River Dee level still rising. Not expecting flood warning level at Maryculter to be given until after 14:00 hrs. Riverside Drive expected to flood later in the day.

At around 17:00hrs Mike Cheyne (Roads Infrastructure Manager) received information from SEPA advising him that River Dee levels in Aberdeen would potentially be higher than those experienced in 2002.

By 17:30hrs Housing colleagues (Kate MacDonald) undertook to organise a team to respond to any Rest Centre that was to be set up.

In addition, the British Red Cross agreed to provide volunteers to support this.

By 19:00hrs it was apparent that a Rest Centre would be required and contact was made with the Norwood Hall who had offered to provide help.

At 21:52hrs evacuees from Bridge of Dee Court Sheltered housing began to arrive. In total 14 people were looked after by Housing and Social Care staff overnight and into the next day at the Norwood Hall.

Continuing rain and high river levels led to the LRP meeting regularly from 1st January through to the 5th January. Through that period the City Council was monitoring the situation, dealing with clean up from the 30th, temporarily closing Duthie Park car park and liaising with David Lloyd Sports Centre and Aberdeen Harbour regarding abandoned and parked cars in potential risk areas.

The Beach Ballroom was kept on alert in case River Dee levels in Aberdeen led to wider evacuations.

On Wednesday 6th January, in response to specific warnings from the Met Office and SEPA, an LRP meeting was convened at 14:30hrs

SEPA provided the following update

The key area of concern is the River Don at Inverurie with expectation of similar river levels as seen on Monday 4 January 2016. All other water courses are expected to be lower than previous recent events, the River Dee in particular is likely to be 1/2 to 2/3's the level of previous events. SEPA did not indicate a concern for other rivers in the Grampian region at this time but will update once models are refreshed on 7 January 2016.

At the next LRP meeting at 11:00 hrs on the 7th January SEPA advised that there would be severe flooding at Inverurie. This information led to the immediate establishment of the council's Incident Management Team under the chairmanship of Pete Leonard to consider the possible impacts on Aberdeen City – particularly at Grandholm. Bridge of Don Academy was identified as an evacuation centre and liaison took place with potentially affected Care Homes regarding evacuation arrangements.

At 17:00 hrs, based on information received and considering the vulnerability of residents, the Incident Management Team decided that Grandholm and Woodside Care Homes should be evacuated. It was further agreed that, due to its location, Persley Care Home should not be evacuated and that a standby generator be requested from Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) for that site. (This was provided). Individual vulnerable people within the affected area were contacted

and accommodation was prepared to provide these individuals with care and shelter if required.

Tom Cowan and his team, including NHS colleagues, undertook a huge amount of work throughout the evening and night to plan and successfully carry out the evacuations from the care homes and ultimately return evacuees safely once it was clear that flooding would not occur. This work involved the movement of frail, vulnerable, frightened people in atrocious weather conditions. A separate report will be produced by H&SCP that will detail the many specific challenges and stellar efforts of staff in carrying out these evacuations.

At the 18:30hrs LRP meeting SEPA advised that their modelling showed never before seen flow rates on the Don at Parkhill but that their modelling showed that the Don's banks would not be breached. They clarified that this modelling had never been tested in an actual event and depended on the integrity of the river banks.

At the request of the City IMT, SEPA confirmed that, based on their models, they would not be issuing a severe flood warning for the Don in Aberdeen. (they will not issue warnings other than for major watercourses so the issue of the Mill Lade in Grandholm is not something they would consider).

This led the council IMT to issue a media statement advising people in Grandholm that, because of the threat from the Mill Lade, they should evacuate. Bridge of Don Academy was now open and ready to receive evacuees. Andy Campbell led a team there overnight which included social care colleagues and Red Cross volunteers. Housing colleagues were on standby to respond should evacuees begin to arrive.

As it turned out no-one chose to use the facility but hearteningly, Andy received a number of visits from local people offering various forms of support.

The predicted peak level at Grandholm was 08:00hrs and, whilst levels got very close to the top of the Mill Lade, thankfully flooding did not occur.

During this period, issues were escalating in the Culter area. Councillor Boulton was heavily involved and had direct contacts with the operational response in that area. The IMT were mostly unsighted on activities in Culter as, although, a local Community Resilience response had been instigated, its activation had not been formally notified to IMT. A number of properties were affected with some evacuations although some residents chose to remain in their homes. The boiler house at Culter school, which is below ground level, experienced water ingress which knocked out the electrical equipment controlling the boilers. The boiler house has a sump pump but that was also knocked out.

The boiler required a new part to get it going again and this part was not available locally so the school had to remain closed for a week.

Plans were prepared to decant the school to Cults Academy and to the local sports centre to avoid disruption running into a second week but the boiler was fixed and school resumed the following week.

Throughout the whole period, Mike Cheyne and staff at Tullos were working flat out to provide sandbags, respond to calls for assistance at areas flooded by surface water, and, later in the morning, carry out winter maintenance work due to forecast freeze.

Effect on Council Functions

Roads staff were heavily committed in deploying sandbags, implementing road and bridge closures and responding to requests for support.

Housing and Social Care staff were also heavily committed in the provision of support to people evacuated from Bridge of Dee Court sheltered housing complex and in the evacuation of the Care Homes in Grandholm.

Education and Childrens Services colleagues were involved in setting up Bridge of Don Academy as a possible rest centre.

The Media team worked alongside partner agencies to deliver multi agency public communications. They also supported the council's own efforts.

Senior Managers came together to form a Council Incident Management Team.

The Emergency Planning team were involved throughout, providing support to Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils.

Assessment of Response

The response was generally successful and appropriate although some staff members who were asked to carry out tasks such as managing a Rest Centre or evacuating Care Homes will have felt exposed due to lack of familiarity with, and training for, emergency roles.

The fact that part of the event happened during a holiday period created challenges as few officers are formally "on-call" and there was significant reliance on a core group of individuals.

Some areas of the response were particularly good, including the precautionary evacuation of Care Homes in Grandholm, the establishment of a Corporate Incident Management Team and the efforts of Roads, Housing and Social Care staff.

The early formation of a Corporate Incident Management Team led by Pete Leonard was invaluable and allowed information to be shared and assessed effectively. This led to informed decisions being made quickly.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Four debriefing sessions were held to capture learning from the events. These covered: Roads response; Housing and Social Care Response; the Corporate Incident Management Team response and a final session with the Council Group Leaders.

A good number of operational recommendations and actions arose from these debrief sessions.

Two strategic recommendations were made and agreed by CMT:

These were:

That a council resilience group chaired by Pete Leonard be established to implement the recommendations arising from this incident.

That this resilience group will report to CMT and that an executive summary of the Incident Report be provided to CH&I August Committee (this report is that executive summary).

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

The actions arising from this report will assist the council in ensuring that the impacts of flooding on the citizens of Aberdeen can be mitigated as far as possible.

Improving Staff Experience –

The actions arising from the report will encourage engagement by all staff to participate in service and corporate contingency planning and will encourage staff to volunteer to support the council's efforts where no defined role exists for them.

Improving our use of Resources –

There is no direct correlation between this report and an improved use of resources.

Corporate -

The key corporate link is with the Single Outcome Agreement – Safer Communities and also links with elements of the Community Plan relating to flooding. The actions arising from the report will further enhance the council's partnership working with all other Category 1 responders as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Public –

There are no implications arising from this report with regard to Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) or Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA).

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There are no risks arising from this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers accompanying this report.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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