

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 4
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Report of the Executive Director of Operations

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FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report is being presented to inform the Commission of the work being carried out by the city council within the area of water management and to assist with raising awareness of flood risk and water management issues within Peterborough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Commission is requested to note the report, endorse the services being provided and offer suggestions for inclusion in the work programme.

The Commission is asked, following the meeting, to utilise any future opportunities as Councillors to raise awareness of the need for residents and businesses to prepare for severe weather events (e.g. flood risk and drought).

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 Managing all elements of water (resources, efficiency, growth, infrastructure, flood risk, water quality and aquatic habitats) contributes towards the following priorities and outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy:

Creating the UK's Environment Capital:

- Conserving natural resources
- Making Peterborough cleaner and greener

Delivering substantial and truly sustainable growth:

- Building the sustainable infrastructure of the future

Creating strong and supportive communities:

- Empowering local communities

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Responsibilities

Peterborough City Council has worked for many years with partner organisations to plan for water infrastructure related to growth. As a Local Planning Authority and a Highway Authority it has always been important to ensure that sufficient infrastructure will be in place for new development and that properties will not be at risk of flooding.

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 brought about an expanded set of responsibilities and priorities for the city council including many statutory duties. Peterborough City Council automatically became a 'Lead Local Flood Authority' with responsibility for the co-ordination of flood risk management related to the following flood sources:

- Surface run-off
- Groundwater
- Ordinary watercourses

The Environment Agency continues to manage flood risk from main rivers and the sea, water companies continue to manage foul sewerage systems and existing surface water systems and Internal Drainage Boards continue to manage water levels in Fen areas. The city council has a role to play in co-ordinating flood risk management activities across each of these other water management partners.

The new responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 include the future duty to (a) approve and (b) adopt surface water drainage systems within new developments:

- (a) The design of surface water drainage systems is changing to use more natural features [sustainable drainage systems' (SuDS)] and less traditional piped methods. Once the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs commences the final part of the Act (expected April 2014) Peterborough City Council will be a 'SuDS Approving Body' to which developers will need to apply for approval of their drainage systems before any construction can start on site.
- (b) Once a drainage scheme is approved and constructed in accordance with the approved designs, the city council is obliged to adopt the scheme. The adoption of non-highway drainage systems is a new area of work for the city council.

The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC is a piece of EU legislation which requires Members States to improve water quality and the quality of aquatic habitats. This Directive requires that 'good ecological status' is achieved in all water bodies by 2027 and that no water bodies experience any deterioration in condition. There are some exceptions for watercourses that have been heavily modified by human intervention for crucial purposes such as flood risk management. The Directive places a duty on all organisations which manage water bodies. This includes Peterborough City Council which is responsible for overseeing work on smaller watercourses. It is the city council's intention to work proactively with this legislation to ensure Peterborough's watercourses are better environments overall for residents and visitors to enjoy, as well as to benefit wildlife.

Recent flood events

Water levels in the local environment have been very high. In November and December 2012 Peterborough's rivers experienced very high water levels. This led to Flood Warnings being issued by the Environment Agency for the River Nene. The Emergency Planning Team and Flood and Drainage officers acted quickly to prepare the incident control room, monitor the flood levels with partner organisations, communicate with Councillors and residents and prepare rest centres should evacuation be needed. Thankfully no properties flooded internally. We were very pleased with the response of the city council and its partners during the flood events and we have received many comments of praise. Nevertheless there are areas that we could improve upon and useful lessons learnt from the event are being developed into improved processes to help the city council prepare for future emergency situations.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report covers Peterborough-wide issues and is for information only. There are no new implications as a result of this report.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The city council now actively engages with residents of Peterborough on issues such as:
 - Awareness of local flood risk
 - How to protect properties from flood risk and deal with insurance queries
 - Water efficiency for drought management

- Local watercourse improvements

Peterborough City Council works with a wide range of water and risk management organisations in this area. These organisations include the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board, North Level District Internal Drainage Board, Middle Level Commissioners, Whittlesey and District Internal Drainage Board, the Highways Agency, Cambridgeshire Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue and neighbouring local authorities.

The city council has adopted a Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to guide developers with on-site flood risk, drainage and water habitat work. This document was consulted on through the formal processes for SPDs and was adopted by Cabinet on 10 December 2012.

7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 This report will not progress forward to another committee following review by the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities. However, the work of the Drainage Team, the Climate Change Team, the Natural Environment Team and the Emergency Planning Team will continue along the lines described in this report.

The water-related work of these teams will be formalised and monitored through a developing Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. This strategy will demonstrate Peterborough's approach to flood risk and related water management and include an action plan of short, medium and long term actions for the council and partners. The strategy is currently being developed.

8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 8.1
- Flood and Water Management Act 2010
 - Water Framework Directive – 2000/60/EC
 - Peterborough Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 None.

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