



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Belfast Flooding – Report on the flooding in Belfast on 16 August 2008 with supporting recommendations.
Date:	23 January 2009
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Relevant Background Information

The flooding emergency which took place in Belfast on 16 August 2008 has now been extensively reviewed using information obtained from the main responding organisations and from Belfast City Council elected members and staff who took part in the response to the event and recovery from it. The information was obtained using a series of structured focus group meetings and the main observations and recommendations have been summarised in the attached report.

The report sets out background information and a series of recommendations to provide information for both the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Health & Environmental Services Committee as well as other Members. The actions arising from the recommendations will be taken forward through the internal Belfast City Council Emergency Plan Working Group (and a specific flood sub-group) and also through the multi-agency Belfast Resilience Forum.

Key Issues

One of the main recommendations for the Council is to set up a Member group, representative of all party groupings to oversee implementation of the recommendations and engagement with other agencies over a defined period of time to ensure preventative measures are put in place to minimise the risk of future flooding in the City.

The Emergency Coordination Officer has initiated work to analyse flooding data from recent emergencies with a view to:

- mapping the main hotspots in the City;
- establishing likely causes and;
- identifying preventative measures that can be put in place

This work should be completed within the next 3 months.

A key issue arising from the August event was the availability and distribution of sandbags. With this in mind Rivers Agency has put forward a proposal to supply Belfast City Council and other councils with sandbags for storage at council depots near to

communities at risk from flooding. This is a welcome proposal and the Emergency Coordination Officer is considering the implications for the Council on how storage and distribution can be facilitated.

Communities who are at risk from flooding in Belfast must be assured that Belfast City Council and other agencies have reviewed the findings from previous flooding events and have taken all possible action to prevent or reduce the impact of further flooding. The Environmental Health Service is also to produce information for householders on flooding prevention and recovery.

Communities must also be assured that Belfast City Council and other agencies have adequate arrangements in place to provide an efficient and effective response for any future flooding emergencies.

Resource Implications

Financial

Work can be accommodated within current budgets.

Human Resources

Demands on member's time to resource a multi agency flood group. Officer time can be accommodated within current workloads.

Asset and Other Implications

None

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note and endorse the findings of the attached Flooding Report: and
- Endorse the proposal to set up a Member group, with representation from all political parties, to oversee the implementation of the recommendations detailed in the attached flooding report and the work with other agencies to put in place prevention measures to mitigate the risk of future flooding.

Documents Attached

App 1: Report – Belfast Flooding – 16 August 2008