



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast Flooding Emergency June 2012
<b>Date:</b>	24 November 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Suzanne Wylie, Director of Health and Environmental Services, ext 3260
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The initial learning points following on from the serious flooding in June were reported to this Committee at a meeting on 10 August. Members will recall that there were particular issues regarding communication, coordination, sandbag distribution, and flood alleviation measures. The Lord Mayor, party group leaders and the Chief Executive held a meeting with the drainage agencies in July to discuss these issues and agree actions in moving forward. Following on from that meeting the Director of Health and Environmental Services provided information to the Department of Finance and Personnel's Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU), which carried out a review on behalf of OFMDFM into the performance of the responding agencies to the June event. A report of the review has not yet been published.
1.2	The Council's Emergency Coordination Officer hosted a multi agency debrief in the City Hall and carried out a number of internal reviews. A report of the main findings and recommendations for improvement is attached as Appendix A. The report contains the actions the Council, together with others will take forward in ensuring the impact of future flooding in Belfast is minimised and that we can respond in an efficient and effective way. It also includes the actions coming out of the multi agency debrief and the Council's emergency Co-ordination Officer will link into the relevant work streams for taking those actions forward too.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<b>Distribution of Sandbags</b> Lack of agreement on the deployment of sandbags was a major issue during the June flooding and a temporary protocol was established during the response which was to be further developed. There have been a number of other incidents of heavy rain since June, which has resulted in continued requests for sandbags. The Council has firmed up the temporary sandbag protocol and this is in place until such times as a regional Memorandum of Understanding is developed and agreed by other Councils; the current protocol is attached as Appendix B to this report. Work to establish local sandbag stores is also ongoing and a number are already in place in the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ormeau Park</li><li>▪ Musgrave Park</li><li>▪ Duncrue Complex</li><li>▪ Avoniel Leisure Centre</li><li>▪ Orangefield Park (sandbag bunkers on trial)</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sandhill Green (sandbag bunkers on trial)</li> <li>▪ Sandhill Parade (sandbag bunkers on trial)</li> <li>▪ Clara Way (sandbag bunkers on trial)</li> <li>▪ Container at Orangefield Park moved to Dixon Playing Fields at Grand Parade, which provides a safer and more accessible location</li> <li>▪ Small quantity at Knocknagoney Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Small quantity at Salvation Army Church on Cregagh Road (operated by Age NI for older people)</li> </ul>
2.2	<p>Negotiations are ongoing to set up stores in other parts of the city and all agencies have worked well together during recent incidents of heavy rain to deploy sandbags and minimise the impact of flooding.</p>
2.3	<p><b>Community Emergency Plans</b></p> <p>Another early recommendation following the June flooding was the need to develop local community resilience and self help. This approach has been piloted in a local neighbourhood in east Belfast where the worst of the flooding occurred in June and a community emergency plan has been developed. The arrangements worked well during the early hours of the morning of 18 October when the Knock River came out of bank. This work is being rolled out across the city with approaches being made to Councillors and residents in other areas where there has been repeated flooding.</p>
2.4	<p><b>Flood Alleviation Work</b></p> <p>Following the June Flooding, Members were of the opinion that there should be a greater focus on flood prevention and that the Executive should lead on this by making investment in flood defences and flood alleviation schemes a priority in flood prone areas. This and the need to appoint a lead government agency for flooding matters were put to government by the Director of Health and Environmental Services in her submission to the PEDU review on how agencies performed in June.</p>
2.5	<p>Additionally it was agreed at the meeting with the drainage agencies in July that the Council would lead a collective approach across agencies to review those areas of the city which continue to flood causing severe inconvenience and distress to residents; to consider the causes of the flooding and to establish if work is planned (direct or indirect) to alleviate it and in what time frame. As the drainage agencies have carried out significant investigations and are working to their own flood alleviation plans (within budgetary constraints). The Council will add value by bringing this together into a common picture of where the problems are and identifying what work is planned across the city. It is also recommended that work is commissioned to develop a strategic issues paper on the most significant flood risk areas for the city, including the city centre, which could be prone to tidal flooding, and identify what additional measures would be needed to alleviate these risks. This will highlight additional infrastructural issues that that will require investment and can be used by the Council to influence the Executive.</p>
2.6	<p>In respect of bespoke flood defence equipment for individual properties, work is being undertaken by the Rivers Agency to scope the effectiveness of these measures. However, at present there is no finance available for such equipment.</p>
2.7	<p><b>Future Work</b></p> <p>A number of the actions in the report have already been completed or are ongoing and if Members are content to endorse the report it is proposed that updates will be taken to the Health and Environmental Services Committee, with progress on the Belfast Flooding Issues Paper being reported to S P and R.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The cost of implementing the actions in the June 2012 Flooding Incident Report are being met through existing budgets. The exception to this are the costs associated with the flood alleviation infrastructure project, which at this stage are estimated to be between £60,000 and £80,000.

<b>4</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
4.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Endorse the key findings and recommendations in the June 2012 Flooding Incident Report.</li> <li>2. Agree the approach to reporting progress on the implementation of the actions in the report , and</li> <li>3. Agree the interim arrangements for the deployment of sandbags;</li> <li>4. Approve the initiation of a tendering exercise in respect of the development of a Belfast Flooding Issues Paper.</li> </ol>

<b>Decision Tracking</b>

<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
PEDU – Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit