



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Tidal Flooding - recognition event for staff and community volunteers
Date:	24 th January 2014
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Director of Health & Environmental Services, ext 3260
Contact Officer:	Valerie Brown, Environmental Health Manager, ext 3301

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware of the series of tidal surges which threatened Belfast between Friday 3 rd and Monday 6 th January 2014. A similar set of circumstances resulted in the City Centre flooding in 1903. The most threatening prediction was for the midday high tide on Friday 3 rd and then again at lunchtime on Monday 6 th . A large scale multi agency response was set in motion on Thursday 2 nd January; this was led by the Police Service (PSNI) as there was a risk to life and consideration was being given to evacuating parts of the city, particularly Sydenham and also putting temporary protection measures in to reduce the risk to the city centre.
1.2	The Council opened its Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) on the afternoon of Thursday 2 nd January and Inverary Community Centre on that Thursday evening. The ECC, which operated until Monday evening was used to direct resource and provide services such as the tactical management of sandbags, emergency support centre planning and support to vulnerable households.
1.3	The significant risk of tidal flooding required a huge collaborative effort by all the Belfast Resilience Partners; with organisations such as PSNI, Rivers Agency, NI Water, NI Electricity, BT, NI Housing Executive and Belfast City Centre Management focusing on protecting the community, businesses and critical infrastructure. Welfare support, advice and assistance were delivered locally by the Council, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Red Cross, and local churches.
1.4	From a Council perspective the most notable service was the sandbag operation, which started at Inverary Community Centre on Thursday, continuing right through the night and over the following days until it moved to Palmertown Road recycling centre on the Monday 6 th , finishing that afternoon. There were a number of key people from various departments within the Council involved in setting up and overseeing the local operation; these included Emergency Planning, Community Services, Parks and Leisure, Environmental Health, and Cleansing. Local Elected Members were also extremely proactive and there was

	also a remarkable effort by the local communities from Sydenham and the Docks area and the volunteers from Lagan Rescue, the Red Cross and local churches who enabled Belfast to distribute and place over 20,000 sandbags over the four day period.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>At the January Council meeting, it was agreed that the Lord Mayor would write to staff to thank them for their excellent response. In addition, the Members' Emergency Planning and Severe Weather Working Group met at the beginning of January and it proposed that the Council hosts a short mid morning event to recognise the voluntary organisations, churches and community volunteers from both the Sydenham and the Docks areas for going the extra mile and working tirelessly to protect local communities. The type of community spirit and support displayed over the four days is very valuable and something to be encouraged and developed. The emergency planning team has already followed up a number of valuable contacts from the response to include within future local community emergency plans.</p> <p>Because the response involved a number of communities it is proposed that the event is held in the City Hall with tea, coffee and scones provided. It is likely that around 50 people could attend.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u> The catering will cost between £163 and £325 depending on final numbers and will be met within existing revenue estimates.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	No equality or good relations considerations

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended Committee agrees to the Council hosting a recognition event for the volunteers involved in the response to the risk of tidal inundation in the Sydenam and Docks areas earlier this month.

6	Decision Tracking
Siobhan Toland to provide details of the event to all Council Members	

7	Key to Abbreviations
ECC – Emergency Coordination Centre	
BT – British Telecommunications	