

D R A F T

Joint Scrutiny Proposal

BACKGROUND

Topic: Worcestershire Floods Summer 2007			
Background to the issue	<p>Floods badly affected many parts of Worcestershire over the weekend of 20/21/22 July 2007 and in mid June. Recovery work is continuing and many agencies are involved in assessing what happened and how to better prepare for next time. Worcestershire Partnership is co-ordinating the flooding recovery process. The Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership has been established to address issues such as how the organisations can improve the county's network of watercourses, ditches, drains and culverts.</p> <p>During the summer District Councils discussed the flooding and Wychavon and Malvern Hills have established scrutinies to investigate the issue within their District.</p> <p>On 31 August the County Council's Cabinet agreed a scrutiny would be useful. Worcestershire partnership has suggested a joint countywide scrutiny would be useful and this was supported by County and District Leaders and Chief Executives.</p> <p>At a meeting of District and County scrutiny members on 26 November 2007, members agreed a joint scrutiny would be useful and could see the benefits of working together to achieve a stronger final scrutiny report with "one voice".</p>		
Draft terms of reference of scrutiny (description of what will be scrutinised)	<p>To review the immediate response to the floods by local/public agencies and the recovery since.</p> <p>To examine whether and how the environment can be better managed to mitigate the potential for flash flooding and limit the extent of the consequent fluvial flooding eg drainage, farm management, infrastructure etc.</p> <p>To make recommendations to County Council, District and Borough Councils, and others as appropriate.</p>		
Scrutiny Officer & Scrutiny Liaison Officer support	Suzanne O'Leary/Jo Weston at County Council		
Suitability for scrutiny. Which of the following criteria does it meet?			
<i>Is the issue a priority area for the Council?</i>		<i>Does it examine a poorly performing service?</i>	
<i>Is it a key issue for local people?</i>	yes	<i>Has it been prompted by new Government guidance or legislation?</i>	No – but see national review recommendations

<i>Will the scrutiny have a clear impact on services?</i>	yes	<i>Will it result in improvements to the way the Council operates?</i>	yes
<i>Are improvements for local people likely as a result?</i>	yes		
Scope of scrutiny (what issues will it cover and what won't it cover)	<p>Some issues which could be covered are below (in no particular order).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum, of which Worcestershire CC is a 'Category One' responder, functioned to meet the needs of Worcestershire during the July event. 2. Whether the existing shared approach to flooding events across the Districts and County Council is operating effectively; 3. Closure of the M5 southbound within Glos. by the South West Highways Agency. How are cross regional operational issues managed? 4. How can the environment be better managed to mitigate the potential for flash flooding and limit the extent of the consequent fluvial flooding eg drainage, farm management, infrastructure etc. This would involve DEFRA etc. 5. Land drainage issues: Drain capacity Is there consistent approach to the maintenance of water courses and ditch courses across district council boundaries Responsibility to maintain ditches (including roadside ones where road improvements have been undertaken) How fields are ploughed 6. Support provided to the community to limit the impact of flooding, include business community e.g. Business Continuity Planning - have we told residents how to prepare? 7. Whether there was an effective communication channel with the public before, during and after the emergency; 8. The management of the recovery phase 9. The extent to which the occurrence of flash flooding can be modelled and therefore predicted. 10. Whether utility companies' response to Gloucestershire postcodes led to a lack of attention to Worcestershire issues; 11. Whether problems are caused by insurance companies not having consistent standards when dealing with situations like flooding; 		

	<p>12. Budgeting issues, including requesting funding support and compiling robust Belwin data;</p> <p>13. Collecting information from a wide range of countywide sources and collating it on behalf of all partners;</p> <p>14. Impact on the agricultural and farming community; and</p> <p>15. Emergency planning issues, including Rest Centre staff training, setting up a GIS system to map vulnerable people and provision of catering to emergency staff (something the County Council may provide).</p> <p>16. Role of Parish Councils</p> <p>17. Designation of flood plain areas for development and the RSS acreage impact</p> <p>18. Do flood defences need more investment by the government?</p> <p>19. Should there be a single organisation in charge of drainage issues?</p>
Advantages to conducting scrutiny & Indicators of success (ie how will you know a good scrutiny has been done?)	
Has anyone else examined the issue? Views of External Bodies on doing this scrutiny?	<p>Other Local Authorities scrutinies: Gloucestershire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council and West Berkshire Council. Tewkesbury Borough Council also discussed the matter.</p> <p>Nationally, the Government are conducting a review into the flooding. Chaired by Sir Michael Pitt, the review will look at what happened, its impacts and what this means for the future.</p> <p>University of Worcester are assessing the impact of the floods through their department of psychology and health sciences, specifically looking at the distress that was caused to individuals.</p>
Any disadvantages or pitfalls to conducting this scrutiny?	

INFORMATION NEEDS

Key Documents, Reports & Data required	<p>Agenda and Notes of 26 November 2007 joint scrutiny meeting</p> <p>Floods facts and figures</p> <p>Cabinet Office Review "Flooding Lessons Learned Review" Terms of Reference and Scope</p>
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	<p>Worcester City Scrutiny Committee Report – Note of Flash Flooding Review, 11 April 2007</p> <p>Worcestershire County Council Cabinet Report and Appendices – Flooding within the County Summer 2007, 31 August 2007</p> <p>Worcestershire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Board Report, 3 October 2007</p> <p>Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership Meeting Notes, 19 October 2007</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council's Flooding Scrutiny Scoping Template, November 2007</p> <p>Gloucestershire County Council's Final Inquiry Report – Executive Summary and Recommendations, 21 November 2007</p>
Possible interviewees (who to question)	<p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Highways Agency</p> <p>Environment Agency</p> <p>Worcestershire partnership</p> <p>Severn Trent water</p>
Site Visits (where to visit)	
Types of meeting/ consultation needed? (eg workshops/ focus groups/ public meetings/ questionnaires etc)	
Media & publicity needs? (eg. Press releases, newspaper ads/leaflets/web features)	

OUTLINE TIMETABLE

Proposal to County & District scrutiny committees	January 2008
Scrutiny Task Group meetings	Jan/Feb March April
Scrutiny Report to County and District scrutiny committees	May 2008?
Scrutiny Report to Cabinets and other relevant bodies	June 2008?

