

# **WORCESTERSHIRE SUMMER FLOODS 2007**

## **Joint Scrutiny Task Group**

**2.00pm, Monday 7 April 2008**

**Lakeview Room, County Hall, Worcester**

### **AGENDA**

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions
2. Notes of 31 March meeting
3. Discussions with:
  - West Mercia Police (2.00-4.00)
  - H&W Fire & Rescue Authority (2.00-4.00)
  - Local Resilience Forum (2.00-4.00)
  - Severn Trent Water (4.00 approx)
  - Environment Agency (5.30 approx)
  - Land Drainage Partnership (7.00 approx)

There will be a break for sandwiches at about 5pm

### **ITEM 3**

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#### **DISCUSSIONS WITH:**

- **West Mercia Police**
- **H&W Fire & Rescue Authority**
- **Local Resilience Forum**
- **Severn Trent Water**
- **Environment Agency**
- **Land Drainage Partnership**

#### *Format of meeting*

1. Attendees will be asked to set out their views or experiences on the immediate response to the floods and recovery since, and whether there are any possible areas for improvement. This will then be followed by a general discussion with each group. Suggested issues to discuss are set out below.

2. The Police, Fire Authority and Local Resilience Forum will each be asked to set out their views separately at the start of the meeting. There will then be a joint discussion with all three.

3. It is hoped to send comments to the national Pitt Review, so relevant recommendations and interim conclusions from the Review are listed. Members will recall that these recommendations were circulated with the last agenda.

#### **West Mercia Constabulary:**

**Chief Inspector Matt Mead and Steve Pooler, Emergency Planning Officer**

4. Following a flood the Police are responsible for:

- co-ordinating the response of all public bodies
- evacuating the public from properties at risk
- providing advice and assistance at the scene
- controlling traffic to prevent bow waves from flooding properties and vehicles from breaking down in floodwaters.

West Mercia's Chief Constable is also the Chairman of the Local Resilience Forum.

5. Chief Inspector Matt Mead will do a presentation setting out events during the summer 2007 floods and the response from a police perspective. West Mercia Constabulary have carried out their own review of the response to the summer flooding emergency and Steve Pooler will be able to advise Members of the main

lessons learned.

**Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority:  
Ray Rogers, Emergency Planning Officer**

6. The Fire Service is responsible for rescue work, extinguishing fires and dealing with dangerous chemicals or substances. They help the ambulance service with casualties and the Police to recover bodies. The Fire Service is responsible for the health and safety of staff from all the agencies working within the inner cordon at the scene of an incident and for liaising with the Police about access to the site. They do not have a statutory duty for flood rescue.

7. Sir Ken Knight, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, has recently published a report into the [Fire and Rescue Service Operational Response to the Summer 2007 floods](#). Some of his key findings are that:

- the Fire and Rescue Service should be given even greater capability to undertake flood rescue
- local Fire and Rescue Authorities should ensure that firefighters have appropriate personal protective equipment and training
- the fire service should NOT have a statutory duty for flood rescue for the fire service, particularly as it does not guarantee interoperability between FRS around the country
- common standards of training with multi agency accreditation for inland water rescue operations should be considered by the appropriate Government Skills Council within the skills business network
- utilities providers such as gas and electricity should consistently take part in the coordination arrangements for responses to major emergencies.

8. The report also makes recommendations for the sharing of information on flood planning and weather risks, media and communications. Sir Ken's recommendations will feed in to the final Pitt Review and will be for Government, regional and local resilience forums, individual Fire and Rescue Authorities, utilities and other bodies to take forward.

9. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority have carried out their own scrutiny into the response to the summer flooding emergency. Their terms of reference were to explore:

- The contribution made by the specialist rescue teams
- The effectiveness of local multi-agency pre-planning through the Local Resilience Forum
- The effectiveness of the multi-agency response and joint working between Local Resilience Forum members
- The effectiveness of regional and national support and mutual aid during the response phase.
- The effectiveness of multi-agency working arrangements and communication with the public during the recovery phase.

10. Outcomes were reported to their Best Value Policy and Performance Committee on 18 March 2008 and will be considered by the Authority on 21 May 2008. Mr Rogers can discuss the main findings from the Authority's review.

**West Mercia Local Resilience Forum:  
Eamonn Croft, Coordinator**

11. West Mercia Local Resilience Form (LRF) is a multi-agency group comprising bodies within West Mercia such as local authorities, national and local health agencies, the three emergency services and the Environment Agency. It is currently chaired by Paul West, Chief Constable of West Mercia Police.

12. The LRF ensures partner agencies co-ordinate resources so they can respond effectively when incidents occur. The LRF also exists to warn, inform, advise and educate the public about developments in the area of Civil Protection.

13. Suggested issues for discussion with Fire, Police and LRF:

- How well did the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum function to meet the needs of Worcestershire during the July event?
- How effective was the emergency response in July and what improvements could be made?
- Do they have a view about whether there was effective coordination between Districts and County Council in the response to the floods and during the recovery?

Pitt Review recommendations	4 - 5
interim conclusions	38 - 41 and 50

**Severn Trent Water:  
Peter Leatherland, Business Resilience Security Manager**

14. Severn Trent Water have a statutory duty to provide potable (drinking) water as well as treating and disposing of waste water. Unusual heavy rainfall can overwhelm drainage systems and cause flooding and in these circumstances, untreated sewage may spill out into streets and gardens. The water companies will assist where possible to reduce the amount of water escaping from the system and will treat areas where sewage has been deposited once the flooding has subsided.

15. Suggested issues for discussion:

- How effective are communication channels with other organisations (eg the Local Resilience Forum) in relation to emergency flooding events and plans
- How are cross regional operational issues managed?
- Does Severn Trent have any plans to alleviate the effects of flooding in future?
- What was Severn Trent's rate of capital expenditure for the last financial year?
- Did Severn Trent spend all of the planned capital expenditure in that year?
- What rate of capital expenditure will Severn Trent be seeking in future years and do they think that OFWAT will look on that favourably?

**Environment Agency:**

**Anthony Perry, Area Flood Risk Manager and Mark Bowers, Planning and Corporate Services Manager**

16. The Environment Agency has a statutory responsibility for flood management and defences and to manage flood risk to existing properties and assets. Some of the main duties are:

- To maintain or improve main rivers
- To install and operate flood warning equipment
- To control actions by riparian owners and occupiers which might interfere with the free flow of main rivers
- Preparation of River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive

17. The Environment Agency is responsible for the maintenance of "main rivers and strategic streams." For non main rivers and streams the responsibility for their maintenance and the removal of obstructions etc. lies with the riparian owners of the land adjacent to the water course. Where a stream passes through a culvert underneath a highway for which the County Council is the highway authority, then the Council is the responsible authority for the watercourse.

18. Some suggested issues for discussion:

- How should any extra funding for flood defences be prioritised and what alternative forms of flood defences are there?
- What dredging of rivers in the County has taken place in the past, present or is planned for in the future?
- How are cross regional operational issues managed?
- How will the Environment Agency influence the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy in terms of allowing further development on flood plains

**Land Drainage Partnership:**

**Ian Bamforth, Service Leader to Highways and Countryside Division, Worcestershire County Council and Steve Jordan, Director of Environmental Services, Wychavon DC**

19. The Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership comprises a range of organisations including Worcestershire County Council, the Environment Agency, National Farmers' Union and District Councils.

20. The group first met in October 2007 where it adopted an action plan to address key issues such as how the organisations can further work together to identify improvements that can be made to the county's network of watercourses,

ditches, drains and culverts. Notes of that meeting were circulated to Members as part of a background information pack for members in November 2007.

21. Some suggested issues for discussion:

- Who is responsible for ensuring that watercourses, ditches, drains and culverts are adequately maintained and that problems are addressed?
- Are landowners fully aware of their responsibilities for dredging ditches on their land and how is this enforced?
- What support is provided for riparian landowners?
- What resources are needed for land drainage and are any additional resources planned?

Pitt Review interim conclusions	17, 18, 20-26, 29, 30 and 32
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