



Managing the risk and response to flooding in Birmingham

Issues arising from May 2018 major flooding event

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Birmingham is at substantial risk of flooding from a range of sources and has experienced a number of significant flooding events in recent years. These have had a devastating impact on both homes and businesses in affected areas. Whilst the economic effect can be considerable, the impact on the lives and wellbeing of people affected, both in the immediate aftermath and the longer-term consequences, have been a source of significant stress and worry in communities affected by flooding.
- 1.2 It is important to recognise that flooding cannot always be prevented but the risk can be managed and actions can be taken to minimise the harm caused by flooding as far as possible. The response to major flooding events when they do happen, needs to be co-ordinated and managed as efficiently and effectively as possible with appropriate support, advice and interventions made available for local people affected by flooding.

2 What happened on 27 May 2018

- 2.1 This review has been instigated in response to a very intense rainfall event, which was significantly larger than anything previously recorded which was experienced on the evening of 27th May 2018. In some areas of the city the highest rainfall totals ever recorded were seen in an incredibly short period of time. This resulted in a major flooding incident which had a devastating impact in certain areas of the city.
- 2.2 The main causes of the flooding were from rivers and watercourses, sewer surcharging and surface water flooding as a result of the extreme rainfall event. The Environment Agency is currently undertaking a detailed analysis of the event.
- 2.3 Where properties have flooded internally the City Council along with partners are undertaking a full investigation in accordance with the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. At the time of writing, 126 roads and up to 1,600 properties affected by flooding are in the process of being investigated. To date, 1,011 properties have been contacted for information and public consultations have taken place in Sparkhill and Selly Park. A detailed report will be published once these investigations have been completed.



3 Background to Scrutiny Review

- 3.1 Subsequent to the flooding on 27th May, Councillors Jon Hunt and Roger Harmer took a motion for debate to the Birmingham City Council meeting on 12th June 2018 calling for an inquiry into the floods of May 2018, to be carried out promptly.
- 3.2 The motion called for the inquiry to include strong resident input and for the report to be debated as a main agenda item at a future Full City Council meeting.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 The review was conducted by members of the Sustainability & Transport O&S Committee: Cllr Kath Hartley, Cllr Tim Huxtable and Cllr Hendrina Quinnen on Thursday 19th July 2018 in Committee Room 2 in the Council House and was chaired by Cllr Liz Clements.
- 4.2 The Committee Members were keen to hear from the local communities affected about their experiences of what happened on the day; about the impact on the lives and wellbeing of the residents affected; and about the response from the City Council and other strategic partners in the aftermath of the flooding event.
- 4.3 Members heard evidence from a variety of witnesses including:
 - Paul Cobbing, Chief Executive, National Flood Forum (NFF);
 - John Clayton, Selly Park South Flood Action Group (FLAG) and Edward Clarke and Howard Smith, Selly Park Residents Community Association;
 - Cllr Nicky Brennan (Sparkhill Ward), Cllr Lou Robson (Hall Green North Ward) and Cllr Peter Fowler (Harborne Ward);
 - Mike Grimes, Director, and Ian Jones, FCRM Manager, West Midlands Environment Agency;
 - Alex Mortlock, Business Planning Infrastructure Manager, and Tim Smith, Flood Partnerships Lead, Severn Trent Water;
 - Michael Enderby, Head of Resilience, and Kevin Hicks, Assistant Director, Highways, Richard Cowell, Assistant Director Planning, and Jacob Bonehill, Principal Planning Officer, all from Birmingham City Council.
- 4.4 In addition, Cllr Brigid Jones, the Deputy Leader, who has responsibility for Emergency Planning, was present at and contributed to the session. Residents living in affected areas who attended the meeting were able, as far as possible within the constraints of the meeting room and the time available, to raise issues and to contribute about their experiences on the day of the flooding, about the response to the event and also about the longer-term impacts of the flooding on their lives and wellbeing.



5 Purpose

5.1 The key lines of enquiry were to examine:

- What were the main causes of the major flooding incident in Birmingham in May 2018?
- Who are the main responder agencies with a role for major flooding incidents and what are their responsibilities?
- How was the City Council response to the incident managed on the day?
- How was the response co-ordinated with multi-agency partners?
- What work has been done with householders and local communities in affected areas to raise awareness and communicate the level of risk in their area and what is achievable in terms of local flood risk management?
- How was communication and liaison with local people managed on the day and in the immediate aftermath of the incident?
- What are the main flood alleviation schemes to reduce the impact of flooding in the affected areas and how are they progressing?
- What can planners do to embed flood risk management into development policies to mitigate risks in relation to future development to prevent flooding where possible and to minimise the impact of development on flood risk, especially in high risk areas?
- How can planning guidance and enforcement be strengthened to encourage developers to use sustainable drainage to minimise the impact of development in at risk areas?

5.2 This report sets out the findings and issues arising from the evidence given. The report is intended to highlight major issues where further follow-up work needs to be done and will be debated at a Full City Council meeting. It is not intended to be a detailed technical report; the Section 19 investigation and report is where the detailed investigation will take place.

6 Responsibilities and duties

6.1 Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) Birmingham City Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). As such, the City Council is responsible for the management of surface water flood risk, groundwater flood risk and the flood risk from ordinary watercourses.

6.2 As LLFA the City Council is required to work closely in partnership with other agencies and authorities to manage flood risk. This would include the Environment Agency – who are responsible for the main river and coastal flooding, Severn Trent Water – who are responsible for the public sewer network and the reduction of sewer flooding, Emergency Service Providers and other public agencies and bodies.



- 6.3 As the LLFA the City Council has a duty to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to ensure that local flood risk is understood and managed in a coordinated way. The strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in October 2017, sets out seven objectives and 20 policies in relation to roles and responsibilities, the type and level of flood risk, how flood events are managed and investigated, how flood risk schemes are prioritised, reducing the impact of development, environmental considerations and sustainable drainage.
- 6.4 The FWMA also places a duty on Birmingham City Council as the LLFA to investigate incidents of flooding. The duty is to investigate the flood to determine the causes of the flooding and determine appropriate actions that may be undertaken by the relevant risk management authority.
- 6.5 Birmingham City Council is identified as a statutory "Category 1" responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This places a range of duties on the City Council, including response, treating the City Council equally to other "blue light" responders in the event of a major incident. Birmingham City Council will also be expected to lead the recovery from any major incident. The Act does require all partners to work with the City Council in the event of a major incident.

7 Section 19 Investigation Report

- 7.1 This duty is set out in Section 19 of the FWMA and the investigations are therefore typically referred to as '*Section 19 Reports*'. The FWMA states that:
1. On becoming aware of a flood in its area a LLFA must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate –
 - Which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and
 2. Whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood. Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must –
 - a. publish the results of its investigation , and
 - b. notify any relevant risk management authorities.
- 7.2 Not all flooding will require a formal investigation and report. Birmingham City Council has set out in its Local Flood Risk Management Strategy a three stage process comprising an initial assessment, a S19 investigation and S19 Report which is published. This process is used to determine to what extent it considers it 'necessary or appropriate' to investigate and what constitutes a significant flood event.
- 7.3 Birmingham City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water are committed to undertaking an investigation in accordance with the requirements of the FWMA in each area where internal property flooding was reported to determine the most likely cause of



flooding i.e. surface water flooding, flooding from rivers, flooding from sewer infrastructure and flooding from highway drainage.

- 7.4 The S19 report will outline the source of the flooding, the flooding mechanism, the responsible parties, the investigation undertaken, actions undertaken and future actions. This will inevitably take some time, probably about 12 months to complete. The findings of this investigation will be published once the detailed investigations and processes have been completed with input from the relevant partner agencies and all residents who responded to the initial investigation will be notified once the report has been published.
- 7.5 In the meantime, this scrutiny review was held to bring together the main responder agencies with Councillors and residents from affected areas to examine what happened on the day, the response to the incident and to listen and respond in a timely way to the experiences of local communities. This was done with a view to taking a report to a meeting of all Councillors on 11th September for debate at the City Council meeting on the overarching issues emerging from the May flooding event and highlighting areas where improvements can be made or where further work needs to be done.
- 7.6 It is not the purpose of this scrutiny inquiry to examine in detail the individual issues raised which are specific to what happened in a particular area or street, except in the sense that these exemplify a wider problem which needs to be addressed at a citywide level through changes to or the development of a different policy approach. The S19 investigation is where the detailed investigation of the affected areas has already started to happen through gathering of information for the investigation and will continue to happen. The S19 investigation will report on what happened at specific sites and roads affected.

8 Findings

- 8.1 Overall there was much praise for the response to the May flooding from emergency services, community volunteers, neighbours, City Council staff and ex-forces volunteers from Team Rubicon.
- 8.2 Very positive written feedback was also provided to the review by Councillors Ziaul Islam and the Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment, Councillor Waseem Zaffar, concerning the response by all the relevant organisations, and in particular by Severn Trent Water, to the flooding that happened in Wheeler Street in Newtown Ward on 7th July caused by a burst water main. Councillor Ziaul Islam confirmed that all the responder organisations acted promptly and that the water supply had been restored quickly to residents. Councillor Zaffar said that when he arrived on the scene an hour after the incident most of the agencies were on site with Severn Trent Water leading the response and in control of the incident. The main concern was reinstating the water supply to the 15,000 affected homes as quickly as possible but the water supply was returned to as many customers as possible within a couple of hours and to all 15,000 properties by 3pm which diminished the impact of the incident on local residents. From a transportation perspective there was also concern about the traffic diversion during the incident but the fact that the road was



resurfaced and re-opened within a few days was very impressive. Both Members praised the communication by officers from Severn Trent Water which kept the Members informed throughout the day and allowed them to disseminate the latest information through social media and direct telephone contact which also helped to alleviate the stress caused to local residents.

- 8.3 However, in relation to the May flooding, the evidence did highlight a number of areas where further work is needed and improvements can be made, in particular to the way the incident was managed and co-ordinated on the day and in the immediate aftermath of the incident.

Review of Emergency Planning Procedures and Response

- 8.4 This flood event had a significant impact on communities and as such it is important to learn lessons. Although not categorised as a major incident, it was acknowledged during the review that the response system needs to contain the right triggers to instigate action to check certain areas or places or watercourses that have flooded in the past in similar circumstances. However, with each storm event being different with regard to its intensity and location, pre-empting where flooding might have occurred based on previous events is difficult and potentially an approach that the limited officer resources from the partner organisations cannot accommodate.

- 8.5 The review received written evidence from the Resilience team on what currently constitutes a major incident

the decision to declare a major incident will always be a judgement made in a specific local and operational context, and there are no precise and universal thresholds or triggers. Regardless it would have to be a significant event that overwhelms the normal capabilities of an organisation or one that requires significant and special support.

- 8.6 The devastating impact of the floods and the frustration caused by the delay in the completion of some flood alleviation schemes was acknowledged by Cllr Brigid Jones, the Deputy Leader. The City Council's Emergency Response arrangements are already under review to enhance the City Council's response to major incidents with a view to enhancing triggers and lowering the thresholds where the City Council's resilience team would intervene to support the response. In addition, the City Council's Emergency Plan is also about to launch a much more robust command and control structure to support its response to Major Incidents.

Strategic co-ordination and collaboration of response with multi-agency partners.

- 8.7 The evidence was that City Council Duty Officers were informed of an incident of flooded properties in Selly Park North and Pershore Road and in consultation with West Midlands Police Birmingham City Council officers activated a rest centre, opened the Birmingham City Council control room and supported the needs of residents. After consultation with West Midlands Police, the rest centre was 'stood down' as most residents elected to stay in their homes. One vulnerable resident at the rest centre was placed in the hands of local authority care.



- 8.8 Whilst a major incident was not declared by any partner, following the storm event, a multi-agency group including the Environment Agency, the City Council and other partners was established through the Flood Advisory Service telecom on Monday 28th. The Environment Agency was in contact with the City Council during the event on Sunday and subsequently as work got underway on recovery.
- 8.9 There was acknowledgement that during the evening of the flooding City Council Duty Officers were not made aware of the impact of the flooding outside of Selly Park North. Reconnaissance after the flood event has highlighted the wider extent of the flooding, including flooding in areas not previously known to the City Council such as in Kings Heath. Subsequently, the Environment Agency established a recovery group, with which the City Council worked closely as further situational updates highlighted the extent of the flooding.
- 8.10 The evidence highlighted a gap in terms of the strategic co-ordination, communication and collaborative working in responding to flooding events by the responsible partner agencies. Co-ordinated support needs to be provided for residents in a simple way, regardless of the cause of the flooding. People affected by flooding do not differentiate between surface water flooding, flooding from rivers, flooding from sewer infrastructure or flooding from highway drainage. They just need co-ordinated support to be provided in a simple and timely way.

Responder organisations need to understand response, recovery, resolution cycle and how to engage with and support residents appropriately at each stage in the process.

- 8.11 One issue that emerged very clearly from the evidence presented to the Scrutiny Committee was that the process of recovering from a flood is unique due to the longevity of the process. The evidence from the National Flood Forum was that this extended period of time lasts on average 6-18 months and that people face a range of varied and complex issues during this time. The support provided to residents needs to recognise the impact on the lives and wellbeing of residents and be appropriate for what residents need at different stages in the recovery process. The needs change as the event moves from the initial response through to recovery and subsequently to longer-term resolution i.e. prevention and alleviation.
- 8.12 In terms of the human cost of this flood, Members were told by the Selly Park North Residents Association that some people in that area will have been out of their home for one year out of the last two and a half years. The evidence was that the City Council was not aware of the flooding in Sparkhill until three days after the event and the support provided at that late stage was not appropriate to what was needed by residents at that time. Support interventions need to be tailored to the specific needs at different stages in the recovery process and to take account of the longer-term impact on people affected to help to reduce the impact of the stress and anxiety caused by the trauma of flooding.
- 8.13 The evidence from the City Council was that since the event on 27th May the level of officer support provided for residents and businesses has been a subject of discussion across all of the organisations involved. As a result the City Council is seeking to establish a form of clear



commitment from the full range of service areas which will in future ensure a wider breadth of support to those affected by flooding events both during and after the events.

- 8.14 This commitment will principally focus on the attendance of officers at the locations affected to ensure that those affected by the flooding have direct access to the relevant and correct organisations and services to support their particular needs. Those needs will inevitably change as the event moves from the initial response through to recovery. There was an offer from the National Flood Forum to work with the City Council in developing this approach and in putting appropriate measures in place to support local communities over the months ahead.

Response to Flooding of Businesses

- 8.15 The impact of flooding on local businesses should not be forgotten. Members heard evidence about the response to the flooding in Sparkhill from Brian Norton from the Indestructible Paint Company, a business based at Pentos Drive in the area. The Committee were told that the impact of the flood cost his paint making business in the region of £500,000 after already having invested £50,000 on a flood defence wall that was quickly overwhelmed.
- 8.16 Measures to mitigate against future risk to businesses, such as working more closely with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership to see what can be done to protect businesses in affected areas, need to be progressed.

Community Preparedness: Role of Flood Action Groups

- 8.17 One of the best ways for local residents to help to mitigate and respond to flooding is through setting up local Flood Action Groups. Flood Action Groups (FLAGS) are an organised and co-ordinated way of working with communities. They are community groups that are led by volunteers which help residents in a neighbourhood to prepare for flooding and cope with flooding incidents.
- 8.18 Volunteers support the warning of residents, identification of vulnerable people and ensure property level flood protection products (where available) are deployed in an emergency. All FLAGS in Birmingham have identified locations for bulk sandbag drops and co-ordinate the distribution to the community.
- 8.19 The City Council encourages the development of FLAGS but responses and stages of development vary in different areas of the city. Generally and understandably FLAGS tend to be already established in areas with a previous history or experience of flooding. There was a desire from some residents where there is currently no FLAG to set up a FLAG in their community to develop more co-ordinated community response arrangements.
- 8.20 FLAGS do need to be supported and co-ordinated and the National Flood Forum has expertise and experience in this area. During the evidence gathering there was an offer of support from Paul Cobbing on behalf of the National Flood Forum to liaise with the City Council and to provide advice, mentoring and support to local residents wishing to set up a FLAG. It is hoped that Birmingham City Council will respond positively to this offer and that it may be possible to produce



a model constitution or model template which can be developed and made available as a resource to support local people to set up and run FLAGS in their area.

Completion of planned Flood Alleviation Schemes

- 8.21 In spite of the fact that the Selly Park South Flood Alleviation Scheme worked well, there was clear evidence of frustration and anger among residents in areas which have suffered the consequences of repeated major flood events from the same set of causes over a relatively short timescale where flood alleviation schemes which would have protected residents have been delayed.
- 8.22 The current flood alleviation scheme at Selly Park North has been delayed for technical reasons that were discussed and a detailed explanation about how the scheme works, reasons for the delays to completion and what the impact of the scheme will be once completed have been set out in detail in a leaflet issued by the Environment Agency included in the evidence pack. Further evidence from the Environment Agency was that the Selly Park North flood alleviation scheme would have managed all flows from the Bourn Brook and would have significantly reduced the impact of the flooding event experienced by local residents. Analysis done by the Environment Agency confirms that the scheme would have coped with the May 2018 event with capacity still remaining within the upstream storage area and bypass culvert. Once completed the project will reduce the risk of flooding in the Selly Park area from very significant to low. Completion has been delayed but is now scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018.
- 8.23 Other current flood alleviation schemes in areas affected are:
- Slade Road – Property level resilience – Birmingham City Council to deliver 2018
- 8.24 Proposed future flood alleviation schemes in areas affected, to be delivered 2021 onwards and subject to securing funding:
- Upper Bourn Catchment – to be delivered by the Environment Agency, Birmingham City Council and Severn Trent Water in partnership. Providing flood risk management benefits across the upper Bourn Brook catchment, including areas of Woodgate, Bartley Green, Quinton, Harborne and Selly Oak.
 - Sparkhill – Flood Alleviation Schemes which have been investigated but are unable to achieve required cost benefit ratio. There are a number of further areas where there is no previous history of flooding and therefore a flood alleviation scheme is not proposed at the current time.

Uninsured residents displaced from their homes by flooding being required to pay Council Tax on two properties

- 8.25 Where people are displaced from their own homes due to flooding and are not insured there were some instances of people being expected to pay two lots of Council Tax. Members were advised that this is not in line with City Council policy and should not be happening. Residents should contact the City Council and any instances where there are issues of this nature should be satisfactorily resolved.



Forecasting/Alerts/Flood Warnings in affected areas

- 8.26 The development of more precise forecasting to enable flood warnings to be delivered in time to give communities time to respond would help. There is a need to be as realistic as possible to identify major events. The evidence presented was that residents registered with 'Floodline' received a flood warning at 6.16 pm which was 30 minutes after the first properties were already flooded.
- 8.27 The Environment Agency acknowledged that delivering flood warnings in these types of catchment areas that can be acted on in time to give communities time to respond is challenging but they are working on it. They gave evidence that in some locations they have installed cameras with an automatic alert but, for example, the Bourn Brook, which was the main cause of the flooding in Selly Park North, has no gauges or monitoring system in place to measure the depth of the water.

How do communities contact responder agencies in an emergency?

- 8.28 Residents need to be clear about who to contact in case of flooding. In the event of a flood, the main reporting route is using 999, making contact with the fire service or police to report an incident. In addition communities are able to contact the Environment Agency floodline.
- 8.29 Contact for the City Council during office hours is via the published telephone number. Out of normal office hours, an emergency number is also published and is provided to callers who call the office hours number. Out of hours calls are handled by the City Council's 24-hour control room. Officers from the control room will contact the relevant out of hours team who provide an out of hours incident service.
- 8.30 In addition, Councillors are able to access the City Council's Duty Officer to escalate issues, however this was not well known and is being picked up as part of wider elected member training.
- 8.31 The evidence highlighted a lack of strategic organisations notifying the City Council of the flood in some areas. The result was that City Council officers were not aware of damage in Sparkhill until three days after the event. Members also heard about a similar experience from a resident in Quinton Road in Harborne, where residents have experienced internal damage from flooding twice in two years. In Hall Green North, there was no information from Birmingham City Council until that evening when contact numbers were circulated.

Traffic Management during flood events

- 8.32 In some locations the effects of flooding was made worse by traffic continuing to attempt to pass through the floodwater creating bow waves which exacerbated the effect of the floodwater. Members were told that attempts were made, some by Councillors, to manage the traffic and divert it away from the flooded roads, with limited success. Traffic continuing to drive through flooded areas made the problems worse. This will need to be addressed by following up in partnership with the Police who have the authority to enforce traffic restrictions.
- 8.33 Another aspect of traffic management which was also raised relates to buses. As far as witnesses were aware, there does not appear to be any mechanism in existence to alert bus operators to re-



route buses away from flooded areas during a flooding incident. This will need to be followed up with National Express West Midlands and other bus operators to ensure that buses can be diverted away from areas affected by flood during a major incident.

Lack of formal flood prevention/alleviation measures along River Cole Valley

- 8.34 Some areas of the city, such as Hall Green North, Hall Green South and Sparkhill, suffered as a consequence of flooding from the River Cole. Evidence was presented at the meeting including a map showing that there is a considerable area surrounding the River Cole which has been designated by the Environment Agency as 'Flood Zone 3' which means that the land and property in the area has a high probability of flooding.
- 8.35 The point was made that, in comparison to flood alleviation measures already completed or in progress along the Rivers Rea and Tame, there is a dearth of flood alleviation or defence measures along the River Cole Valley and it was suggested that the poor level of maintenance and management of the Cole Valley corridor and Cole Valley walkway may have exacerbated the situation and made the area more susceptible to flooding.
- 8.36 The River Rea Partnership, led by the Environment Agency, is delivering or has completed two flood risk management schemes in the city. They are working with Calthorpe Estates, Birmingham City Council and other organisations to develop the Selly Park North Flood Risk Management Scheme and have completed the Selly Park South Flood Risk Management Scheme. There is also a Strategy for the River Tame with a Perry Barr and Witton Scheme being delivered over two phases.
- 8.37 In contrast, there are no formal flood prevention or alleviation measures for the River Cole Valley. A similar type of partnership arrangement needs to be established through the Environment Agency for the River Cole and its tributaries to facilitate the development of similar schemes.

Planning and Development: Building in green infrastructure measures to strengthen flood prevention as part of the planning process

- 8.38 It is important to give consideration at the outset of any development, as part of the planning process, to what green infrastructure measures (such as living walls, tree planting, balancing pools etc.) which are also flood defence measures and have a positive effect on the environment, should be incorporated into development plans.
- 8.39 The Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) which was adopted in January 2017 is the main strategic planning document for Birmingham and is what is known as a Development Planning Document. The main policy within this document is policy TP6 'Management of flood risk and water resources' which sets out the requirements for managing flood risk in new developments. It was suggested that the pursuit of planning contributions towards the cost and implementation of flood alleviation schemes should be continued.
- 8.40 In addition it was suggested that aspects of planning control could be strengthened by translating some of the relevant planning guidance, into planning policy. The example given was the



Sustainable Drainage: Guide to Design, Maintenance and Adoption which is currently guidance and is managed by the Flood Risk Management Team. It is important to note that this document states that the City Council, as both Lead Local Flood Authority and Local Planning Authority, expect it to be used for all types of commercial and industrial development. The degree of weight attached to guidance is a matter for the decision maker which would be either Planning Committee or Officers under delegated authority, depending on the nature of the proposal. Nevertheless, significant weight is attached to this guidance in the planning decision making process. More generally the relevant statutory policy in the BDP TP6 requires all development proposals to manage surface water through Sustainable Development Systems (SuDS) to minimise flood risk. Guidance then provides specific detailed advice on how this should be done. As such, translating existing planning guidance into planning policy is unlikely to have an impact on the implementation of SuDS, particularly as the National Planning Policy Framework requires that local statutory policies do not make development unviable.

- 8.41 Other possible measures were also raised, such as increased levels of planning enforcement in cases where construction has taken place without planning consent and the adoption of SuDS, where developers can sometimes be reluctant to adopt them due to the cost of the ongoing maintenance obligations. It would be possible for the City Council to develop its own adopting body, which would make the maintenance operation easier in new developments, however both of these measures would require a significant level of financial subsidy from the City Council.
- 8.42 There is a strategic approach to the use of SuDS and green infrastructure set out in the BDP but there is a limited amount of resources available that acts as a constraint on the level of implementation of those measures. The Community Infrastructure Levy is one resource which can be and is used as a source of funding for these types of schemes and flood risk management measures. A similar level of consideration needs to be given to flooding mitigation when projects for work in the public highway are being planned.

Training and Information for all Councillors but in particular for newly elected Members.

- 8.43 All Elected Members, and in particular newly elected Members, need to have a clear understanding about what to do and who to contact in the case of a flooding emergency. Information about the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in responding to a flooding event, what support is available on the ground in a flooding emergency and how residents can access that support needs to be made available to Members, in the most appropriate way through the induction process. In addition newly elected Members require training on their role in an emergency and how the response will work, together with the roles of each responder. Further information could be made available through an induction pack or an online portal.



9 Areas for improvement

9.1 There are lessons to be learned from the evidence that was provided to the Committee about the devastating impact on local communities of the flooding which happened on 27th May. Both the economic impact and the disruption and the stress and anxiety caused to people affected were severe. Various areas were highlighted as potential areas for further policy development with a view to demonstrating leadership, improving co-ordination, improving future resilience and improving the response to major flooding events in the future.

- **Emergency Response Procedures:** This flood was significant and although not classified as a Major Incident and no triggers to activate the Emergency Arrangements were met, the impact was significant for all those concerned. The lack of notification and alerting by strategic partners resulted in the City Council not being able to establish the level of coordinated support it would wish. As part of a wider review, the City Council is enhancing its response and emergency arrangements, lowering the triggers to alert the Resilience team and ensuring their involvement. It is also working with strategic partners to ensure that more robust notification of incidents occurs. These changes are needed to provide residents and businesses with a more coordinated support package both during and after such flood events which meet the changing needs of residents during the recovery cycle.
- During the evidence gathering there was an offer of support from Paul Cobbing on behalf of the National Flood Forum to liaise with the City Council and to provide advice, mentoring and support to local residents wishing to set up a FLAG. It is hoped that Birmingham City Council will respond positively to this offer and that a **model constitution or model template for FLAGS** can be produced which can be made available as a resource to support local people to set up and run FLAGS in their area. However, as with any potential provision of support from the NFF to supplement the Birmingham City Council functions (either through establishing FLAGS or supporting citizens in recovery following an incident), funding will need to be identified and a clear understanding of what will be delivered for that funding will have to be agreed with the NFF and potentially other partner organisations.
- The issue of **Traffic Management during flood events** needs to be followed up with both West Midlands Police and National Express West Midlands and other bus operators to make sure that a mechanism is put in place to ensure that traffic is re-routed and diverted away from flooded areas during a major incident.
- **A River Cole Valley Partnership** arrangement should be pursued by the Environment Agency along the lines of the arrangements already in existence for the rivers Rea and Tame, to facilitate the provision of flood defence and flood alleviation measures along the River Cole Valley.

9.2 This report represents just one aspect which forms part of an ongoing programme of Scrutiny work. The Sustainability & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Committee will maintain a keen interest in scrutinising flooding and will continue to keep flooding on its agenda. The Flood Risk



Management Annual Report is already scheduled to be presented to the January 2019 meeting. This will provide Committee Members with an update on flood risk management related issues including progress with major flood risk management schemes in the city, progress with other flood risk management works including property level resilience measures, routine clearance, inspection and restoration work carried out and investigation and publication of any S19 flooding investigation reports.

Motion

That the report is noted, and discussion points are forwarded to the Sustainability & Transport O&S Committee to feed into future work.

Councillor Liz Clements

Chair, Sustainability & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Committee