

**LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES****CABINET****DATE: 22 SEPTEMBER 2008****REPORT OF: CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT****LEAD OFFICER: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DEVELOPMENT & STREET SCENE****SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF SURFACE WATER FLOODING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP****WARDS: ALL****KEY DECISION?: NO****IF YES, IN FORWARD PLAN?: YES****For general release****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report sets out the response of the Cabinet to the report of the Surface Water Flooding Scrutiny Task Group.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.2 Following the severe storms experienced across the Borough in July 2007 the Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a Task Group to undertake a review into Flood risk.

1.3 In parallel the Government set up its own independent review under the Chairmanship of Sir Michael Pitt.

1.4 The Government is yet to provide a full response to the Pitt report but is indicating that it expects the Environment Agency to take a greater strategic role and Local Authorities will be expected to play a greater role in Surface Water Flood Management. The indication is that new funds will be available but no further information has yet been provided.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 That the Cabinet approve the response to the Task Groups Report.**

**2.2 That a further report on the implications of the Pitt Report is presented to Cabinet once the Government has fully responded to the recommendations.**

**3. DETAIL**

**Recommendation 1**

**(Action by)**

- 3.1 That the Council and Thames Water be recommended to investigate the feasibility of installing larger diameter sewers or small holding tanks in high risk areas. LBRuT/Thames Water

The recommendation is accepted in principle but as this relates to existing sewer systems managed by Thames Water it requires their agreement. TW have agreed that they will be in a position to promote an Engineering study to areas that were flooded provided everyone involved follow the TW process as agreed with Ofwat. Every incident of property or highway flooding needs to be reported to TW and a flooding questionnaire completed and returned to TW. The details of flooding incidence are recorded onto the TW Flooding History Database and depending on the cause of flooding (blockage, severe weather, hydraulic inadequacy) TW Asset Planners request their engineering project team to progress to a feasibility study. If a suitable solution is designed, this will progress to a scheme mainly governed by the cost and number of outputs relieved as stipulated by Ofwat, the Regulator.

**Recommendation 2**

- 3.2 That Thames Water provides the Council with the sewer cleaning schedules for Richmond upon Thames by August 2008.. Thames Water

Officers are now meeting on a regular basis with Thames Water to deal with routine operational matters. Sewer cleaning and CCTV surveys are in progress and TW are regularly liaising with the Head of Highways Management at LB Richmond upon Thames.

**Recommendation 3**

- 3.3 That an electronic record is made of the date and time, the location and the type of substance removed from gullies to help identify patterns and target enforcement. This information should be mapped. LBRuT

Agreed where significant deposits are found in gullies a record will be kept, either electronically or mapped depending on which proves to be most appropriate for later taking enforcement action.

**Recommendation 4**

- 3.4 That the Council and Thames Water begin a joint publicity campaign, urging residents to report anyone pouring inappropriate materials into the sewer system. At the very least, this should include an article in Arcadia and information on the Council's website. LBRuT/Thames Water

Agreed and TW will provide information to the Council regarding " Bag it and bin it don't flush it " to be published in their website.

**Recommendation 5**

- 3.5 That the Council investigate extending the fat collection LBRuT service to weekends and encourages all traders to use it.

In principle this sounds to be an appropriate response but it will be an expensive service to provide. The costs may be prohibitive and discourage adoption by the business community. The Council will need to take stock on all trade/commercial waste collection and disposal systems given the potential LATS exposure.

**Recommendation 6a**

- 3.6a That gullies which are known to flood regularly be painted LBRuT yellow, as a warning to the public.

Not accepted. This is likely to confuse members of the public and is not accepted given that the Council is trying to enhance the street scene.

**Recommendation 6b**

- 3.6b That this scheme is publicised. Local residents should be LBRuT encouraged to check these gullies regularly, report any blockages and avoid parking directly over the gully.

Not accepted. Rather than asking the public to monitor blocked gullies and avoiding parking on them when there is a yellow line in place, it would be more appropriate to suspend parking locally on the day that the gully is to be cleaned and ensure targeted cleansing of gullies that are causing a problem.

**Recommendation 7**

- 3.7 That deep cleansing of roads be scheduled for the same LBRuT time as any road closures for gully maintenance.

Accepted

**Recommendation 8a**

- 3.8a That the Council be recommended to cone off roads LBRuT where gully cleansing is scheduled on the evening before work commences.

Accepted in principle and roads will be coned off at an appropriate time in advance of cleansing.

**Recommendation 8b**

- 3.8b That the Council be recommended to close different sides of a road on alternate days when undertaking gully cleansing. LBRuT

Trials of deep cleansing of roads have commenced to determine which solution is most appropriate in practice.

**Recommendation 9**

- 3.9 That no gully cleansing case is closed until the gully has been cleared/repaired. LBRuT

Accepted.

**Recommendation 10a**

- 3.10a That the Council buys a second gully cleansing vehicle. LBRuT

Not accepted at this time. The purchase and running of a second vehicle is not necessarily the right solution to the issues raised. A combination of deep cleansing and routine gully emptying will be adopted and resources allocated.

**Recommendation 10b**

- 3.10b That if a second gully vehicles is not purchased, the Council arranges for extra gully cleaning to take place.. LBRuT

See above response.

**Recommendation 11a**

- 3.11a That the list of roads where blocked gullies were reported in July 2007 and the list of roads flooded in July 2007 (both from the Council's and Thames Water's records) are compared and analysed within six months. LBRuT

Officers are already jointly reviewing the cases with Thames Water.

**Recommendation 11b**

- 3.11b That any roads identified as having suffered from both blocked gullies and flooding are recorded and inspected as a priority. LBRuT

Accepted

**Recommendation 12**

- 3.12 That a high level strategic meeting be held at least annually between Thames Water, the Council and the Environment Agency and that this is held more often if required. LBRuT/Thames Water/EA

Regular meetings are currently taking place with Thames Water annually. The Environment Agency has not yet responded to the report and are reviewing their role in relation to the Pitt Report.

**Recommendation 13a**

- 3.13a That Thames Water, the Council and the Environment Agency hold quarterly operational meetings, at which relevant employees from all organisations attend as required. LBRuT/Thames Water/EA

Quarterly meetings are currently being held with TW and will be extended to include the EA

**Recommendation 13b**

- 3.13b That the Council's representative on the Drain London project be involved in the above meetings. LBRuT

As all London Boroughs are collectively represented on Drain London through the LB of Redbridge, this is currently impractical.

**Recommendation 14**

- 3.14 That Thames Water provides the Council with its flood history records, which should detail which roads have suffered from surface water flooding by the end of August 2008. Thames Water

TW expect a highway flooding report from the Council unless otherwise the Council reported this to TW 24 hr Call Centre at the time of the incident. TW are unable to disclose customer property flooding details to the Council.

**Recommendation 15**

- 3.15 That Thames Water provides the Council with information on known bottlenecks affecting the Richmond upon Thames sewer network by the end of August 2008. Thames Water

During severe storms inadequate gullies, blocked gullies and blocked or surcharged sewers could all be classed as bottlenecks. Sewer cleaning and CCTV survey are in progress to make sure that the sewers are in optimum operational condition.

**Recommendation 16**

- 3.16 That Thames Water provides the Council with information on any improvement schemes planned for Richmond upon Thames in relation to Surface Water Flooding. Thames Water

When TW identifies flooding in an area reported and by customers by subsequently completing the flooding questionnaires, various departments within the Council are consulted and notices served during investigation, study and implementation of the scheme. Progress will be managed through the regular operational meetings.

**Recommendation 17**

- 3.17 That Thames Water provides the Council with further Thames Water maps of the sewer system by the end of August 2008.

LB Richmond upon Thames already has the same maps as TW, but TW can provide Eagle prints for a specific area.

**Recommendation 18a**

- 3.18a That Thames Water and the Council agree a system, LBRuT/Thames within six months, that allows the Council to report Water multiple incidents of flooding to Thames Water on behalf of its residents.

A solution has now been agreed with Thames Water but residents are advised to make their own reports to satisfy the regulators. There is already a proper process in place to report flooding to the 24 hr call centre or by writing to TW. Every affected customer are requested to complete a Flooding Questionnaire and send it to the TW Flooding Group to record all information to the flooding history data base. Every entry is vital in promoting this to a study and to find a suitable solution.

**Recommendation 18b**

- 3.18b That the Council follow up on all incidents it reports to LBRuT Thames Water to ensure that they are adequately dealt with.

This is both impracticable and is likely to be unworkable in practice given the requirements of the Data Protection Act. TW are the lead Authority in such instances and through regular operational meetings these matters are being addressed

**Recommendation 19**

- 3.19 That Thames Water allow residents to report multiple Thames Water incidents of flooding in one phone call and accurately record this in their records, within six months.

Incidents of flooding can be reported by a phone call but all customers affected either by single or multiple incidents are advised, for their own benefit, to complete a flooding questionnaire so that entries can be recorded accurately on the flooding history data base. For legal reasons questionnaires should be completed per property rather than collectively. When TW Flooding Group receives the completed flooding questionnaires, the detail is recorded within three months.

**Recommendation 20**

- 3.20 That until recommendations 16 and 17 are implemented, LBRuT the Council issues clear advice on its website and to all callers to report any flooding and all subsequent incidents to both Thames Water and the Council.

Accepted. Reports should be directed to Thames Water.

**Recommendation 21**

- 3.21 That the Council be recommended to work with other authorities through the Local Government Association to push for more effective regulation of sewage authorities. LBRuT

Accepted.

**Recommendation 22**

- 3.22 That the Council map the roads it knows were affected by flooding in July 2007, along with information of flood and blockage history provided by Thames Water, within six months. LBRuT

Accepted and the information has already been shared with Thames Water.

**Recommendation 23**

- 3.23 That all calls to the Council from residents who report blocked gullies/surface water in their road are recorded and classified as either blocked gullies for immediate action, or as evidence of areas where the infrastructure cannot cope. The records should be mapped and reviewed regularly. LBRuT

Accepted and being implemented, with issues that appear to be surface water flooding being also passed to TW.

**Recommendation 24**

- 3.24 That relevant Council officers meet regularly before the operational meetings with Thames Water, to highlight issues and share information. LBRuT

Accepted and already happened.

**Recommendation 25a**

- 3.25a That the Council undertake a publicity campaign, promoting the use of permeable surfaces for paved front and back gardens. LBRuT

Accepted as part of sustainable design guidance. It now appears that this will be covered by the new GPDO.

**Recommendation 25b**

- 3.25b That the Council encourage residents to ensure that paved areas in front gardens drain to flowerbeds or other open areas. LBRuT

Accepted where the Council is aware that such activity is taking place and can influence the decisions, again contained in the proposed revisions to the GPDO.

## **Recommendation 26a**

- 3.26a That all new Council car parks, newly resurfaced car parks and other large paved areas be built with permeable surfaces to reduce water run-off. LBRuT

Accepted in principle and will be adopted wherever appropriate. There may be situations when the Environment Agency does not permit discharge into the ground.

## **Recommendation 26b**

- 3.26b That all new Council car parks where possible, are built with water storage facilities. LBRuT

This will be taken into consideration in the design of new facilities.

## **Recommendation 26c**

- 3.26c That all new Council car parks, and newly resurfaced car parks, are designed so that any water run-off drains to landscaped areas. LBRuT

This will be taken into consideration in the design of new or maintenance of facilities.

## **Recommendation 27**

- 3.27 That the Sustainable Construction Checklist require minimum standards of sustainable drainage and water conservation. LBRuT

We will monitor progress with Sustainable Construction Checklist which is already promoting such Initiatives. The provision of some large tanks for storage of grey water in recent developments has flagged up that there needs to be a balanced approach where trees may be adversely affected thus imposing minimum standards will need to be viewed in the wider context as we develop the Checklist

## **Recommendation 28**

- 3.28 That Thames Water and the Council investigate the possibility of a joint incentive scheme for the reuse of grey water and report back in six months time. LBRuT/Thames Water

The Council and the Environment Agency have the power to implement schemes of this nature where development is taking place. Developers are already adopting the principles because it is financially advantageous, thus it is unlikely that any further incentive would be required.

## **Recommendation 29**

- 3.29 That the Council provides general advice on sustainable drainage and water butts and makes a bid to the Climate Change Fund to allow the Council to provide water butts and grey water harvesting at a discounted rate to local residents. LBRuT

Accepted.

**Recommendation 30**

- 3.30 That the Local Development Framework Development Plan Documents include a policy promoting the provision and retention of small areas of green space within town centres, which among other benefits, should be designed to reduce rates of surface water run off. LBRuT

Accepted, this will be considered in the development of the appropriate Development Plan Documents.

**Recommendation 31**

- 3.31 That consideration be given to restricting Permitted Development Rights for new and possibly existing development in the functional flood plain, with the aim of bringing any development which could either be at risk or worsen flood risk elsewhere, under planning control. LBRuT

This will need to be brought forward as a joint initiative with the Environment Agency as a response to Drain London, before bringing forward detailed are proposed.

**Recommendation 32**

- 3.32 That the Local Development Framework Development Plan Documents includes a policy on development in areas of flood risk which covers matters such as basements and buildings on stilts in the flood plain. LBRuT

The LDF DPDs will set out areas of the Borough that are at risk of flooding. As such there will be a presumption that no development should take place in these areas. If development is subsequently proposed then the applicant would need to demonstrate that adequate mitigation measures are put in place as part of any consents being granted in accordance with PPS25.

**Recommendation 33**

- 3.33 That the Environment Agency reviews its responses to planning applications, to consider whether it should have raised objections in more cases. EA

Awaiting a response from the Environment Agency.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Task Group consulted a number of organisations in the preparation of its report and Thames water and the Environment Agency have been provided with copies of the report and recommendations in order that they may influence this report. Thames Water have responded and have seen this final report. In developing the Development Plan Documents they will be subject to formal consultation procedures as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.

#### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The responses to the report of Surface Water Flooding Scrutiny Task Group recommended in this paper do not commit the Authority to additional expenditure at this time. Many of the recommendations have already been implemented within current resources and trials of other recommendations are in progress.

Following the Government response to the Pitt Report which has not yet been published the Authority will need to evaluate the new demands which may be placed on it together with any additional funding which may be made available. A further Cabinet report will be provided at this time.

#### **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 The Development Plan Documents being prepared as part of the Local Development Framework will need to reflect the emerging guidance from Government and the Environment Agency.

#### **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

Parts of the Borough are at risk from flooding as a result of either heavy rainfall or high water levels in the rivers. The Borough Council is a drainage authority and has some responsibilities to address these matters to protect the public. The Government are currently considering increasing these responsibilities and giving the lead role locally to Councils. The Council would thus be at risk if it failed to address these matters in a professional manner.

#### **8. EQUALITY IMPACT/CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no specific equalities issues arising from this report.

#### **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None arising from this report.

#### **10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The Borough suffered the effects of heavy rainfall in July 2007 and due to the geography and topography areas of the Borough are prone to flooding. It is for these reasons that the task group was established and why the Borough continues to work in partnership with other agencies to mitigate the effects.

## **11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

- Unitary Development Plan
- The Local Development Plan Documents
- The Pitt report

## **12. CONTACTS**

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**Environment Agency response to the Surface Water Flooding Scrutiny Task  
Group: September 2008**

<b>Rec. No.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Environment Agency Response</b>	<b>Comments</b>
12	<i>That a high level strategic meeting be held at least annually between Thames Water, the Council and the Environment Agency and that this is held more often if required</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>Welcome the approach to have these meetings to discuss surface water issues within the borough</i>
13a	That Thames Water, the Council and the Environment Agency hold quarterly operational meetings, at which relevant employees from organisations attend as required	<i>Partially Accepted</i>	<i>The Environment Agency would wish to see the meeting agenda before committing to attend</i>
29 - 32	<i>Recommendations to promote the increased use of sustainable drainage and review of floodplain development</i>		<i>Although this is a role identified for LBRuT, the Environment would like to work with the Council to help achieve these recommendations.</i>
33	<i>That the Environment Agency reviews its responses to the planning applications, to consider whether it should have raised objections in more cases</i>	<i>Partially Accepted</i>	<p><i>There is a need to identify and clarify examples of applications where the Council believes the Agency should have objected more but have not done so.</i></p> <p><i>The EA responds in line with PPS25 and national guidelines. If Richmond believe there are localised flood risk issues this should be discussed at the regular liaison meetings started in September 2008.</i></p>

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