

Council – 24th February 2020

Urgent Question received from Councillor D Florence-Jukes

Will the Leader of the Council provide an overview to Members of the extent of the damage caused by the ongoing floods within our Borough detailing what plans this authority has in assisting those affected by the floods particularly during the recovery and clean-up period.

Response by the Leader of the Council Councillor D Goodfellow

As a category 1 responder (defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004) the Council has processes in place to respond to emergencies in the Borough, to mitigate the impacts and to support communities affected.

As you will be aware, over the weekend of the 15th and 16th February 2020, the Borough suffered from the effects of Storm Dennis. In particular, on Sunday 16th February a significant number of calls were received on the Council's emergency telephone (beginning in the very early hours of the morning), informing the Council of localised flooding being experienced in various parts of the Borough, including the Kitling Greaves Lane and Hazelwalls areas. The Council was able to strategically deploy sandbags within these areas to support these residents. Other affected areas that were highlighted included Mead Crescent, Stapenhill and a number of properties in the Barton under Needwood, Rolleston on Dove and Yoxall areas. Officers immediately put the Town Hall on standby due to the potential for it to be mobilised as a rest centre.

As a result of this localised flooding which had been seen on the Sunday, the Council was advised that this was potentially becoming more widespread over the course of Monday 17th February, with the possibility of the River Trent water levels peaking and potentially overtopping in the early hours of Tuesday 18th February. At 5pm on Monday, officers chaired a multiagency conference call which resulted in formal Strategic and Tactical Co-ordinating Groups being set up (including Staffordshire County Council, Police, Fire, West Midlands Ambulance Service and the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU)) as part of the local resilience forum response. Council officers immediately attended Stafford Police Station to manage the Borough Council's input to the multiagency response.

As part of the response it was highlighted that a number of properties may need to be evacuated and therefore at 00.50am a decision was made to activate the Town Hall as a rest centre, with 100 beds available. Within approximately 40 minutes this was open and ready to accept residents displaced due to the floods. However, emergency services subsequently advised that residents in the affected did not require the rest centre facilities and the rest centre was closed around an hour later. On the morning of the 18th, the Strategic Coordinating Group stood down the response phase and it moved into the recovery phase.

On 19th February 2020, the Chief Executive took part in a ministerial flood recovery telephone conference call. Following receipt of guidance from MHCLG late that afternoon, an internal recovery plan start up meeting took place to co-ordinate partners. As the lead organisation for flood recovery, the Borough Council has set up the East Staffordshire Flood Recovery Group (Lead Officer Mark Rizk) whose

membership includes Staffordshire County Council and the CCU. The first meeting took place on Thursday 20th February 2020.

In order to confirm East Staffordshire's eligibility and the associated timescales for administering the Flood Recovery Framework, the Flood Recovery Lead Officer had a direct telephone conversation with MHCLG on Friday 21st February. Following that conversation the Council was able to build the relevant webpages, and later that day full information was published relating to the Flood Recovery Framework on the [Council website](#) for residents and businesses with properties affected. This information includes an online form for registering a claim. This information has been communicated to all customer contacts staff and Borough Councillors. As of 5pm today the Council has received 64 applications via the website.

The possible support from MHCLG available to residents is as follows: Community Recovery Grant £500 per eligible household that has been flooded or is "unliveable" as a result of flooding; Council Tax Discount: 100% Council Tax discount for a minimum of three months, if flood water entered the home or the home was otherwise considered "unliveable"; Business Rates Relief: 100% Business Rates Relief for a minimum of three months if the business is unable to resume trading from the property (the relief provided will be subject to State Aid limits and is only available to properties with a rateable value of less than £10m); Business Recovery Grant: £2,500 for eligible Small and Medium Sized Enterprises which have suffered severe impacts from the floods that cannot be recovered from insurance.

Details of the eligibility criteria for Residential Properties are: The property must be their main home; Second or empty homes are not included in this scheme; Flood water must have entered the inside living space of your property; Properties considered to be "unliveable" could include: Where access to the property is severely restricted (e.g. upper floor flats with no access); The adverse weather has resulted in other significant damage to the property such that it would be or would have been advisable for residents to vacate the premises for any period of time, regardless of whether they do vacate or not; Flooded gardens or garages will not usually render a household eligible. Eligible businesses will be Small and Medium Sized businesses within flooded areas which: Are directly impacted by the flooding: for instance there was flood damage to the property, equipment, and / or stock; or; Are indirectly impacted by the flooding: for instance the business has had no / highly restricted access to premises, equipment and / or stock as a result of flooding, restricted access for customers, suppliers and/or staff; and directly suffered a loss of trade as a result.

A further recovery meeting took place this morning and the CCEOs are in the process of visiting individual properties in flooded areas within the Borough to engage with residents, assess the damage caused and collate necessary information to support the recovery. Officers will continue to assist residents in the recovery and the clean-up process where necessary.

In addition, direct assistance has been provided in conjunction with local members, such as localised additional waste collection of flood damaged articles by the ESBC waste team. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Members for their hard work helping residents at this difficult time, and our officers who mobilised quickly to put plans into action.