

Report of the Director of Development

Outer East Area Committee

Date: 24 October 2006

Subject: Report on Recent Flooding in East Leeds – August 2006

Electoral Wards Affected:
Crossgates and Whinmoor
Garforth and Swillington

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

This report provides details of the Council's response to recent small-scale flooding in East Leeds in August 2006 in the context of the on-going implementation of improvements by the Water Asset Management Working Group (WAMWG) following concerns which were raised at the Outer East Area Committee on 19 September.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 This report provides details of the Council's response to recent small-scale flooding in East Leeds in August 2006 in the context of the on-going implementation of improvements by the Water Asset Management Working Group (WAMWG) following concerns which were raised at the Outer East Area Committee on 19 September.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Following significant flooding of several areas of East Leeds in August 2004 and May 2005, Executive Board approved the set-up of a cross-departmental working group (WAMWG) to develop recommendations for improvement by the Council and its partners in relation to the maintenance of water assets and response to flooding. WAMWG reported its initial proposals to Corporate Management Team in June 2005 and began their implementation following the release of £503,380 in resources. Additional full-year funding of £1.1 million per annum was approved as part of the 2006/7 budget and is to be provided annually to facilitate the on-going implementation of improvements by the departments concerned.
- 2.2 WAMWG is currently in the process of revising its terms of reference to ensure its on-going relevance and developing a 'Stage 2 Action Plan' to take its work forward. On 17 May 2006 the Group reported to Executive Board on its progress and received approval for a new 'Policy on Maintaining Water Resources and Responding to Flood Incidents'. In addition, WAMWG has provided written evidence and verbal updates on its work to the 'Flooding in Leeds' Scrutiny Commission and recently submitted a formal response to its final report.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Outer East Area Committee on 19 September 2006 concerns were raised by an elected member about flooding which occurred in the Whitkirk area on 23 August following heavy rainfall.

Notification and Investigation

- 3.2 In terms of the Council's awareness of potential problems, a Flash Warning of predicted localised rainfall of up to 50mm was received from the Met Office at 15:28 hours on 23 August and this was distributed by PEPU to departments across the Council. Following the rain's onset, the only problems reported to the Peace and Emergency Planning Unit (PEPU) at the time were: the A64 becoming impassable due to flooding which was reported to Highways (17:05); and a request for sandbags at 44 & 46 Queensway, Garforth, which was referred to Highways (17:50). During this period the out-of-hours Emergency Services Attendants confirmed to PEPU that they were busy, but not with calls concerning flooding.
- 3.3 On 24 August, Land Drainage established that the following properties had flooded the previous night:
- 27 Whitkirk Lane: this incident was notified to the Council by George Mudie MP.
 - School Bungalow, Ninelands Lane, Garforth
 - 36 Highfield Drive, Garforth
- 3.4 Following its notification, Land Drainage investigated the Whitkirk Lane drainage system on 24 August and discovered evidence that the flooding was due to a surcharge of the public combined sewer which is Yorkshire Water's (YWS) responsibility. As a result, YWS was therefore requested to take part in a joint survey (including a CCTV inspection) of the downstream sewer system. This took place on 1 September and revealed that a

blockage in the sewer (opposite 65 Austhorpe Lane) was probably responsible. YWS assured residents that the blockage would be removed by the week ending 9 September.

- 3.5 In parallel to this work, PEPU requested Streetscene Services on 24 August to attend each of the affected locations as well as the two locations identified the previous evening (A64, near Thorner and Queensway, Garforth) to ensure the all of the relevant gullies were fully cleansed.
- 3.6 The incident affecting properties at 12-20 Kennerleigh Avenue was first drawn to the attention of Land Drainage in an e-mail from Cllr. Peter Gruen on 5 September. As a result, the Section investigated this flooding on 7 September and identified once again clear evidence to suggest that this resulted from surcharging (to ground level) of the public sewer in the centre of the highway. It was also established that the highway gullies were perfectly clear, but were unable to discharge into the sewer. Land Drainage consequently requested YWS to conduct another joint survey to determine whether downstream blockages or general incapacity were the cause. This survey took place on 13 September and discovered significant sewer damage and blockage further downstream outside 28 Kennerleigh Avenue. Yorkshire Water has since sent a letter to affected residents explaining when excavation and repair work will commence.
- 3.7 Yorkshire Water has also indicated that a modelling exercise is being considered, which would help to show whether the blockages at Whitkirk Lane and Kennerleigh Avenue are sufficient explanation for the flooding or whether there is a basic lack of capacity (the storm on 23 August was very roughly – and provisionally – equivalent to a 1 in 10 year storm).
- 3.8 The flooding at Ninelands Lane in Garforth has also been investigated by Land Drainage. The road has an ample length of integrated kerb drainage (300m length of 'Beany blocks'). Nevertheless, this was totally submerged and failed to drain the road. Instead, the floodwater overflowed into the adjacent field and the school bungalow. The ditch that had been provided at the side of the field - following a previous flood incident - was completely overwhelmed. The investigation has concentrated on the downstream systems (highway drains, culverts and sewers) into which the kerb drainage connects. A previously unknown highway drain has been discovered and this is to be surveyed (using CCTV) for blockages. West Garforth has been the subject of repeated flooding and the backbone of the drainage system consists of a privately-owned culvert, which no organisation is responsible for upgrading. In view of this, the Council - in partnership with the Environment Agency, YWS and the Pennine Water Group - has asked DEFRA to make West Garforth one of its sponsored pilot studies in Integrated Urban Drainage Management. DEFRA has provisionally agreed to this though a formal contract has not yet been signed.

On-going Improvements to Water Asset Management

- 3.9 The occurrence of further flooding incidents appears to have given rise to suggestions that changes made over the past two years - that is following major flooding in August 2004 and May 2005 - have been inadequate. We would like to reassure the Committee that this is not the case and would note that the Water Asset Management Working Group's update report to Executive Board on 17 May 2006 highlighted just how much has been achieved in terms of delivering on its original proposals. It would be useful to recapitulate some of the key issues here for the Committee's benefit.

Maintenance Work

- 3.10 As you may be aware, at the beginning of 2006 Land Drainage contracted a major specialist, Duffy's, to undertake preventative and reactive maintenance work on Council-owned watercourses. All work is commissioned and directed by Land Drainage on the

basis of identified priorities. This contract also includes provision for call-out by PEPU to respond to emergencies on a 24-hour basis.

- 3.11 Highway Services – together with partner services – identified a range of ‘hot spots’ for enhanced maintenance work and these locations are now receiving more frequent attention. To facilitate this, Streetscene Services leased two extra vehicles and recruited additional staff to enhance their gully-cleaning arrangements on an on-going basis.
- 3.12 The supermarkets have procured the services of a company which has identified and removed shopping trolleys from streets and watercourses across the city. This company now responds to reports of abandoned trolleys on a 24-hour basis through a contact number. As a result, there has been a marked reduction of trolleys found blocking watercourses.
- 3.13 Land Drainage also participates in a technical forum of practitioners from the Council, Environment Agency and YWS which has been established to discuss detailed issues of mutual concern and this meets regularly.
- 3.14 In our view, the above-mentioned changes have proven very successful. It is noteworthy that since this work began Leeds has experienced several severe weather events involving heavy rainfall which have, however, resulted in a smaller number of flooded properties relative to previous incidents. In particular, we have experienced very few problems arising from Council-owned water assets. It is important to state that no matter how much investment is put into this area, it is highly likely – for several reasons – that a number of properties somewhere in the city may experience flooding in severe weather events. The Council’s task, in conjunction with its partners, is to ensure that this risk is mitigated as far as possible.

Risk Assessment

- 3.15 Work is on-going on the major task of identifying and recording the location, ownership and vulnerabilities/risks relating to all watercourses, highway drainage, culverts, lakes and reservoirs across the city. Data collected is being recorded in GIS for use in more effectively responding to flooding, ensuring more effective maintenance prioritisation, and informing the development of capital investment programmes and emergency plans. Development Department is also procuring a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Leeds to ensure that all significant new developments fully consider flood risks across the city and encompass appropriate sustainable drainage. This work should be completed in January 2007.

Emergency Response

- 3.16 In December 2005 partner agencies in West Yorkshire involved in responding to flooding incidents ratified a detailed protocol for more effective multi-agency co-ordination and response to flooding incidents. This clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities for all forms of flooding and the trigger points at which agencies would be expected to respond. Council departments’ responsibilities have also been clearly stated in the Council’s recently-approved ‘Policy on Maintaining Water Resources and Responding to Flood Incidents’ which has been communicated to all DMTs.
- 3.17 Following the implementation of new measures in several areas, there have been no examples where the Council’s response to incidents *reported* to it have been found lacking. However, this does not mean that we are complacent. PEPU is currently exploring with Chief Executive’s Department ways in which the Council’s public out-of-hours emergency number can be better publicised to ensure that there is more clarity in this area. The Unit also continues to work with our partner agencies to progress a range of initiatives to benefit communities, including targeted flood fairs (one of which took place on 8th October at the Royal Armouries) and public information campaigns and

proposals for the rapid deployment of resources to mitigate or recover from the effects of flooding.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 On 17 May Executive Board approved a policy statement drafted by WAMWG on 'Maintaining Water Resources and Responding to Flood Incidents'. This policy clarifies and defines the scope of the Council's roles and responsibilities in terms of statutory duties and permissive powers in relation to maintaining water resources, assessing and mitigating the risks arising, responding to related flooding incidents and supporting the communities affected by these. Information about this and the group's work can be found in a dedicated WAMWG presence on the intranet in Development's pages.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 See paragraph 2.2.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 This report provides an explanation of the sources of recent flooding in the Whitkirk and Garforth areas together with an information on how the Council and its partners have responded. It demonstrates that most of this resulted from circumstances beyond the Council's control (i.e. Yorkshire Water public sewers), but that once it was made aware the relevant services have sought to remedy the cause of this.

6.2 In addition, this report sets out the contribution that the WAMWG has made in reducing the extent of flooding across the city in the event of severe weather events, whilst noting that instances of flooding will continue to occur. The Council is committed to working with its partners to find solutions in areas that appear to have problems in the local drainage infrastructure that may contribute to the probability and impact of flooding.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Outer East Area Committee is requested to note this report.