

Business Survey Report

Consultation questions were posed to responding businesses in order to help identify potential areas of improvement in the way the Council responds to emergencies, to gauge how businesses viewed the response of the Council and other agencies; to assess the effectiveness of their own Business Continuity Plans and to assess what businesses did for themselves or their community this time and would consider doing in the future. A number of questions were set in order to determine these points. All the responses were inputted into the online survey directly by responders.

A total of 9 business responded to the survey, however for the majority of questions only 6 actually responded which makes it very difficult to make any statistical conclusion. To put into context there were over 35 business flooded at least and there are in the region of 13,500 businesses in West Berkshire. Therefore only 0.07% responded.

Of the responders that gave details of their location they were from the Lambourn Valley (3) and Streatley (1), areas which were flooded.

2 were micro business (0 – 9 employees) and 3 were Small and Medium Enterprises (10 – 249 employees)

Regardless of the small response from businesses below is the analysis of the responses including in the case of free text answers, key and recurring points are presented

To what extent were the responding businesses affected by the flooding and how do they feel about it?

1. Respondents were asked to confirm *what caused the flooding in their area* from a choice of options. They could choose more than one option.

Reason for flooding	No of responders
Don't know	1
Groundwater (when the water table rises)	6
River water (when the river bursts its banks)	2
Surface water (when rainwater is unable to drain away)	4
Sewage	2
Other (please specify)	1

8 businesses responded to the question.

In relation to the other comments these relate to not being flooded,

BUSINESSES Key Points/Comments 1:

It is important for businesses to understand the flood risks they could be faced with, and any other risk, in order that they can prepare a response to ensure they can continue operating.

2. On asked what the **effects of the flooding** was on the responders were:

Answer Options	Response Count
Property became an island (surrounded by water)	2
Property flooded internally (working space)	5
Restricted access routes	6
Restricted water supply	0
Sewage issues	2
Staff unable to get to work	3
Other (please specify)	3

8 businesses responded.

The greatest impact was the restriction on access routes followed by being flooded internally. The knock on effect of this was limited access to businesses, including staff and therefore a financial impact.

This financial impact included having to leave premises; cancelled events and not being able to work on water logged ground.

The comments made with respect to other impacts included limited access by customers/parking etc, not being affected and flooded drains.

BUSINESSES Key Points/Comments 2:

- The impacts on businesses is similar to residents
- The financial losses can be significant due to the knock on effects of the flooding e.g. clients not getting access etc

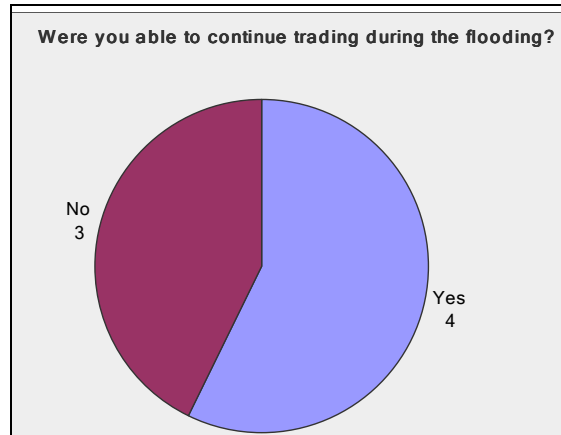
How prepared were the responding businesses for flooding/adverse weather?

In order to capture how prepared businesses were to flooding or indeed other incidents a number of questions were posed.

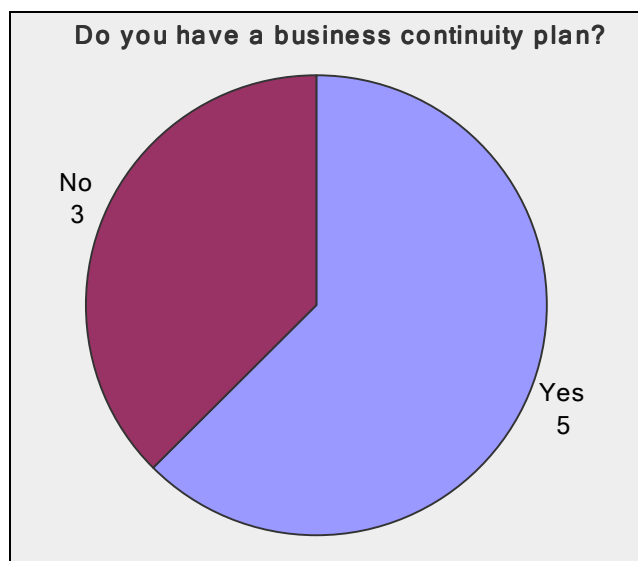
3. Responders were asked to confirm **if they continued trading or not during the floods.**

7 businesses responded to the question, 4 continued, 3 did not.

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4. Responders were also asked if they had a **business continuity plan**.



Of the 8 responders 5 confirmed yes.

5. They were then asked **if they activated their business continuity plan?**

Answer Options	Response Count
Yes	2
No	2

Only 4 businesses responded with a 50:50 split in the activation of the plans.

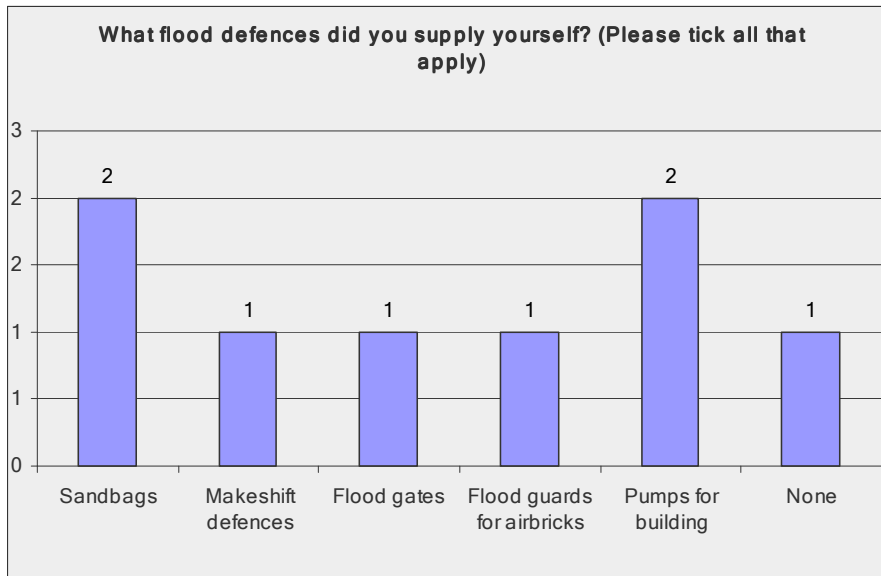
6. Responders were asked **if their business continuity plan had been effective?**

Only 1 business responded to confirm it had been effective.

7. Responders were asked to confirm what **flood defences responders supplied themselves.**

6 businesses responded to the question.

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The responses could be split into the same categories as the residents' survey i.e.:

- Businesses with prior preparation by way of property level protection which would require planning and purchase in advance (4)
- Businesses who took immediate actions during the event - includes sandbags etc (3)
- Businesses who used no flood defences – this was referred to in the comments and was due to the wide area affected (landowner) .

8. Responders were asked if they were **signed up to receive flood alerts from Floodline** and if so in **what format they received the alerts**.

Answer Options	Response Count
Yes	3
No	3

6 businesses responded with only 3 receiving alerts

Answer Options	Response Count
Text	1
Email	3
Phone	3

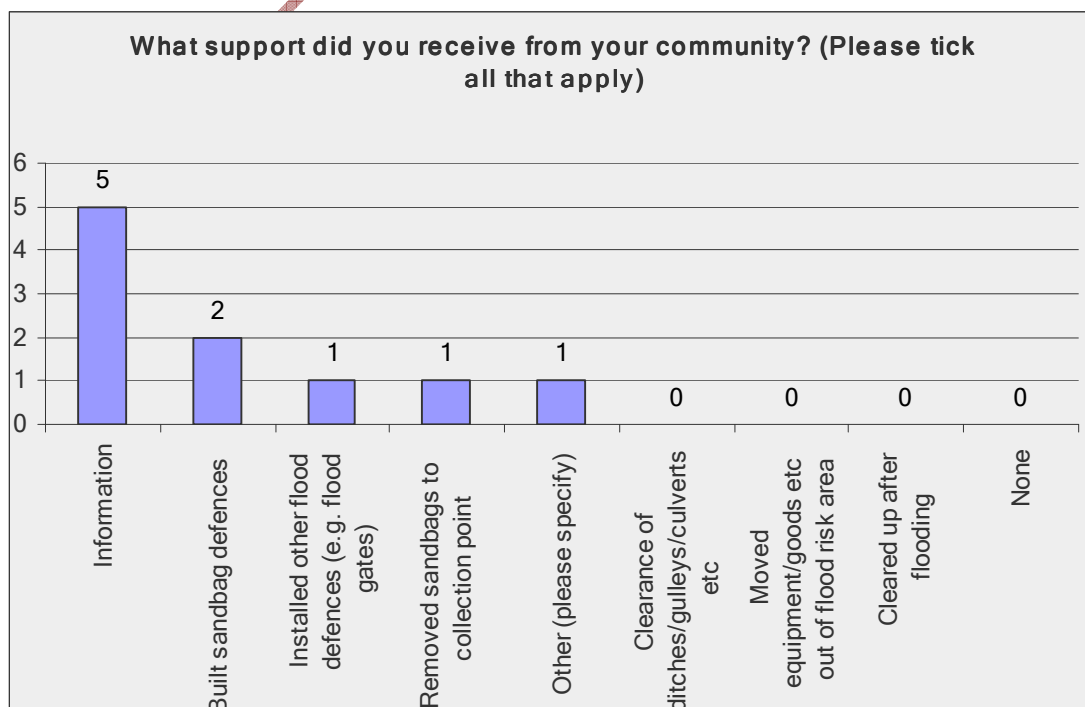
Of the 3 that received the alerts then all 3 received the alerts via email and phone calls, one also received alerts via text message.

BUSINESSES Key Points/Comments 3:

- From this survey more than half the businesses stopped trading during the floods.
- It is not known from this survey the potential losses experienced
- The responses to the Business Continuity questions suggested a gap in knowledge and understanding of business continuity. This was reflected in the fact that 50% of the 6 responders indicated they would like advise and support to develop their plans.
- The responses to the provision of preplanned flood defences and signing up to floodline alerts suggest that the businesses had not undertaken a full review of the potential risks to their businesses and therefore their Business Continuity plans would be flawed.
- Whilst this is a small survey it is worrying since the impact on the business is significant if they have to stop operating for even short periods of time. In order to find out more as to what support businesses need to improve their resilience a more detailed wider survey is recommended.

What support did the responding businesses get or provide to the local community?

9. Responders were asked **what support the businesses received from their communities?**



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6 responded to the question. The main support provided was by way of information (5). Other support was by way of building and removing flood defences. Other support was provided by the community by way of loan of equipment e.g. pumps and provision of car parking to allow business to continue.

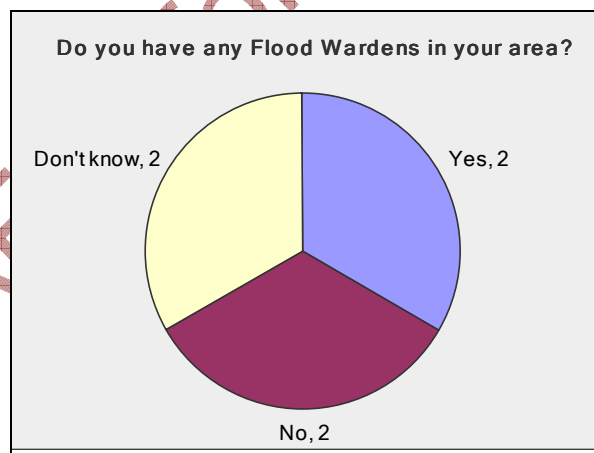
Without knowing what the business type it makes it difficult to assess whether the businesses responding were integral to the communities and therefore efforts were made to support them it was interesting to note that the biggest support was by way of information suggesting the route of information flow is essential in communities.

10. Responders were asked **what support they provided to their community.**

Answer Options	Response Count
Provision of drop in centre	0
Provision of refreshments	0
Other (please specify)	1
Provision of equipment	2
Unable to help	3

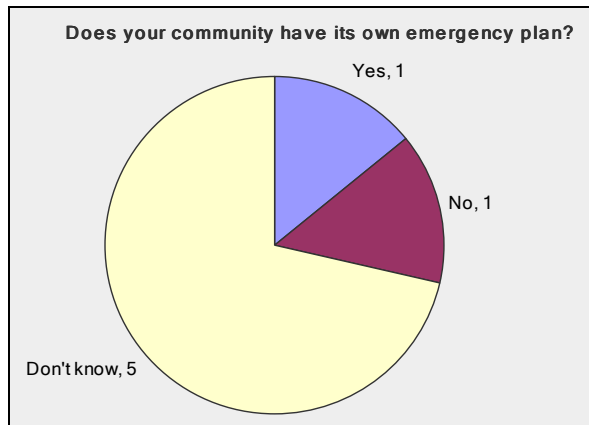
6 businesses responded with 50% (3) stating they were unable to help whilst others provided equipment or with respect to other this related continuing to work with their patients.

11. Responders were asked if they knew if there **were any Flood Wardens in their area**



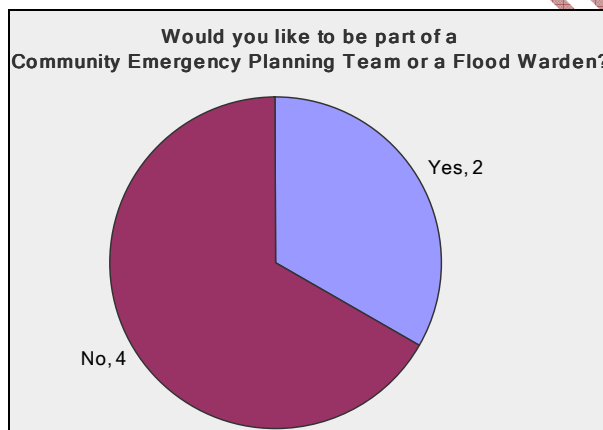
The response was split evenly by the 6 responders.

12. Responders were asked if they knew **if there was a Community Emergency Plan in their area and if so whether it was activated?**



From the 7 responders, the majority (5) did not know. The 1 responders who knew there was a Community Emergency Plan also knew it had been activated.

13. Responders were also asked if their business would like to be part of a Community Emergency Planning Team or Flood Warden?



BUSINESSES Key Points/Comments 4:

- All of the responses suggests that the responders to this survey are not very involved with their community or due to their size (3 of 5 businesses have less than 10 employees) they cannot be involved easily in some incidents when they are affected themselves.
- Regardless it is still recommendation to any community developing a Community Emergency Plan to ensure they include businesses in their plans, not least since they can support the community and the support these businesses may need from the community..

Where did the businesses get their information about what was going on and how did they rate it?

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From the responses earlier one of the main support the community gave the businesses was in relation to information. Businesses are no different to residents and therefore with information can plan and respond.

14. As a result the responders were asked **how they found out what was happening in their community?**

Answer Options	Face to face	Email	Website	Twitter	Facebook	Radio/TV	Publication	Not applicable
West Berkshire Council	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
West Berkshire District Councillor	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local Town/Parish Councillor	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Flood warden	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Community group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environment Agency	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	1
Thames Water	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Local media	1	0	2	1	1	2	1	1
National media	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1

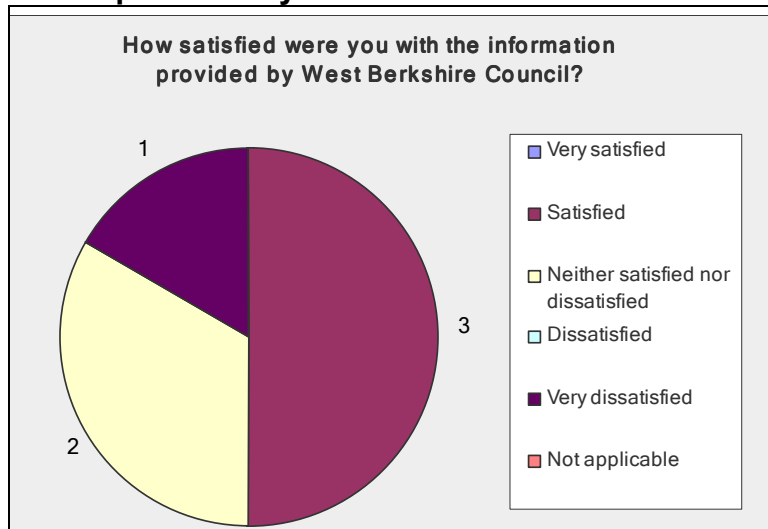
6 businesses responded to the question

Whilst a much smaller sample the responses were in line with those provided by residents when asked the same question.

BUSINESSES Key Points/Comments 5:

- Communications in an emergency with accurate information is essential
- The community information updates was most commonly spread by the communities, face to face or via email.
- Council, EA and TW websites were used for updates to a lesser extent.
- Local media, TV and radio were used.
- Social media was not a commonly used means of communication.
- In order to get the same message out to all about what is happening in communities in emergencies then a suite of formats needs to be used including some of those sources identified in the response.
- Residents do wish to get information directly in their community and therefore finding means to increase that conduit should be considered which gives sufficient factual detail of each community.

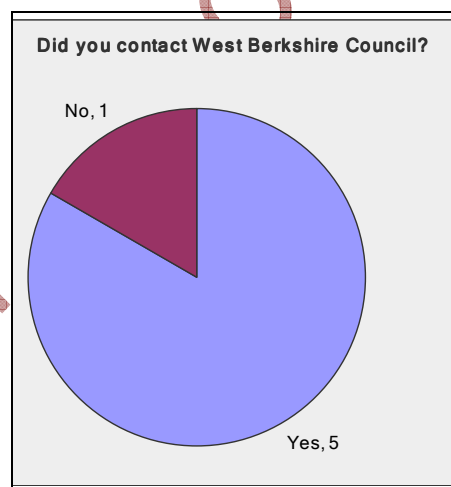
15. When asked how satisfied the responders were with the information provided by West Berkshire Council.



From the 6 responders only 1 was very dissatisfied.

What support did the responding businesses get from West Berkshire Council and how did they evaluate this support.

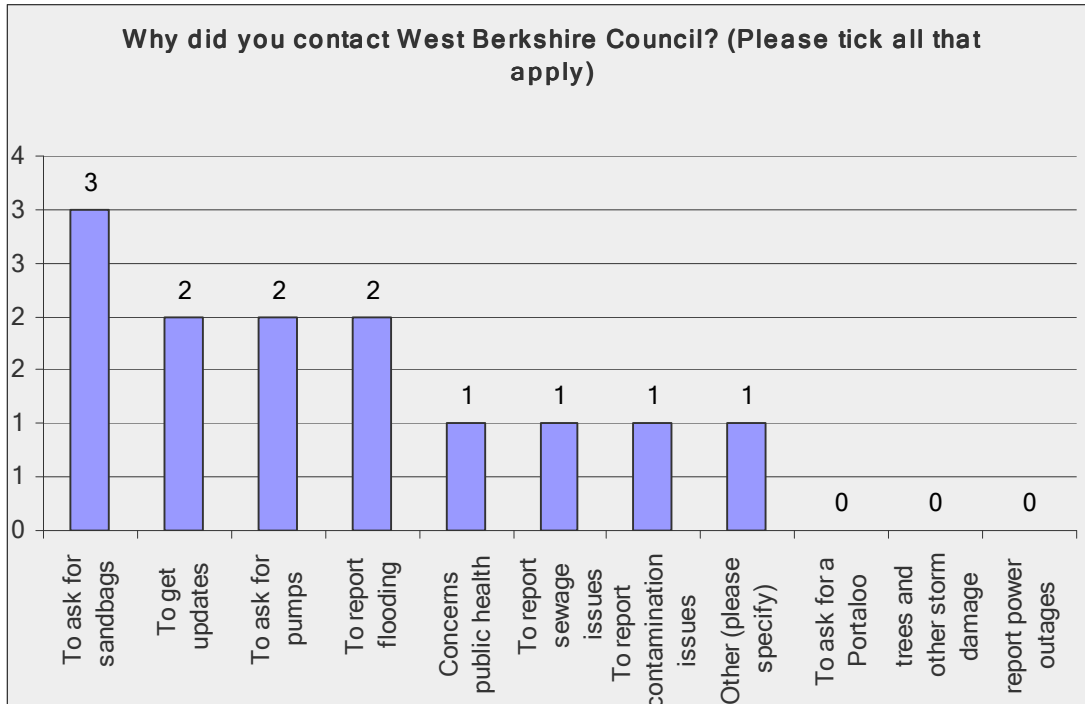
16. Responders were asked if they contacted the Council during the floods?



6 responded with 5 confirming they contacted the Council.

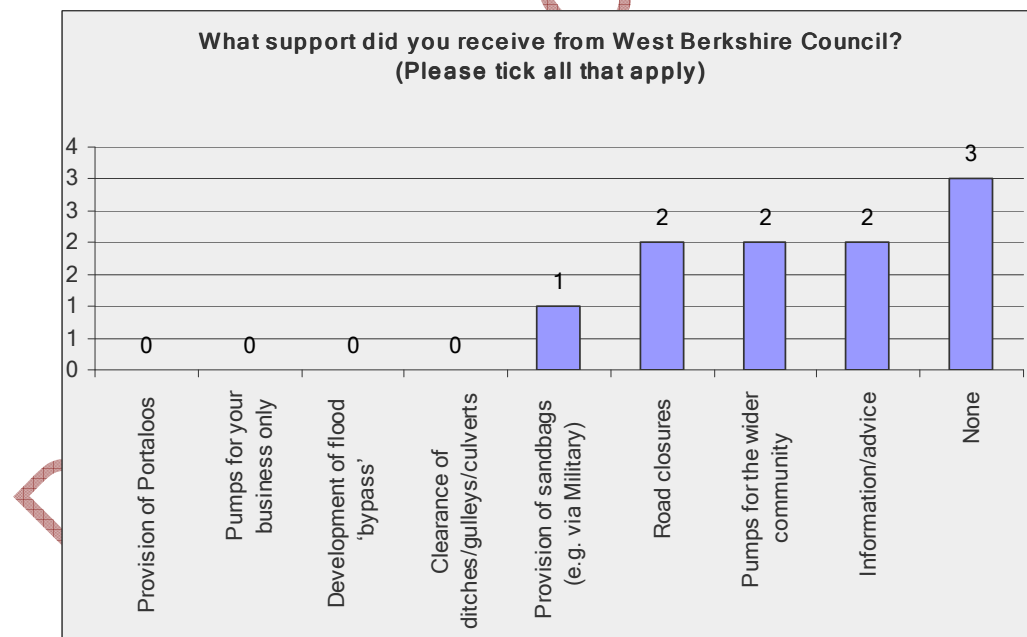
17. Responders were asked why they contacted the Council.

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5 responders answered the question with a spread of requests made. The other was in relation to report a badly damaged road.

18. Responders were asked what support they received from the Council?



5 businesses responded to this question.

BUSINESSES Key Points/Comments 6:

- Both the contact and support provided to businesses included:
 - Provision temporary flood defences (sandbags) suggesting that businesses had not taken flood risk seriously for their premises.
 - Provision of information and updates suggesting the communication routes in communities and the information provided by the Council was insufficient or not getting to the whole community.

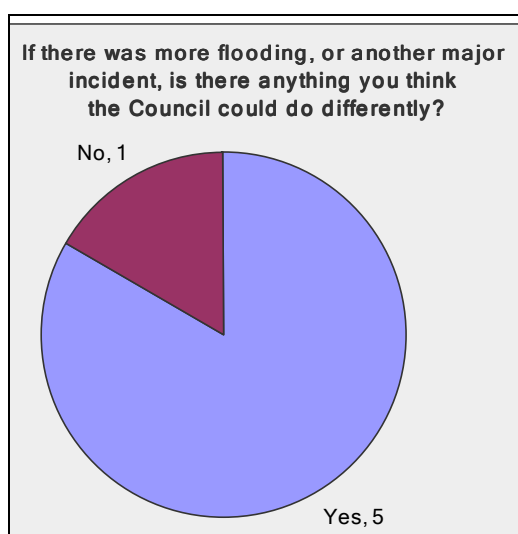
19. Responders were asked how they contacted the Council and to provide a level of satisfaction with the customer service provided?

Answer Options	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Phoned customer services during the day	1	1	0	0	1
Phoned emergency contact centre out of office hours	0	0	0	1	1
Phoned Emergency Operations Centre	0	0	0	0	0
Email	0	1	0	0	1
Online reporting	0	1	0	0	1

5 businesses responded. Due to the small survey however there is no clear trend or analysis to be made.

What would the responding businesses do differently and what would they suggest the Council does differently in the future.

20. Responders were asked whether they believed there was something else the Council could do and if so what.



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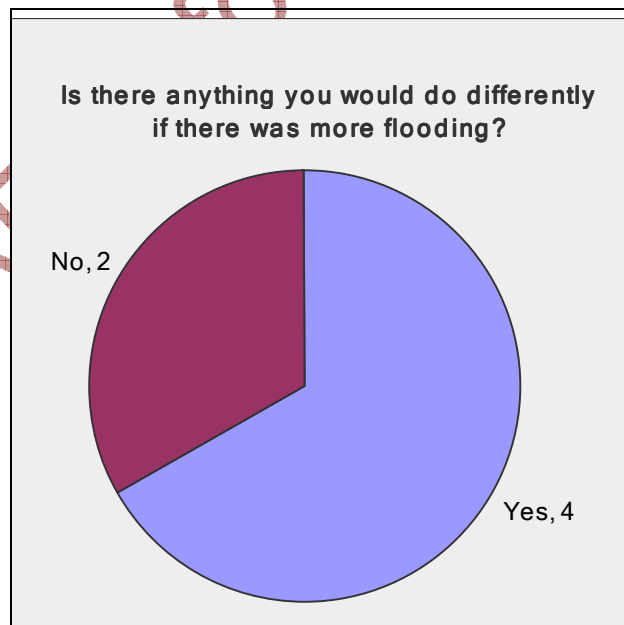
6 businesses responded with 5 saying yes.

The suggestions are summarised below:

Start drainage and flood relief work prior to the flooding starting.
Provide support by officers being in the communities assessing the situation and getting information from the community.
Improve communications
Provide sandbags at strategic locations.
Get an alternative route for the water installed before the next event
Providing pumps would be welcome
Signs at Northcroft explaining the area was designed to flood to protect homes, it was not safe to play in as it may contain raw sewage etc.
Signs explaining why this was being done esp if unmanned pumps are in situ..

From the above responses it is clear in some cases that there is a lack of understanding about the responsibilities of the Council and businesses and indeed the priorities of the Council in any response which is in relation to life and limb of humans and those who cannot help themselves – the vulnerable. There is therefore a process of awareness that needs to take place to provide this information along with advising businesses about business continuity.

21. Responders were asked if they would do something differently the next time and if so what?



6 responded to the question with 4 stating they would do things differently the next time.

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- 2 responders advised they would be seeking means of installation of flood defences or planning for a similar event this year
- 2 advised they would contact the Council and keep doing so until they got a response or helping less in the community.

BUSINESSES Key Points/Comments 7:

- There are high expectations as to what the Council should do.
- There is lack of knowledge about roles and responsibilities including those of businesses.

DRAFT - for Consultation