

Individual Executive Member Decision

Sandbag Policy

Committee considering report: Individual Executive Member Decision on 23 February 2017

Portfolio Member: Councillor Jeanette Clifford

Forward Plan Ref: ID3219

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To gain approval of the sandbag policy in Appendix C which clarifies the Council's position regarding the supply of sandbags before and during a flood event.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Sandbags are no longer considered to be an effective means for dealing with floods, particularly flash floods, and it is therefore recommended that the Council will not issue sandbags to the public in the future. However, experience has shown that there is a general expectation among the public that the Council should help during a flood. Therefore, the proposed policy provides the ability for officers to use their discretion in exceptional circumstances or when dealing with requests from vulnerable people. It is recommended that the policy in Appendix C is adopted to make clear the Council's position on providing sandbags.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** None.
- 3.2 **Policy:** The proposed policy contains a provision for supplying sandbags to safeguard vulnerable people (as defined in the policy) and community facilities, such as care homes, schools and surgeries.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** None.
- 3.4 **Legal: None** None. The Council has no legal duty to provide sandbags to the public.
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** None.
- 3.6 **Property:** The proposed policy contains a provision for supplying sandbags to protect Council buildings

4. Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council: Councillor Roger Croft

Sandbag Policy

**Overview & Scrutiny
Management
Commission Chairman:
Ward Members:**

Councillor Emma Webster

**Opposition
Spokesperson:**

Councillor Alan Macro

Local Stakeholders:

Parish Councils, Local Flood Forums

Officers Consulted:

Carolyn Richardson

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council does not have a statutory duty to provide sandbags and it has generally not been our policy to do so. Householders and business owners are responsible for protecting their own property, but experience has shown that the public expects the Council to help when flooding is imminent
- 1.2 Sandbags are often used as a first defence for flooding, but according to research by the Environment Agency their effectiveness is questionable.
- 1.3 Whilst sandbags may seem inexpensive, the cost involved in filling bags, their deployment and disposal can amount to tens of thousands of pounds. Moreover, sandbags have numerous disadvantages; they are time consuming and labour intensive to make up, deliver and place, and the disposal of sandbags which have been contaminated with foul water is expensive.
- 1.4 Sandbags are no longer considered to be an effective means of dealing with floods, particularly flash floods, and therefore it is proposed that the Council will not issue sandbags to residents or businesses before or during a flood event. The Council will continue to encourage people to invest in flood protection products and make their own arrangements for sandbags. However, the proposed policy does allow Officers to use their discretion in exceptional circumstances or when dealing with requests from vulnerable people.

Background Papers:

Pitt, M. 2008. *The Pitt review: learning lessons from the 2007 floods*, DEFRA

Available from: http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/pittreview/thepittreview/final_report.html

Wards affected: All Wards.

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the Council Strategy aims and priorities by allowing for the supply of sandbags to vulnerable people and community facilities, and supporting and encouraging householders and business to make arrangement to protect their own property before and during a flood event.

Officer details:

Name: Stuart Clark
Job Title: Principal Engineer
Tel No: 2857
E-mail Address: stuart.clark@westberks.gov.uk

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix A - Supporting Information
- 5.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 5.3 Appendix C – Sandbag Policy