

SCRUTINY CONSULTATION

46/09 - NORTH YORKSHIRE JOINT COUNTY AND DISTRICT FLOOD SCRUTINY

GROUP: The Scrutiny Officer submitted a written report which enclosed the North Yorkshire Joint County and District Council Flood Scrutiny Group Final Report. The Chair welcomed the Civil Contingencies and Resilience Officer to introduce the report. He advised that the Government had identified flooding as a top three risk for the country and it was one that impacted the most on communities. Other risks included Pandemic Influenza and terrorism. He explained the background behind the Group, which was established in the Autumn of 2008 to review how prepared North Yorkshire was for flooding incidents and to make recommendations regarding community resilience. He explained the role which he played within the Group and commented that it would have been more beneficial if he had become involved in the Group at an earlier stage. The Group was also served by Councillor Grange. He referred to the in depth review work undertaken by the Group and that he was disappointed Harrogate's work towards the review was not detailed in the final report as the Council had undertaken a number of areas of work towards the review. It was also noted that it would have been preferable for local authorities to be consulted upon the final report before it was finalised. There was some discussion regarding officer support for Members supporting joint reviews and it was **agreed** that it would be recommended that officer support should be available to all Members serving on joint groups. The Scrutiny Officer reported that he would take this forward as there was another joint review commencing in October on "enhanced two tier working". It was also **agreed** that when joint reviews were being progressed appropriate reporting arrangements should be put in place to enable the consideration of any report by the Commission before it was finally agreed.

He then gave a brief presentation in relation to emergency planning in the Harrogate District and the effect of flooding. He advised that there was no legal requirement or statutory requirement for the protection of individual properties and that the responsibility lied with the owner of a property (HBC only as an Housing Authority). He reported that the District had a long history of flooding and that the widespread floods of 2007 prompted the Sir Michael Pitt review and focus was now placed upon greater multi-agency partnerships. He stated that weather patterns and the climate had changed significantly over recent years with unexpected flooding in areas without previous history and flash flooding occurring over the summer months. He referred to increased popularity of paving gardens/driveways etc which increased running water during flash flooding. In relation to raising awareness over the problem, he reported that the Council had been pro-active in this area and there had been community involvement, which included representation at the Great Yorkshire Show and other events, and through the development of Community Plans. There had been the establishment of strategic sandbag stores, trained community leaders, officers and Members and he also referred to new planning policy PPS25 which related to building in flood risk areas. He referred to some of the recommendations which had come out of the Review and advised that one had been for local authorities to knock on the doors of

all residents in affected areas advising them of a flooding risk, although he stated that this was not practical for the Council as they did not have sufficient manpower and it could be better deployed.

Questions were then invited. Councillor Nick Brown commented that the majority of incidents and references in the Final Report covered areas outside the Harrogate District, such as Filey and Scarborough, and would have welcomed more detailed information on flooding incidents in Harrogate. He also queried how Parish and Town Councils became involved. The Civil Contingencies and Resilience Officer stated that they worked very closely with Parish and Town Councils and encouraged and assisted them to produce a Community Plan. He stated that all Parish and Town Councils had been written to and that approximately 17 Community Plans had now been established. However, he advised that there was a perception from some Parishes that they were not at risk of flooding and had not become involved in the development of a Community Plan although the Plan encompassed other areas of severe weather and Pandemic Influenza. The Civil Contingencies and Resilience Officer **agreed** that he would submit details of flooding incidents in the Harrogate District to a future meeting of the Commission.

A discussion ensued in relation to greater community awareness and the involvement of Parish and Town Councils and Members and it was suggested that Resident Associations in the Harrogate area be approached as Harrogate did not have Parish Councils. The important role played by the voluntary sector was also acknowledged and they also played a part in the development of Community Plans. It was **agreed** that the Civil Contingencies and Resilience Officer would write to Members seeking support for and involvement in taking Community Plans forward in their particular Wards. Member training in the development of Community Plans was also suggested.

The Chair thanked the officer for his attendance and it was **agreed** that an update report be brought back to the Commission in one year's time.

(6.55 pm - 7.45 pm)