



**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PLACES**

**WEDNESDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2024**

**Report of the Executive Director - Place**

**Storm Babet (October 2023) Review**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To scrutinise the work that was done by the County Council before, during and after Storm Babet, and to contribute to improving future preparation, response and recovery.
- 1.2 To note that, in addition to County Council officers, officials from other relevant organisations will be present at the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee and will be able to respond to questions where these fall outside the scope of the County Council's duties.

**2. Information and Analysis**

- 2.1 Storm Babet occurred during 19 to 22 October 2023. The rainfall across Derbyshire was unprecedented, with record river levels across the County, causing flooding to approximately 1,600 properties and businesses (exact numbers are still to be determined).
- 2.2 Dozens of roads were closed, some communities needed to be evacuated, and a Major Incident was declared in Derbyshire. Both Gold (Strategic Command Group) and Silver Command (Tactical Command Group) were operating for several days, and hundreds of personnel from Derbyshire County Council and other Risk Management Authorities (Environment Agency, Water Companies, Emergency Services, District/Borough Councils) were involved in both the response and recovery, and also preparations for future flooding events.

- 2.3 The rainfall during Storm Babet was a record for the Midlands, with 67mm of rain falling between 18 and 20 October 2023. Overall, it was the third wettest 3-day period on record in England and Wales (since 1891).
- 2.4 Record water levels were recorded on the vast majority of the main rivers in Derbyshire during Storm Babet, with Rivers Hipper, Rother, Amber, Erewash, Ecclesbourne and Bottle Brook all exceeding previous records by some margin.
- 2.5 During the flood event, numerous flood warnings were issued across the whole of Derbyshire.
- 2.6 All Risk Management Authorities were involved in the immediate recovery, post Storm Babet, assisting in the clean-up operation of hundreds of roads and inspection of hundreds of structures (culverts, bridges, etc), supporting residents and businesses who had been flooded in their recovery (e.g. advice, clean up, waste disposal, re-homing, flood grants, etc).
- 2.7 Seven Multi-Agency drop in sessions have been carried out post Storm Babet across the County, to provide residents with an opportunity to speak to all Risk Management Authorities about their experiences, and to obtain help and advice. The County Council's Flood Team has played a key role in these sessions, of which all have been very well attended.
- 2.8 The County Council's Flood Team has attended dozens of site visits across the County with residents, members, MPs and other agencies, to start to understand who was affected, and how and why the flooding occurred. Even though it is 4 months post Storm Babet, it will take many more months to understand the full picture. As part of this ongoing work, the County Council is undertaking a Section 19 Flooding Investigation (as required under the Floods and Water Management Act 2010), which is being undertaken by its Professional Services Partner, Jacobs Consulting.
- 2.9 The Flood Team is also managing the Property Flood Resilience Grant Fund, which allows residents, who have been flooded during Storm Babet, to apply for a grant of up to £5,000, to make their homes and businesses more resilient to flooding (e.g. Flood doors/barriers, pumps, air brick covers, etc). The reported figure to Government of properties who have been internally flooded in Derbyshire from Storm Babet was 1,675.
- 2.10 Once all of the investigatory work has been completed, which will include the Section 19 Flooding Investigation, the Flood Team, along

with all other professional partners, can start to plan as to how future mitigation solutions can be realised. Any quick wins for flood mitigation will always be explored, but given the scale of the flooding in Derbyshire, it is simply not feasible to try and protect every single property in Derbyshire for future flooding events. Communities will need to be assessed on things like risk, deliverability, cost benefit and deprivation, along with many other factors, to prioritise where efforts can be focussed on. Funding is also a significant factor in all of this, as Derbyshire is predominately reliant on grant in aid funding from the Government, to fund any future flood mitigation schemes.

2.11 It is clear that, given the very recent significant flood events in Derbyshire, including November 2019 and February 2020, along with Storm Babet, the ever-increasing onset of climate change is here to stay, with wetter winters and drier summers. Communities need to become more resilient to flooding and, although all Risk Management Authorities will continue to support these communities in any way they can, they also need to try and support themselves in dealing with and recovering from future flood events.

2.12 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 is the legislation that determines the Lead Local Flood Authorities roles and responsibilities for the County Council. However, prevention of, response to and recovery from events like Storm Babet requires action from a range of public bodies and utilities well beyond the County Council, and each will have its statutory duties in this context. For this reason, officials from the relevant organisations operating in Derbyshire have been invited to the Committee and many have made themselves available to respond to appropriate questions.

### **3. Consultation**

3.1 All Risk Management Authorities have been consulted and had an input into the ongoing Section 19 flooding investigation.

### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

4.1 Option 1: Holding this Committee session at a later date - It was considered whether to delay this Committee session until after completion of the Section 19 report, when more information would be available to the Committee. However, this would not give the Committee the opportunity to scrutinise the County Council officers and provide input into the Section 19 investigation.

## **5. Implications**

- 5.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

## **6. Background Papers**

- 6.1 None.

## **7. Appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Implications

## **8. Recommendations**

That the Committee:

- a) Takes account of the information provided in this paper (and subsequent presentation) in its scrutiny of the work that was done by the County Council before, during and after Storm Babet, and to contribute to improving future preparation, response and recovery.
- b) Notes that in addition to County Council officers, officials from other relevant organisations will be present at the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee and will be able to respond to questions where these fall outside the scope of the County Council's duties.

## **9. Reason for Recommendations**

- 9.1 To provide an effective mechanism to scrutinise the work of the County Council, ensuring that the County Council remains effective in its management of flood risk, and ensure it keeps abreast of the ever-changing landscape and climate, which impacts upon how flood risk is managed.

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## **Implications**

### **Financial**

- 1.1 The continued increase in major flooding events due to climate change, does impact upon funds available for both the emergency response and continued management of flood risk.

### **Legal**

- 2.1 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 is the legislation that determines the Lead local Flood Authorities roles and responsibilities.

### **Human Resources**

- 3.1 Attracting people into local authorities who have the relevant experience, skills, and qualifications in flood risk management, is becoming increasingly challenging, as the market for this is extremely competitive.

### **Information Technology**

- 4.1 None.

### **Equalities Impact**

- 5.1 None.

### **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 6.1 One of the objectives in the Council Plan 2021-2025 is to *“Reduce the level of flood risk to the residents and businesses of Derbyshire through our planning role, the delivery of flood mitigation schemes and working with communities to develop flood resilience measures”* and also *“Adapted our services and worked with communities to help lessen the effects of climate change”*.

### **Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental, Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)**

- 7.1 None.