



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL MAJOR INCIDENT RECOVERY BOARD - FEBRUARY 2020 'STORM DENNIS' FLOODING EVENT

Minutes of the meeting of the Major Incident Recovery Board - February 2020 'Storm Dennis' Flooding Event meeting held on Tuesday, 3 March 2020 at 2.00 pm at the Conference Room, Sardis House, Sardis Road, Pontypridd, CF37 1DU.

County Borough Councillors - Major Incident Recovery Board - February 2020 'Storm Dennis' Flooding Event Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan Councillor M Webber
Councillor A Crimmings Councillor M Norris

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Ms W Edwards, Service Director – Community Services
Mr D James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development

Others in attendance

Mr J Hogg – Natural Resources Wales
Mr T Graham - Pontypridd Town Council
Mr S Prichard – Pontypridd Town Council
Mr J Nicholas – Mileway
Mr A Comley – RCT Citizens Advice

20 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

21 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2020 as an accurate reflection.

• Service Recovery Update

The following updates were provided by Council Officers and Key Partners in respect of the major weather incident 'Storm Dennis':

Frontline Services, Highways and Infrastructure

- The majority of the cleaning was complete with the exception of the odd property owner/tenant still making themselves known;
- The team were assisting with the food collection and had begun delivering food parcels;

- The cleansing team were revisiting the streets daily;
- 12 structures with issues had been identified, with officers working through the retaining walls;
- Llanwonno/Tylorstown tip was still being monitored;
- There was still traffic as a result of the Berw Road bridge being closed;
- Approximately 19,000 sandbags had been distributed;
- A number of CRMs were still being received;
- There was currently no parking enforcement in Pontypridd;
- There was currently no enforcement on black bag waste;
- The Capital cost was approximately £44M and increasing; and
- Praise was given to the Council, key partners, the community and businesses for pulling together at such a devastating time.

Housing

- 748 residential properties had been verified as having flood damage;
- 37 households had been placed in temporary accommodation but 24 had since been placed with family or given a six month tenancy;
- Three central locations had been established for donations (1 for food and 2 for non-food);
- 40 cages of food had been received from Tesco, which consisted of a mixture of community donations and food provided from the store itself;
- 16 trolleys of food donations had been received from Asda;
- Deliveries had also been received from food suppliers such as the Co-op and Aldi, along with a number of various financial donations;
- The food boxes had been prioritised in terms of need (27 had been delivered to temporary accommodation, a further 238 were due to be delivered to vulnerable residents that day and the rest would be delivered the following day);
- The Leader advised that the food boxes were made up to supply a whole family and as such, those with larger families would receive a bigger box to ensure they are all fed for the week. He spoke of the potential of providing a second food box to those most vulnerable for the following week;
- As residents move back to their homes, there would be a greater need for cutlery and small electrical appliances;
- Castell Howell had generously provided a £1000 financial donation due to the amount of food received;
- The officer questioned whether there was potential for vouchers to be provided for clothes and shoes etc;
- There was a possibility that some small businesses would need further support;
- The Community for Work team were working with Finance to distribute the hardship payments through the drop in sessions, and most had successfully been issued; and
- There were issues with people out of county applying for the fund, who were not eligible.

RCT Citizens Advice

- Residents were being advised of the Discretionary Assistance Fund, which provides urgent grants to people in Wales, which do not need to be paid back. The grants are for certain electrical white goods, such as fridges and cookers, in addition to household items such as beds, bedding, curtains and kitchen items;

- Over 200 households had been provided with advice with 60/70 given more detailed advice and casework support;
- The advice ranged from cost of repairs, insurance and medical storage guidance;
- There were a number of useful trusts, which residents were being referred to. An example given was The Licensed Trade Charity, which helps pub, bar and brewery people who are in need of help;
- The biggest concern was how people would afford to fund everything;
- There would likely be an increase in scams and loan sharks;
- Advice was provided to people in respect of the working rights due to the disruption in travel and additional financial costs;
- The partnership with mobile libraries had been successful as more vulnerable people came forward, who may not have otherwise; and
- The organisation was working with residents outside of working hours, including a Saturday, to ensure they are provided with help as a matter of urgency.

Businesses

- 381 businesses had been verified as having flood damage;
- 10/15 Expressions of Interest were being received daily so the number was expected to increase to around 450 businesses;
- 51 of those verified were national businesses;
- 208 applications for the hardship fund had been completed;
- 36 applications for the fund had been received by businesses located in Pontypridd town centre;
- A number of the businesses in Pontypridd had reopened or relocated in the town centre;
- Drop in sessions had taken place with Welsh Government in Treforest and Cwmbach Industrial Estates; and
- There had been a mixed impact on businesses, with the final figure of damages due to be confirmed in the coming week.

Treforest Businesses

- 60/70 claims had been received;
- A project Manager had been appointed to deal with the claims;
- Most inspections were now complete;
- The level of contamination would be known in the coming week;
- The bridge was due to be inspected the coming Thursday;
- All occupiers had been visited and provided with Public Health guidance on water contamination and claim forms where necessary;
- There were concerns in respect of rent, business rates, future insurance and business continuity;
- An example of a severely flood damaged business was provided – The Brewery had approximately £30,000 worth of damage, contaminated stock and would be taxed immediately should the stock be moved;
- No businesses were yet to advise that they were looking to relocate off of the industrial estate; and
- There would be a weekly newsletter/email issued to the businesses to keep them up to date with the service recovery progress and any information in respect of grant funding available to them.

Pontypridd Town Council

- £30,000 had been released from reserves and would be used as mid-term support, when any gaps arise;

- Councillors were still out supporting those in need;
- The allotments had suffered substantial devastation and caused mental anguish. As such, the Town Council had issued 8 tips and were working with One Voice Wales and Keep Wales Tidy to support them;
- Pontypridd BID had requested a drop in session in the town centre; and
- Pontypridd BID still had concerns regarding the impact on the businesses which hadn't been flooded and were keen for events to take place within the town centre.

Natural Resources Wales

- There had been no river flooding as a result of Storm Jorge but there had been surface water flooding;
- The debris in rivers was being prioritised over the next fortnight;
- The attention would then be placed on inspecting the defences to prevent future flooding;
- The review of Pentre was being progressed and all similar grids were being routinely checked;
- When questioned if NRW had an out of hours culvert review, it was explained that there was a 24 hour response team for all culverts owned by NRW and that all their assets and Pentre culvert, were inspected the day before any flood occurring;
- Discussions ensued around the River Cynon culvert, which was deemed a risk to public safety but was on private land. NRW explained that it was inspected weekly but that they could not get hold of its owner;
- There had been an issue in Ferndale over the weekend where a pipe had burst and caused flooding – this was being inspected;
- All significant tips had been visually inspected with the Coal Authority and there had been minor issues. Detailed follow up inspections would take place; and
- There was extensive historic records available should the Council need them.

Prior to concluding, the Leader spoke of his recent visit to Oxford Street and Treforest Industrial Estate with the Chief Executive and Chair of Natural Resources Wales and explained that a review would soon be carried out of the Taff area flood warning system and flood defences.

The Leader spoke of his request to Welsh Government to support the Local Authority in helping businesses by applying immediate 3 month local relief (Credit) for the payment of Non Domestic Rates (NDR) and advised that he was still awaiting confirmation.

The Steering Group RESOLVED:

- That officers and partners would refer residents to the Discretionary Assistance Fund to ensure they are aware that there they do not need to use their Hardship Fund on white goods;
- That officers would consider distributing vouchers to residents for necessities such as clothing and shoes;
- That another series of mobile library drop in sessions would be arranged to take place in the residential streets the following week and advertised on social media;
- That a mobile library drop in session would be arranged to take place in Pontypridd town centre in partnership with RCT Citizens Advice with letters circulated beforehand to inform businesses;

- That an event is organised in Pontypridd town centre to coincide with the opening of the new library on 30th March 2020;
- That the Ynysangharad Bridge in Pontypridd is prioritised to help with the footfall in the town centre;
- That the Chief Executive would again contact Mr David Rosser, Welsh Government to request that the team make immediate contact with Treforest Industrial Estate and reiterate that over 4000 job losses could occur at the site, should support not be provided. If there is no contact made, the Leader would then contact the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales;
- That the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication liaise with Mileway to ensure that any press releases or statements issued by the Leader of the Council can be included in the newsletter to the businesses;
- That a letter had been written to the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales to request emergency powers to demolish two bridges (Castle Inn and White Bridge) due to the high risk they pose; and
- That the Council work with Natural Resources Wales to intervene with the culvert in the River Cynon, which was deemed as a risk to public safety.

This meeting closed at 3.30 pm

**A Morgan
Chairman.**