



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14th OCTOBER 2020

CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPACT OF FLOODING IN RCT DURING 2020

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATIONS**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to consider information relating to the severe flooding which took place across the County Borough during 2020. This process will also provide the opportunity to contribute to the subsequent development of statutory reporting requirements by the Council (as the flood management authority) and Natural Resources Wales (River flood management authority).
- 1.2 This report proposes a mechanism to learn the views of Elected Members, whose electoral divisions were impacted by these flooding events.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

- 2.1 Acknowledge the contents of the information presented by the local authority's Group Director for Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services;
- 2.2 Establish a scrutiny inquiry session to consider the views of Elected Members who represent those communities impacted; and
- 2.3 Agree to subsequently consider the Council's assessment, as the statutory flooding authority, taking consideration of the information provided through the scrutiny enquiry session.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to assess the impact of the flooding from Storm Dennis and Ciara earlier in the year and receive representations and input from Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- 3.2 The report enables scrutiny to review the information in greater detail, make comments and recommendations as necessary which will contribute to the Council's statutory report.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 In February 2020, some of the worst storms on record hit Rhondda Cynon Taf and the flooding that occurred following Storm Ciara and Storm Dennis affected over a thousand businesses and homes. Further flooding hit the County Borough on the weekend of 29th February 2020 from Storm Jorge and again for a third time in June 2020.
- 4.2 At the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Members will receive information on the event preparation, an overview of the impact of the event and details of the Council's recovery response. Following on from this meeting it is proposed that a scrutiny inquiry session is established, so that committee can hear from the Members of the affected wards, and in doing so, provide the opportunity for this information to be factored into the Council statutory reporting on this matter. This process will also assist the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to make comments and, if appropriate, recommendations on the response of the local authority to future severe weather events.
- 4.3 Whilst undertaking their work Members may wish to note that, in line with the statutory requirements, the Council is responsible for developing a strategic flood risk management for Rhondda Cynon Taf; the key policies are:-
 - A. The ***Flood and Water Management Act 2010*** (hereafter, the Act) make provisions for the management of flooding and coastal erosion in England and Wales. The Act provides powers to, and makes requirements of, the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Local Lead Flood Authorities (LLFA);
 - B. **Section 6 of the Act** defines the roles and responsibilities of 'Risk Management Authorities', which include all 22 Welsh local authorities (who act as LLFA). The Act also places a duty on local authorities to develop and implement Local Flood Risk Management Strategies to set out objectives for managing local flood risk from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses;
 - C. **Section 19 of the Act** sets out the responsibility of a LLFA to investigate a flood event:
 - (1) On becoming aware of a flood in its area, a lead local flood authority must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate—

- (a) Which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and
 - (b) Whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.
- Title: An independent inquiry into the 2020 flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf so that lessons are learned
- (2) Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must—
 - (a) Publish the results of its investigation, and
 - (b) Notify any relevant risk management authorities.

5. EVIDENCE PROVIDED FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 It is proposed that members receive a presentation from the Group Director for Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services, which provides information on these flooding events.
- 5.2 It is also proposed that the Committee receives information from Natural Resources Wales in respect of its areas of responsibility. An invitation has been extended to participate in this process.
- 5.3 To support Members' deliberations, an invitation has been extended to the appropriate Cabinet Members.
- 5.4 Following presentation of this information, Members may be minded to support the establishment of a scrutiny inquiry session to consider the views of Elected Members who represent those communities impacted. Members may also be minded to consider the Council's assessment, as the statutory flooding authority, taking consideration of the information provided through the Natural Resources Wales' own statutory report at a later date.

6. SCRUTINY BRIEFING/ ENQUIRY SESSION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to hold a scrutiny enquiry session which will include members of the committee as well as extending an invitation to those local Members whose wards were severely impacted by the storms and flood damage.
- 6.2 It is suggested that the scrutiny enquiry session, will capture the experiences of Members and their respective communities in one session so as to gather conclusions and recommendations which will inform the statutory council report, and a future presentation of these matters to full council in November, following the publication of the Natural Resources Wales report.
- 6.3 There is a statutory duty upon the Council and Natural Resources Wales to formerly report upon the flooding incidents which occurred in February 2020 and to submit them to Welsh Government. As a Risk Management Authority (RMA) and in the public interest, the Council will assess the causes of flooding from Storm Dennis and publish its findings.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that following presentation to Full Council in November the final

stage of the scrutiny process will then take place, where the opportunity will be provided to scrutinise both the statutory reports of the Council and Natural Resources Wales. At this point the opportunity will be provided for Members to consider lessons learned.

- 6.5 In order to advance the matter at the earliest opportunity it is proposed that the date of the scrutiny inquiry session be agreed by committee and notification circulated to other Members thereafter.

7. MAJOR INCIDENT RECOVERY BOARD

- 7.1 When formulating lines of scrutiny, Members are asked to consider, the considerations of the Major Incident Recovery Board, established by the Leader of the Council, as part of his scheme of delegation.
- 7.2 The Board was established to ensure an Authority-wide approach in the delivery of services and the prioritisation of resources following the major weather incident declared by South Wales Police as result of severe rain and flooding caused by Storm Dennis

These decisions can be found at:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Committees/MajorIncidentRecoveryBoard.aspx>

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 The process of engagement will steer the scrutiny consideration and methodology going forward and enable it to formulate well balanced and objective recommendations.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Equality and diversity implications are to be considered as part of the Working Group's recommendations and any subsequent implementation arrangements.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Financial and resource implications will be considered as part of the Working Group's recommendations as will any subsequent implementation arrangements going forward.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.

- 12.1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act asks public bodies to work better with people, communities and each other to meet the Sustainable Development principle. The Council's approach to the implementation of the Act agreed by Cabinet is to make sure that its requirements are embedded into the everyday business.
- 12.2 Engagement with Stakeholders at this stage of the Scrutiny review will support the Working Group apply the Sustainable Development principle of the Act through the five ways of working, namely, Integration, Collaboration, Long term thinking, Involvement and Prevention and maximise the contribution to the 7 national Well-being goals.
- 12.3 Not forgetting the 'Future Generations Framework for Scrutiny' which poses a set of questions that Scrutiny Members can use as a prompt. It can be used to see if the decisions they conclude have applied the Sustainable Development principle and to ensure that the work and recommendations of the Scrutiny Working Group are progressed through the lens of the Act.

13 CONCLUSION

The scrutiny process outlined above provides the opportunity for scrutiny to consider and challenge the response of the Council and its partners to the unprecedented weather events which affected Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2020. In doing so, the proposed approach will provided the opportunity for Elected Members, who represent communities which experienced significant impact, to inform the statutory reporting requirements of the Council.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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