

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 9 October 2013

Somerset Flooding Summit – Draft Final Report

Report of the Civil Contingencies Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Ken Hayward)

1. Executive Summary

To present the draft final report of the Somerset Flooding Summit for consideration by the Executive.

2. Background

The attached report outlines the process undertaken and the subsequent conclusions reached by the Countywide Joint Scrutiny review. Councillors Simon Coles and Gill Slattery represented Taunton Deane on the Joint Steering Group.

This exercise was never about 'solving' the issue of flooding in Somerset; this has been and continues to be the subject of detailed and complex discussions at many levels. Instead, the Summit was an opportunity for Somerset residents, local agencies and the business community to come together and share experiences and suggestions for improved water management across Somerset. It was very much an evidence gathering exercise and the recommendations contained in the report reflect the information gathered as part of this Scrutiny process.

When this report has been considered by all 6 Somerset authorities, the Joint Steering Group will meet again to collate the responses and finalise the action plan and future monitoring arrangements. The Action Plan will identify for each recommendation, the following:

- Proposed Action
- Who is responsible for the Action
- The Desired Outcome
- The Resources required to deliver the Outcome
- Target Date for Delivery

The Somerset Leaders and Chief Executives have informally considered the report and their broad support is shown in **Appendix D**, along with the minutes from other Council Scrutiny meetings in **Appendix E**.

3. Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to accept the contents of the Somerset Flooding Summit draft report.

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Appendix A - Draft Somerset Flooding Summit Report
Appendix B - Flooding Summit Meeting Etiquette
Appendix C - Feedback from Flooding Summit Workshops
Appendix D – Somerset Strategic Leaders
Appendix E – Other Council Scrutiny Meeting Minutes

Somerset Flooding Summit

A Summary of Findings from the Somerset Flooding Scrutiny Event

May 2013

DRAFT

Chairman's Introduction

Introduction

Somerset suffered two particularly bad periods of flooding in April and December 2012. The flooding affected all areas of the County, with the Somerset Levels and Moors perhaps bearing the brunt.

In the weeks immediately following the December floods, it became apparent that various local groups and agencies were keen to hold meetings with key bodies such as the Environment Agency (EA) and the County Council (SCC) to explore the issues around flood prevention, flood management and flood recovery.

It was quickly realised that those key agencies would struggle to attend numerous meetings on the same topic and that such an approach would not represent an effective use of already limited resources. It was therefore agreed to establish a joint countywide Scrutiny approach that would bring as many of the key people together at the same time in the same place.

In this way, Scrutiny played a crucial community leadership role in bringing together a range of agencies and the public in order to deliver real and measurable outcomes that would in time benefit the residents of Somerset.

All the Somerset authorities (both district and County) agreed to this joint approach and established a Joint Steering Group with elected member representation from all 6 authorities. Conducting the review in this manner represented the best use of limited Scrutiny resources and provided the relevant agencies and the public with a single point of contact. By joining together, it was hoped that Somerset would be able to speak cohesively and convincingly at a national level and input more effectively into any subsequent national reviews which may occur in the aftermath of the recent floods.

As a Steering Group we decided that an evidence gathering event would be a good starting point for this project – they therefore planned the Somerset Flooding Summit 2013. The Summit was designed to learn lessons from the recent flooding and identify potential measures to improve things in the future. By its very nature, much flood management work can only be a paper or simulated exercise so when faced with a real time event, it makes sense to review the effectiveness of the relevant policies and practices.

From the outset, we have been very clear on two important points:

Firstly, this exercise was not about apportioning blame to any one agency for their perceived role in the flooding incidents. The process planned to look at success stories as well as areas for future improvement. The Steering Group wished to use the Summit as an opportunity to gather evidence upon which to base further work or recommendations and to build an informed picture as possible of the flooding facts affecting Somerset.

Secondly, the Steering Group had realistic expectations as to what could be achieved by one event on one day – the members were aware that they would not and could not answer all the points raised, but that the Summit was the start of the process and would provide an evidential framework for further work.

This report sets out areas for further work as well as some specific recommendations for improvements in all aspects of flood management in Somerset.

The Somerset Flooding Summit

The Flooding Summit was intended to be the start of the review process – an evidence gathering opportunity. To this end, from the outset, the Steering Group was keen to ensure that a wide range of delegates were invited to attend, and that the event should not be ‘local authority centric’.

There were several key agencies whose attendance was vital to the success of the event:

- Environment Agency;
- Somerset County Council as Lead Flood Authority (as well as Highways authority and Lead
- Civil Contingencies authority)
- Internal Drainage Board
- Wessex Water
- Avon and Somerset Police
- Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue
- County Landowners Association

These agencies were approached first, and the premise of the Summit explained to them – without exception they were all happy to participate, quickly realising the potential of such a jointly organised event to maximise the use of their resources. Once these key agencies had agreed to attend, we were able to look at the wider delegate list and the following confirmed their attendance:

- Jeremy Browne MP
- Tessa Munt MP
- Ian Liddell-Grainger MP
- Somerset Chamber of Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Insurance Industry
- National Farmers Union

In addition to these agencies, we recognised the need to involve members of the community and Parish Councils. However, we also realised the need to keep numbers attending manageable. In terms of public engagement, each local authority issued a press release outlining the aims and objectives of the review and inviting members of the public to contact us via a dedicated flooding@southsomerset.gov.uk e-mail address. They were asked to detail their personal flooding experiences as well as suggestions for future improvements – we received over 150 responses and undertook to keep all responders informed of progress.

All responses were collated and analysed and the key messages used to inform the Summit Programme.

Somerset as a county has hundreds of Parish Councils, all of whom make a valuable contribution to local democracy and many of whom were affected by the flooding.

However, it simply was not logistically practical for each parish to be represented at the Summit, so it was agreed that each district would nominate the five most appropriate parishes from their area to attend – these parishes were identified based on local intelligence.

We were aware that many of these agencies and individuals had significant pressure on their resources and so wanted to make sure that the Summit was the best use of their time. In advance of the Summit, each delegate was asked to identify the top five issues they would wish the Summit to address – their responses were collated and used as basis for the Summit Programme in addition to the public responses identified in the paragraph above.

Overwhelmingly, the majority of delegates identified the need for clarification on the roles and responsibilities of all the agencies involved in Flood Management. The information we gathered indicated that at a time of crisis it was difficult to know who to contact in various situations.

Bearing this in mind, the morning session of the Summit consisted of a number of presentations covering the key Flood Management roles and responsibilities as well as presentation from the Met Office to give some context. Copies of the presentations will be made available in due course.

The presentations were:

- Robbie Williams - Environment Agency
- Dr Sarah Jackson – Met Office
- Paula Hewitt – Somerset County Council
- Roger Meecham – South Somerset District Council
- Refreshments – served in the main Conference Room
- Nick Stevens – Chief Executive, Somerset Internal Drainage Board
- Paul Oaten – Head of Sewerage Services – Wessex Water
- Graham Clarke – Country Land and Business Association - the Role of Riparian Owners

Prior to the event, we were aware that this was a very emotive subject – understandably so, with many people dramatically affected. However, we wanted to make sure that the Summit was a productive event, looking to learn lessons for the future rather than attribute blame. To help facilitate this, we were very fortunate in securing the services of Lord Cameron of Dillington as an independent Chairman. In addition, we agreed to include a Meeting Etiquette Guide in the Delegate pack (attached at Appendix B to this report) to reinforce the positive intentions of the Somerset Flooding Summit.

The afternoon session of the Summit consisted of four workshops- each one designed to address the issues raised by delegates in advance. Each delegate was assigned to a workshop based on the information they provided beforehand.

In order to try and maintain a focus to the discussions, each workshop was asked to identify at least one local (Somerset level) action to address the issues raised and one national action that can be taken further following the Summit. The workshops were organised as follows and notes from the workshops can be found at Appendix C to this report.

Community resilience

Issues for the workshop to consider:

- What could/ should communities be doing to help themselves?
- What support from other agencies do they need and what is available?
- What examples of 'good' community resilience are available and how can these experiences be shared?

Desired outcomes from this Workshop:

- Delegates are more aware of what they can do to support their own communities
- Better understanding of what support is available to them
- Agencies are aware of what support they need to provide and to communicate with such communities
- At least one local action to move things forward
- At least one higher level action to be taken forward.

Economic Impact

Issues for the workshop to consider:

- What are the issues around the economic impact / business impact / impact on agricultural communities?
- What work is currently going on to investigate the impact of the flooding, including the closure of the A361?
- Are there any suggestions for improvements / actions?
- How can we work with insurers and government to make sure that no premises on the Somerset levels are uninsurable?
- What support is available to support businesses?

Desired outcomes from this workshop:

- What can be done across Somerset to better support businesses in terms of flood recovery?
- What can businesses do for themselves?
- What could be done nationally (i.e. Insurers) to support the economy of Somerset following flooding?
- Consideration of Somerset's vulnerable infrastructure and potential improvements.

Flood Management / Prevention

Issues for this workshop to consider:

- Extension of discussion on roles and responsibilities
- How can everyone work together to achieve tangible outcomes? NO BLAME
- What are the barriers / issues and how can they be overcome?
- Who and how is it decided when to use the pumping station network that already exists?
- In the modelling of the spatial planning, what consideration is given to the

- secondary effect of deliberately flooding premises on the Somerset Levels?
- What funding arrangements are in place to support flood management and are there any potential additional funding streams that could be better exploited? Potential use of CIL funding?
- Tidal exclusion barrier on the River Parrett in Bridgwater
- Gully clearing and maintenance.
- What is the way forward in areas where challenges are particularly severe e.g. Somerset Levels?
- How can we make an effective case to MEP/ DEFRA? Central Government for more adequate funding?
- What are the agreed water management priorities particularly for the levels and moors?
- Role of planning authorities and developing on flood plains
- Water storage for future use
- Scope for Internal Drainage Boards to take on responsibility for dredging / channel clearance on main rivers in places where it would improve land drainage but EA are unable to for whatever reason.

Desired outcomes from this workshop:

- Who is responsible for what in terms of Flood Prevention?
- What can be done at Somerset level to improve Flood Prevention?
- What message(s) need to be communicated on a national level re; Flood prevention.

Interagency Working

Issues for this workshop to consider:

- How can we work better with others in the South West to make important infrastructure more resilient?
- How do we work together to help communities and businesses recover better from flooding?
- How do we make sure that everyone is better informed about their roles and responsibilities – notably Riparian Owners?
- Can we improve how we work together to co-ordinate resources to submit bids for prevention schemes?
- How can we get better at:
 - Sharing information
 - Sharing resources
 - Co-ordinated sandbag response – avoid sandbag postcode lottery
- Simplify flood related communications to the general public
- Greater ability to enable communities and other agencies to close roads to stop vehicles becoming trapped and requiring rescuing / recovery.
- Greater co-ordination of shared information between services prior to events occurring to ensure tactical level receive up to date information during an event.
- Managing public expectations
- Create a shared database of flood defence assets (including maintenance regimes)

Desired outcomes from this workshop:

- What can be done at a Somerset level to improve frontline flood response inter-agency working?
- Potential for a single point of information that everyone feeds into?
- What support is needed nationally to support better inter-agency working?

Recommendations

In terms of process, the Joint Steering Group is not a formally constituted committee of any of the authorities taking part in this review. Consequently, all recommendations will need endorsing through each authority's own decision making processes. This may appear a rather lengthy and cumbersome process but it is there are no statutory provisions for Joint Scrutiny Committees. That said, many of the recommendations contained in this report suggest further areas of work to ensure that this project is a worthwhile exercise with tangible outcomes. In order to reduce the risk of creating an overly bureaucratic process, we recommend that the Joint Steering Group is retained with its current membership of 2 elected members from each authority. The Steering Group will then agree how best to proceed in terms of monitoring progress against our recommendations and securing the best possible outcomes.

Our recommendations have been formed based on the evidence and information gathered via the Flood Summit. As was intended, the Summit generated a number of areas for further consideration and exploration and consequently a number of these recommendations require further, more detailed work. However, members of the Steering Group are keen to maintain the momentum of this project and are aware that for those affected by flooding issues, a timely response is critical. To this end, the Steering Group have allocated a time frame for each recommendation and the Steering Group will retain an overview of progress against each recommendation.

The outcomes/recommendations fall broadly into two categories; those which can be actioned locally at a Somerset level and those which need to be taken forward at a more national level.

Economic Impact and improved infrastructure

Nationally the emphasis is on the economic case for improved flood management arrangements. Several examples were given at the Flood Summit of the need for improved infrastructure in the County from main roads to main train lines. Delegates at the Summit were informed that SCC are currently preparing a study of the economic impact of the December Flooding – this empirical data will hopefully support the anecdotal evidence given at the Summit of the significant economic impact of the flooding and further support calls for additional flood management funding.

We recommend that discussions with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) are initiated to look at the contribution the business community across the region can make to improving the infrastructure - it was not only Somerset that was adversely affected when the mainline train route was compromised by flooding around Curry Moor / Lyng and Burrowbridge and that national bodies such as Network Rail should be actively involved in these solution based discussions.

In addition, we recommend that all opportunities to secure Partnership Funding are actively pursued. In May 2011, DeFRA announced a new approach to funding capital projects that reduce flood risks – Flood and Coastal Erosion Resilience Partnership Funding (Partnership Funding). This policy allows risk management authorities to apply for grant in aid and encourages them to secure funding from other sources. The main purpose behind introducing Partnership funding was to:

- Make sure that investment is not constrained by what government alone can afford to do;
- Increase certainty and transparency over the level of DeFRA funding for each project;
- Leverage further investment towards worthwhile projects;
- Allow a greater level of local ownership and choice;
- Encourage more cost-effective solutions; and
- Better target Defra funding towards areas at significant risk.

We feel that any project to protect and improve Somerset's Infrastructure would meet this criteria.

Insurance Industry

Although the Summit was very well attended by a wide range of bodies, representatives from the insurance industry were notable by their absence – despite repeated requests for them to attend. Many of the agricultural, business and community delegates attending the Summit raised a number of questions relating to securing adequate insurance in the future and the role of the insurance industry in flood prevention work. Due to the importance of this issue, the **Steering Group recommend that further work is undertaken to engage with the Insurance industry both at a county level and nationally.** The Steering Group are aware of the ongoing national discussions between the Government and Insurance industry and would urge the Somerset MPs who attended the Summit to represent the interests of Somerset businesses and communities in these on-going discussions. **At a county level, we recommend that the Insurance Industry are asked to participate in the wider economic impact discussions outlined in recommendationof this report.**

Media Coverage

Delegates at the Summit stated that the flooding attracted a significant amount of local and national media coverage, and whilst most of the reporting was an accurate reflection of events, there was some sensationalist coverage which some feel has had a negative economic impact (tourists cancelling bookings because they don't think Somerset is 'open for business' etc.). Additionally, other businesses have said that clients have cancelled orders because of mis-reporting (wedding venues etc.).

The information given to the Steering Group seems to indicate that this issue could be somewhat improved if the number of information sources was reduced. This would naturally occur anyway if the co-ordination of information proposed by the single Somerset Flooding Information Point (see recommendation) is introduced. **The Steering Group recommend that a press protocol is devised, advising those dealing with media enquiries how to respond effectively.** Such a protocol would direct all enquires to the single information point to ensure consistent information is

given – this will of course rely on the full commitment of all the relevant agencies to accurately maintain the single information point. In addition to this, all those in contact with the media will be briefed on the need to reinforce positive messages about those areas which remain accessible and the positive steps being taken to actively manage the flooding situation.

Lead Flood Authority role and responsibilities.

The Flooding events of 2012 reminded us that flooding is a serious on-going risk for Somerset Communities. The Flood and Water Management Act 2012 implemented many of the recommendations of the Pitt Review into the 2007 floods. The Act clarified the roles and responsibilities for the management of flooding and introduced some new duties.

The Steering Group recommend that further work is undertaken to fully understand what progress has been made in Somerset towards implementing the full range of duties and responsibilities included in the Act.

One such duty is the preparation of the local flood risk management strategy. Such a strategy should describe the flood risk in an area and set out the actions that will be taken to manage it. Local strategies will help prioritise investment decisions and provide information on how flood risk will be managed. They provide a starting point for Lead Flood Authorities to engage with communities. Guidance from Defra and the Local Government Association states that local strategies are expected to take between 12-18 months to complete. According to the most current Environment Agency data, Somerset County Council's strategy preparations are *'in progress'*.

The Flood and Water Management Act was enacted in October 2010. In a recent letter to all Lead Flood Authorities, the Minister for Natural Environment – Richard Benyon MP, stated that whilst flooding events of 2012 may have diverted some resources away from policy preparation, he would encourage '...Lead Flood Authorities to get your strategies into the public sphere by Autumn 2013 so that communities can see the local arrangements in place for tackling flooding and what they can do to help themselves'.

In terms of funding flood management work -DeFRA figures state that in 2013-14 Somerset as a Lead Flood Authority will receive £461,000 – **we recommend that further work is undertaken to look at how this money is committed and what accountability measures are in place? Also, how is this figure calculated and is it adequate based on the risks /actions identified in the Somerset local flood risk management strategy?**

We recommend that in order to support the Lead Flood Authority in preparing the necessary strategy and policy documents, drafts are submitted to the Steering Group for consideration at an appropriate stage. This will ensure effective consultation with the constituent district authorities and that the pertinent issues already identified by this review are reflected in the emerging strategies.

Flood Mapping

As part of this review of the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Flood authority, **we recommend that the Steering Group considers the information that the Environment Agency and the Lead Flood Authority have been doing to generate a**

new generation of surface water flood maps for England in compliance with the Flood Risk Regulations 2009. DeFRA are keen that this information is shared with district authorities to ensure all local knowledge is effectively captured and this can be achieved by reporting through this Steering Group.

Dredging

Prior to the Summit, the Steering Group felt that one issue would perhaps dominate – that of dredging the rivers Parrett and Tone, as there had been a significant amount of coverage of this issue in the local and national media. As mentioned in the main body of this report, great care was taken to ensure that this issue did not overshadow any other equally as pertinent issues. However, on the day of the Summit, the Environment Agency opened their presentation by saying that they appreciated the value of dredging (a change from their previous stance on this issue) and that now efforts needed to be concentrated on sourcing adequate funding.

The Steering Group are of the opinion that there is no value in looking at the historical reason behind dredging, or lack thereof, but that in order to secure the best outcomes for our communities in the future, we should in effect accept that ‘ we are where we are’.

To this end, the Steering Group recommend that discussions are had as soon as possible to identify practical and innovative sources of funding. The Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee has recently identified some funding to ‘kick start’ a dredging fund and this now needs to be built upon. We recommend that all potential partnership funding sources are fully explored and progress is regularly reported to the Steering Group.

As part of the continuation of the Joint Steering Group’s work, **we recommend that further work is carried out to ascertain the exact cost of dredging and realistic funding options. Such discussions would move beyond the more familiar territory of who should pay for dredging to who actually can pay. Discussions on this topic should look at contributions from Statutory Flood Management agencies (EA, IDB’s, Local authorities etc) as well as the business sector and community enterprises.**

Disaggregation of Drainage Levy

District or Unitary Council’s pay a levy to Internal Drainage Boards (IDB’s), funded from Council Tax. The scale of the levy is determined by the IDB and at present and Councils are obliged to pay this levy.

This aggregation creates difficulty for Council’s, as any increase of IDB levy would need to be funded within the limit of increase permitted to Council Tax without referendum (this limit was formerly imposed by way of a ‘cap’). This issue is compounded where a need exists for Council’s to increase Council Tax for their own requirements.

There is potential that Government may introduce a requirement that IDB’s gain the agreement of Council’s on any proposed increase in the drainage levy, but in reality this would not overcome the difficulties described above, as many Council’s would be reluctant to decline requests from IDB’s for an increase.

It would be preferable for the IDB levy to be disaggregated, and for IDB’s to be

permitted to precept for the funds they require. This would provide a greater degree of transparency for tax payers and enable Council's and IDB's an appropriate degree of financial independence.

Somerset recommendations

More locally, the Steering Group received considerable positive feedback from those attending the event about the presentations given in the morning session of the Summit. As detailed in this report, these presentations outlined the main roles and responsibilities of the key flood management agencies. Feedback from delegates asked if this information could be reproduced in an easy to understand format and made publicly available. In addition, numerous delegates raised concerns that whilst all the information is undoubtedly available, it is hard to know where to find it, especially at a time of crisis.

We recommend that a single 'Somerset Flooding Website' is created, to be hosted by the Lead Flood Authority to ensure effective consistent advice and information is given across the County.

Community Resilience

The Community Resilience Workshop was well attended and very positive – delegates were keen to learn what they could do to help their own communities. The Steering Group feel it is important that this enthusiasm and positivity is maintained and **that a higher profile is given to the recently formed Community Resilience in Somerset Project to ensure that as many communities as possible are supported.** Two parishes have already been included in the programme as a result of the Somerset Flood Summit and this could be expanded.

There were a number of issues raised during this workshop that we would like to see addressed as a matter of some urgency. Once answered, the information could usefully form a self- help guide for communities and **we recommend that a further information event is held for Parish Councils and communities, facilitated by Avon and Somerset Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue and Somerset County Council covering the following points:**

- Public Liability - what can the public be empowered to do in times of flood and how is this achieved (road closures, flood alleviation etc)
- What resources can be provided to communities – signage etc
- Advice on the use of vehicles in flood water – 4x4 community response vehicles etc
- Definitive information on Road Closures – and what happens if signage is ignored.

Unfortunately, Somerset was not chosen to be part of the DeFRA funded Flood resilience Community Pathfinder Scheme. Participation in this scheme would have addressed many of the issues identified by the Flood Summit. **Every effort must now be made to ensure that the information produced by the thirteen local authorities who were chosen is carefully monitored and appropriately applied to Somerset.**

Summary of recommendations

The Joint Flooding Steering Group recommends that:

1. That the report on the economic impact of the 2012 flooding events is reported to the Steering Group as soon as is practicable.
2. Discussions with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) are initiated to look at the contribution the business community across the region can make to improving the infrastructure - it was not only Somerset that was adversely affected when the mainline train route was compromised by flooding around Curry Moor / Lyng and Burrowbridge and that national bodies such as Network Rail should be actively involved in these solution based discussions.
3. In addition, we recommend that all opportunities to secure Partnership Funding (under the Defra Flood and Coastal Erosion Resilience Partnership Funding initiative) are actively pursued.
4. That Somerset is actively represented by all agencies, including our MPs in government level discussions to ensure that insurance against flooding remains widely available and affordable and the Insurance industry is encouraged to positively engage in flood management discussions to ensure better flood prevention.
5. That a press protocol is devised, advising those dealing with media enquiries how to respond effectively and to promote the 'Somerset is open for business' message at times of flooding.
6. That in order to support the Lead Flood Authority in preparing the necessary strategy and policy documents as required by the Flood and Water Management Act, drafts of key documents are submitted to the Steering Group for consideration at an appropriate stage. This will ensure effective consultation with the constituent district authorities and that the pertinent issues already identified by this review are reflected in the emerging strategies.
7. That further work is undertaken to look at how the £ 461,000 allocated by Defra to Somerset County Council as a Lead Flood authority money is committed and what accountability measures are in place? Also, how is this figure calculated and is it adequate based on the risks /actions identified in the Somerset local flood risk management strategy?
8. That the Steering Group considers the work that the Environment Agency and the Lead Flood Authority(SCC) have been doing to generate a new generation of surface water flood maps for England in compliance with the Flood Risk Regulations 2009.
9. That discussions are had as soon as possible to identify practical and innovative sources of funding for a renewed programme of dredging in Somerset and that further work is carried out to ascertain the exact cost of dredging and realistic funding options. Such discussions would move beyond the more familiar territory of who should pay for dredging to who actually can pay. Discussions on this topic should look at contributions from Statutory Flood Management agencies (EA, IDB's, Local authorities) as well as the business sector and community

enterprises

10. That a single 'Somerset Flooding Website' is created, to be hosted by the Lead Flood Authority to ensure effective consistent advice and information is given across the County.
11. That a higher profile is given to the recently formed Community Resilience in Somerset Project to ensure that it supports as many communities as possible and that the Lead Flood Authority can use the project as a basis for implementing a more sustainable model similar to those operated in other areas such as North Somerset.
12. That a further information event is held for Parish Councils and communities, facilitated by Avon and Somerset Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue and Somerset County Council covering the following points:
 - Public Liability - what can the public be empowered to do in times of flood and how is this achieved (road closures, flood alleviation etc)
 - What resources can be provided to communities – signage etc
 - Advice on the use of vehicles in flood water – 4x4 community response vehicles etc
 - Definitive information on Road Closures – and what happens if signage is ignored.
13. That the Lead Flood Authority leads the preparation of a Riparian Owners Information Sheet to be made available to land owners and householders, containing information about Riparian responsibilities and sources of guidance or support.
14. That consideration is given by the Somerset Water Management Partnership (SWMP) to incorporating within its constitution the need for it to take a strategic overview of the issues raised at the Flooding Summit and in this report.

Meeting Etiquette

The Somerset Flooding Summit Steering Group want to make sure that everyone attending the event have a positive experience. We are aware that many of you are passionate about the very important issues the Summit will cover and we want to make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to make a positive and constructive contribution.

With this in mind, we have drawn up this **Meeting Etiquette** which we ask all delegates to observe:

A meeting is as successful as the positive contributions of its members. These practical steps will ensure everyone gets the most out of the opportunity:

- Meetings are for the benefit of all and no one person has the right to dominate or be disruptive. People should be addressed courteously and should feel comfortable enough to make their contributions;
- Whilst the Chair is finally responsible for managing the meeting, it is everyone's responsibility to make the Chair's job as smooth as possible for the good of all. The Chair will aim to ensure that meeting times are managed well so that everything can run to time. They also need to manage contributions, keep contributors from repeating themselves, and ensure a few individuals do not monopolise the time. This will ensure that equality and courtesy are maintained.
- Everyone should be aware of other people's rights to be treated with courtesy. Nobody should feel bullied or insulted or be verbally attacked. Should anyone disagree with someone else, then there is a friendly and courteous way to disagree;
- Those wishing to speak should signal their intention to the chair and wait to be invited to speak. Before speaking, you should construct the points you wish to make and stick to them, speaking for as short a time as possible without repetition whilst using clear, non-defamatory language. The Chair will need to take firm line with people who speak without waiting for an invitation, but the Chair will also need to be aware of any difficulty, for example sight of hearing impairment.
- The Chair has a duty to stop disruptive practices and can ask those displaying unacceptable behaviour to leave – this would always be a last resort.
- In group discussion, each participant should make space for all others who so wish, to have a chance to contribute.
- Be open to innovation and prepared to learn from others.

We ask that all those attending today will:

- Really listen to what people say
- Make any criticisms constructively
- Contribute at least once; and
- Make the most of this opportunity

Flooding Summit Workshops

Community Resilience Workshops

The Session began with introductory presentations from the agency representatives present:

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue

- Community resilience is important as during a large scale flooding event, it is inevitable that agencies may be swamped and in any case can't be everywhere at once.
- Fire & Rescue services have a statutory responsibility with the other 'blue light' agencies to lead during the emergency phase of incidents such as flooding.
- Fire & Rescue services also do everything they can to prevent flooding by seeking to identify risks in the community and enabling communities to assist themselves during the acute phase in particular.
- If risk to life not present, no duty to rescue people from flooding, but in reality fire & rescue services will do everything they can to help.
- Are lobbying Government to provide clarity as to which agency has responsibility for rescuing people from floods.
- Fire & Rescue services are concerned that if homes are cut off by severe flooding, that they may be unable to fulfil their statutory duty.
- Are working with communities on prevention initiatives, by visiting homes they think may be at risk and identifying changes or improvements needed to make people safer, such as homeowners turning electricity off when flooded.

Avon & Somerset Police

- As with many agencies, the Police are suffering budget cuts so haven't got the resources to deal with spontaneous flooding events unless it becomes a civil contingencies issue.
- Motorists becoming stuck in floods becoming a drain on resources for the police – considering issuing fines to motorist who do not heed 'road closed' signs.
- Police piloting giving authority to community groups to close roads in cases of flooding.

Environment Agency

- The EA are working with communities to help them help themselves by developing community flood warden schemes and flood plans. This work is not restricted to parish councils – can be any suitable community group.

Civil Contingencies

- Recognises the crucial role community resilience has to play in coping with serious

flooding events – particularly during the acute phase

- Schemes where Parish Councils help to find accommodation for people displaced by flooding have proven to be successful – would like to try more widely.
- Keen to gather ideas as to equipment / skills communities need in order to become more resilient.

The session was then opened up to wider discussion, with key points as follows:

- Clearing timber which has fallen into watercourses or onto highways more quickly could help prevent flooding to homes – there is a problem with this caused by parishes being uncertain where they stand legally on doing this type of work on highways/ rivers?
- Vehicles driving through floods too quickly causing bow waves is a problem as this can cause homes to flood – roads need to be closed sooner in order to prevent this?

(Note: Police added that they can empower people to make enforceable road closure - this was well supported by attendees)

- Clarification needed on legislation in terms of managing risks associated with community resilience activity.
- Many people get stuck when trying to drive through floods due to underestimating the depth. Could markers be installed on roads to assist drivers in judging the depth of flood waters?
- Gullies being blocked is exacerbating the problem
- Communities recognise that in times of widespread flooding, they are on their own and are keen to develop resilience
- 4x4 vehicles have proven to be essential during serious flooding for getting supplies through to vulnerable people, however, it is important for drivers to be aware of the need to go through floods slowly in order to avoid pushing water over defences (sand bags etc) into people's homes.
- People need to be made aware of the dangers of walking through floods as they
- don't know how deep the water is or may fall down/over submerged obstacles
- Communities need their own supplies to make sandbags rather than relying on DC's

(Discussion across the group on this issue – question: used sandbags are contaminated, how / where should they be disposed of?)

- There is often a strong community spirit, but liability is a real fear for people, which can stifle this. Agencies need to give clear advice on this – they either need to devolve greater responsibility to communities or be more responsive.

(Discussion across the group expressing strong agreement with this statement and expressing dissatisfaction with the poor performance of the County Council for not clearing out drains more regularly.)

- Somerset County Council are piloting a scheme where GIS equipment is given to parishes for them to pin-point the position of the drains which in their view are of greatest priority for clearing.
- Somerset County Council only clear the drains themselves, not the pipes leading away from the drain *Question: how do we find out who is responsible for the pipes leading away from drains?*
- Parishes need agencies to produce advice sheets 'how to help yourselves' and clear advice on who to go to under various circumstances
- Somerset County Council need to coordinate the clearing of gullies better

(Discussion across the group, giving examples of occasions where the gully clearing crews had been undertaken incompletely and inefficiently – the group speculated that the way in which the contract is managed could be the cause of these issues.)

- Communities found that the Environment Agency river level readings on their website were not up to date enough – usually over an hour out of date.

(Environment Agency representative informed the group that they agreed that data needed to be as 'live' as possible and that they were already working to improve this Nationally.)

Conclusions

The group agreed that there is a strong desire from communities to be able to develop greater resilience and increase self-sufficiency during major flooding events. The group recognised that during such events, it was unrealistic to expect the agencies to be everywhere at once due to resource limitations. Hand in hand with this recognition came a frustration from the group that the agencies also needed to accept that if they could not meet community needs fully during these circumstances, that they needed to 'let go' and empower communities to help themselves. In order to be able to achieve this, the group agreed the following were needed:

1. Clarity is needed urgently on which agency people should go to under various circumstances for help. The websites of all relevant agencies are unclear and confusing at present – the agencies should work together to resolve this and ensure common terms and simple language are used.
2. Agencies need to work together with communities to support them towards creating practical and resourced plans
3. Agencies need to provide support to communities to realise these plans, this could be Equipment, Financial Support and/or Training / advice
4. Agencies need to provide reassurance to communities on liability – this may need deregulation at national level.

Business Continuity and Economic Impact Workshop

Main Issues

- Business unable to get insurance (not an act of god)
- £180 million in economic losses – based on SW Chambers figures
- Evidence of businesses having to close
- Loss of crops and produce

- Redundancies and total business failures
- Common messages and stats needed
- Somerset will become known to potential investors as somewhere it is too risky to invest
- £1000 per acre of agricultural land under water
- Need to be able to put together a credible business case to the treasury for greater government support
- Danger the compensation approach will drain public resources that could be better spent on prevention
- Recovery and Self help
- Investment in own resilience / adaption for agriculture
- What can be done nationally?
 - Need political commitment to overarching management plan
 - Establish position on underwriting insurance claims
 -

Priorities for improving vulnerable infrastructure

- Assemble economic business case for dredging investment (£5 million capital, £270k for 2 year's maintenance)
- Combination of funding sources and ensure local budgets agreed priorities
- May need to de-prioritise drainage in wettest areas in order to focus local budgets for biggest impact.

What can businesses do for themselves?

- Looking at their own resilience – **Investment** – adapting agricultural practices

What should be done to support businesses to recover from floods?

- Prevention better than cure
- Better business advice – insurance advice
- Personal level protection – parish level purchase of individual flood prevention equipment

What can be done nationally?

- Get government funding – get rural issues on the agenda – if such large areas of urban economic land were at risk of flooding -there would be greater government support
- Long term management plan (commitment)
Change in criteria to trigger investment
- Outcome of discussions between insurance and government for underwriting insurance claims -Better guidance on contingencies plans from insurance companies to make firms insurable -Stressing the case about the importance of agricultural land – food security
-

Priority actions –

- If we find £5 million, would there be any barriers to starting the dredging asap ?
- Rapid assembly of economic business case
- Review all budgets against priorities

- Improve vulnerable infrastructure
 - Strong business case for dredging – initial £5 million (capital) £270k every 2 years for regular maintenance
 - Do we continue to carry out drainage in the wettest areas (adaption?)
 - Can we attract European funding?

Interagency Working Workshop

What can be done to improve inter-agency working to improve flood responses?

- Constant flow of accurate and timely information
- Imperative that it is relevant information
- More information required for planning purposes
- Pre-planning maps / ditches / clearance screens etc
- Strategic Flood Risk Management Group
- increased profile / direction / sub groups etc
- Need a single point of contact
- The problem is not operational
- need to work through the above points and that should lead to single point of info for everybody to feed into. Sharing critical pieces of information
- National support
 - Dredging of main water courses
 - Appropriate equipment and training available to emergency services

Flood prevention Workshop

- Add an objective to the New Land Management Scheme (operated by DEFRA?NE and developed to replace environmental stewardship) the new objective would be flood prevention / alleviation.
- Attenuation of water at a higher level (electricity use) -Attenuation to whole water management (upper and lower catchment areas) Parratt catchment project
- Better understanding how the level hydraulically work
- If proposals which would provoke the Reservoirs Act would be low risk should be considered
- Better DEFRA guidance regarding volumes not just quantity – land management schemes.

SOMERSET STRATEGIC LEADERS' COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

	Scrutiny Draft Recommendations	Leader Draft Recommendations
1	That the report on the economic impact of the 2012 flooding events is reported to the Steering Group as soon as is practicable.	Agreed
2	That discussions with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) are initiated to look at the contribution the business community across the region can make to improving the infrastructure it was not only Somerset that was adversely affected when the mainline train route was compromised by flooding around Curry Moor / Lyng and Burrowbridge and that national bodies such as Network Rail should be actively involved in these solution based discussions.	<p>Replace with:</p> <p>That discussions with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) are initiated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the impact of the 2012 flooding on the economic well-being and strategic infrastructure of Somerset and the surrounding areas; • Clarify the contribution that the LEP can make to improving outcomes on these issues. <p>National bodies such as Network Rail should be actively involved in these solution based discussions given the impact on the mainline train route of flooding on the Levels and Moors.</p>
3	In addition, it is recommended that all opportunities to secure Partnership Funding (under the Defra Flood and Coastal Erosion Resilience Partnership Funding initiative) are actively pursued.	<p>That discussions with all partners should continue as a matter of urgency to agree a vision for flood prevention in Somerset for the future. This should clarify the aims and responsibilities of all of the partners, build a comprehensive understanding of the funding opportunities available and enable the development of appropriate business cases for projects and funding.</p> <p>This work should not stop all opportunities continuing to be pursued to secure Partnership Funding.</p>
4	That Somerset is actively represented by	Agreed

	all agencies, including our MPs in government level discussions to ensure that insurance against flooding remains widely available and affordable and the Insurance industry is encouraged to positively engage in flood management discussions to ensure better flood prevention.	
5	That a press protocol is devised, advising those dealing with media enquiries how to respond effectively and to promote the 'Somerset is open for business' message at times of flooding	Agreed
6	That in order to support the Lead Flood Authority in preparing the necessary strategy and policy documents as required by the Flood and Water Management Act, drafts of key documents are submitted to the Steering Group for consideration at an appropriate stage. This will ensure effective consultation with the constituent district authorities and that the pertinent issues already identified by this review are reflected in the emerging strategies.	Agreed
7	That further work is undertaken to look at how the £ 461,000 allocated by Defra to Somerset County Council as a Lead Flood authority money is committed and what accountability measures are in place? Also, how is this figure calculated and is it adequate based on the risks /actions identified in the Somerset local flood risk management strategy?	Agreed that the totality of current funding for flood related activities needs to be understood and the adequacy of this level of funding considered. In order to build up this picture all councils (including Exmoor National Park) will provide details of spending on flood and water management including external funding and project funding received. However all Government funding streams relating to flood relief and alleviation within Somerset should embrace the twin elements of transparency and accountability with the recipient organisations providing a full audit as to the purpose and details of the implementation of any scheme associated with this funding.
8	That the Steering Group considers the work that the Environment Agency and the Lead Flood Authority(SCC) have	The Leaders preference is that the Environment Agency should publish their existing surface water

	been doing to generate a new generation of surface water flood maps for England in compliance with the Flood Risk Regulations 2009.	flood maps on their website and promote their availability with a view to achieving greater transparency.
9	That discussions are had as soon as possible to identify practical and innovative sources of funding for a renewed programme of dredging in Somerset and that further work is carried out to ascertain the exact cost of dredging and realistic funding options. Such discussions would move beyond the more familiar territory of who should pay for dredging to who actually can pay. Discussions on this topic should look at contributions from Statutory Flood Management agencies (EA IDB's, Local authorities) as well as the business sector and community enterprises.	Agreed, however the anticipated impacts of any dredging on retaining structures along the river also need to be understood.
10	That a single 'Somerset Flooding Website' is created, to be hosted by the Lead Flood Authority to ensure effective consistent advice and information is given across the County.	In preference to a new website, the focus will be on improving communications by developing a flooding communications protocol for Somerset to ensure a cohesive approach to the provision of timely and relevant information on existing websites and via other appropriate mechanisms.
11	That a higher profile is given to the recently formed Community Resilience in Somerset Project to ensure that it supports as many communities as possible and that the Lead Flood Authority can use the project as a basis for implementing a more sustainable model similar to those operated in other areas such as North Somerset.	Agreed
12	That a further information event is held for Parish Councils and communities, facilitated by Avon and Somerset Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue and Somerset County Council covering the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Liability - what can the public be empowered to do in times of flood and how is this achieved (road closures, flood alleviation etc) • What resources can be provided to communities – signage etc 	Agreed that rather than having a series of separate events, this recommendation will be taken forward by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adding flooding issues to the agendas for a series of public consultation events being planned by the County Council for the autumn • ensuring that every town

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on the use of vehicles in flood water – 4x4 community response vehicles etc • Definitive information on Road Closures – and what happens if signage is ignored. 	and parish council/meeting receives a flooding information pack which will include the points listed in the scrutiny recommendations.
13	That the Lead Flood Authority leads the preparation of a Riparian Owners Information Sheet to be made available to land owners and householders, containing information about Riparian responsibilities and sources of guidance or support.	Agreed and that this information can be included in the pack referred to above
14	That consideration is given by the Somerset Water Management Partnership (SWMP) to incorporating within its constitution the need for it to take a strategic overview of the issues raised at the Flooding Summit and in this report.	Agreed subject to the inclusion of a review of the groups active within Somerset on water management issues with the aim of simplifying the arrangements and clarifying responsibilities.

SEDGEMOOR DC – COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1 JULY 2013

Somerset Flood Summit Report

The Scrutiny Officer informed the committee that the Somerset Flooding Summit had been given an award by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, for the work that had been undertaken on this subject and members of the committee congratulated the officers and Councillors involved.

Members were advised that this report was not the answer to all of Somerset's problems with flooding and in respect of the recommendations detailed on Pages 13 and 14, the Parishes wished for empowerment but it was noted that some of the recommendations could be achieved quickly, whereas others may take time as a strategic overview was needed.

The committee considered that there needed to be clarification on who was the lead authority for this project with the suggestion that the Somerset Water Management Partnership should take the lead and that any monies needed to be spent wisely. It was suggested that waterways should be dredged and that an exact cost ascertained to include maintenance after the dredging. Councillor Scott also suggested that information should be fed to the Internal Drainage Boards as this would include all waterways within the District and County, also that the Environment Agency should use their website for publicising of the project rather than spending money on a new website.

It was also noted that to provide effective protection to Northmoor the Parrett and Tone needed to be dredged between Hook Bridge and the Northmoor Pumping Station (this was based on research evidence from the Parrett Drainage Board) There is a shortfall in funding which needs to be addressed by the County Council and the Environment Agency.

Members agreed that an update was needed to report on progress of the recommendations.

Resolved

The Community Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations detailed on Pages 13 and 14 of the report and referred them to the Executive.

SOUTH SOMERSET DC – SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 JULY 2013

Somerset Flooding Summit – Draft Final Report

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report as shown in the agenda. She commented that Sedgemoor District Council had considered the report the previous day and the other districts and county council would do so over the next few weeks. The Steering Group were of the opinion that the Somerset Water Management Partnership (SWMP) should be the lead group to take things forward, although concern had been raised about governance. Recently new governance had been discussed and a revised constitution was being drafted.

It was suggested that the steering group continues to meet, possibly twice a year, to monitor the progress of outcomes and to keep the momentum for action going. She noted that the leaders of the Somerset councils had met to consider the report and had fed back some comments. Members discussed the comments and the Deputy Leader, briefly explained the reasoning for some of them.

The Scrutiny Manager explained that at this stage Scrutiny members were being asked to endorse the Scrutiny recommendations, but they could be amended if they wished to incorporate some of the comments suggested by the leaders. Members unanimously agreed that the report be recommended to District Executive with the original Scrutiny recommendations.

The Chairman thanked the Scrutiny Manager, and SSDC members on the steering group – Councillors Dave Bulmer and Paul Maxwell, for their work with the flooding review.

ACTION: Members to note the draft final report on the Somerset Flooding Summit, and to recommend it to District Executive for consideration.

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL – SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 JULY 2013

Somerset Flooding Report

The Committee **considered** this report and **discussed** it along with the recommendations and responses from the Somerset Council Leaders and Chief Executives.

Members were encouraged by the positive solution based approach to flood prevention and **agreed** to approve the recommendations set out in Appendix B to the report.

Members **suggested** that at the next Joint Steering Group meeting in September **consideration** be given to the following:

- Attention be focused on practical work and solutions;
- Solutions were pursued as expediently as possible;
- Regarding funding for Internal Drainage Boards (IDB's) that the issue of disaggregation of the drainage levy be progressed;
- Focus on upper catchment areas and engaging with landowners and farmers;
- That telemetry and equipment be used to the best possible advantage and that things like pre-pumping on the Levels be considered prior to inclement weather.

MENDIP DC – SCRUTINY BOARD 29 JULY 2013

Draft final report of the Somerset Flooding Summit

Scrutiny Board was asked to consider the draft final report of the Somerset Flooding Summit and make any comments prior to consideration by Cabinet

The Lead Officer introduced the report by stating the significant flooding in the County instigated a County-wide joint scrutiny consideration of the issue. This culminated in conference in March 2013. The findings of that conference were set out in the report.

Members' attention was drawn to Item 10 on the updating, where references to Somerset County Council as Lead Flood Authority should have read 'Lead Local Flood Authority'. The updating also included Item 10, Appendix B; recommendations of the joint responses from the Leaders/Chief Executives.

Councillor North requested that Ian Liddell-Grainger's title of MP be included on page 3 of the report. It was also raised that no representatives from the insurance companies were in attendance during the summit. It was proposed that Scrutiny recommend additional pressure be put on insurance companies to attend future meetings.

Councillor Cottle disagreed with the notion that the floods did not affect Mendip significantly, citing the example of his car that was written off as a result of flood damage. He also referenced the losses that farmers suffered due to flooding.

Councillor Knibbs queried an email received by the Chairman of Selwood Parish Council that informed the Parish Council of an opportunity to apply for funding to clear and dredge rivers. Councillor Knibbs asked why the Parish Council had only been given the short timescale of two days notice to submit an application. The Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance replied that £200,000 of funding was available county-wide, but had been discussed months before the aforementioned email was sent out.

Councillors felt that one of the problems surrounding the flooding was that with so many different organisations and groups invited, there were many different, conflicting viewpoints. It was felt that it would be more appropriate for one Authority to take centre stage and establish a policy to be followed.

Councillor Inchley enquired whether our Planning Policies allowed us to build houses on flood plains, and whether this was wise given the levels of recent flooding. The Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance replied that the Environmental Agency, and not the Council, dictated whether houses could be built of flood plains or not.

Councillor Parham suggested one positive to take from the summit was the Environmental Agency's admission that their policy of not dredging rivers was wrong. It was added that despite that admission, the Agency stated that dredging would not be sustainable.

The Lead Officer confirmed that Somerset County Council were the Lead Local Flood Authority, tasked with coordinating a response to the flooding, but the Environmental Agency were responsible for any issues relating to dredging. There was no single person responsible, as an owner of the overall project. The Leaders of each respective Council would be responsible for taking issues forward, but no single person would assume the role of Chairman of the event.

Members were agreed to note and recommend the report.

RESOLVED

To recommend the Somerset Flooding Summit draft report to Cabinet and that Scrutiny recommend additional pressure be put on insurance companies to attend future meetings regarding flooding.