

Scrutiny Committee

Drainage and Flooding



Draft Final Report – February 2015

Task Group:

- ▶ Councillor Melvyn Gardner (Chair)
- ▶ Councillor Sue Jones
- ▶ Councillor Keith Martin
- ▶ Councillor Mick Titherington

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is all about challenging decision made by the Council and other local organisations, keeping an eye on local issues and reviewing local policies.

In other words, Scrutiny acts like a watchdog for the people of South Ribble. It is about helping the council to work with local people, partners, other businesses and organisations and voluntary and community groups, to improve the quality of life of residents in the borough.

Scrutiny:

Challenges local performance so that we can raise standards, ensuring the services provided meet customers' expectations;

Questions the decisions of the Council's cabinet and other local organisations;

Reviews policies and becomes involved in the development of new policies;

Holds inquiries and reviews services provided by public organisations on issues of public interest or concern e.g. local hospitals, the police, fire service, utility companies etc.

Makes recommendations for action, change and improvement.

Who is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is made up of twelve members of the Council who are appointed by all members of the council on an annual basis.

How can you get involved?

Local people and organisations have an important part to play in the Scrutiny process. If you use a service it is important that you let your councillors know your views on how it could be improved.

You can do this in a number of ways:

- ▶ Attend meetings
- ▶ Suggest a topic
- ▶ Get involved in a consultation

You could be asked for your views on an issue or be invited to provide specialist knowledge you have by being a witness in a Scrutiny review or by being co-opted onto one of the task groups.

More information?

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For further information on this review or to view the background information and research, please contact Darren Cranshaw, Scrutiny & Performance Officer on 01772 625512 or email: dcranshaw@southribble.gov.uk.

Welcome and Introduction



As chair of the Task Group looking at drainage and flooding, I have pleasure in presenting our report.

The Members of the Task Group found the review very informative and it was helpful to explore the issues in greater detail. Drainage and flooding is an issue for all communities and one which we need to ensure we consider and actively tackle as South Ribble grows with the Local Development Framework and Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal through a longer-term view.

All Members of the Task Group have learnt a great deal about the key issues and it is hoped that our recommendations will help improve drainage and flooding in the Borough for the future.

We would like to thank everyone involved in the review for their assistance with the review and in particular the County Council's Flood Risk Management Team, Ian Welsby and Stacy Gorridge together with the Borough Council's Public Health Team, Jennifer Mullin and Lee Foden for the work they do serving our residents every day.

Councillor Melvyn Gardner
Chair of the Scrutiny Task Group

Rationale for the Review

The suggestion for this review was made by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Margaret Smith against the backdrop of major changes to roles and responsibilities with regards to the Flood and Water Management Act, the County Council's new Local Food Risk Management Strategy and local concerns about drainage and flooding.

Scrutiny Committee Review Team

- ▶ Councillor Melvyn Gardner (Chair)
- ▶ Councillor Sue Jones
- ▶ Councillor Keith Martin
- ▶ Councillor Mick Titherington

Review Aims and Objectives

- ▶ To consider the Flood and Water Management Act and its implications for partners in South Ribble.
- ▶ To look at the Lancashire and Blackpool Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and its implications for South Ribble.
- ▶ To explore the roles and responsibilities with regards to drainage and flooding in South Ribble.
- ▶ To make appropriate recommendations.

Methodology

In carrying out this review, the Task Group has carried out the following to inform the review and develop its findings and recommendations:

The Task Group met with Ian Welsby and Stacey Gorridge from the Flood Risk Management Team at Lancashire County Council who gave a presentation on the Flood and Water Management Act and the County Council's response. The officers also answered the Task Group's questions about roles and responsibilities and the relationships between the various partners in South Ribble.

The Task Group also met with Jennifer Mullin and Lee Foden from the Public Health Team at South Ribble Borough Council who gave a local context to the implications of drainage and flooding on the Borough, providing examples of local projects and work in which the Borough council is involved with on a daily basis.

The Task Group also invited contributions from all Members of the Council from a local neighbourhood perspective to identify any issues or hotspots there might be in our communities.

A significant amount of press coverage was generated about the review with residents being encouraged to contact us with any feedback, comments or examples they might have. Despite the prominent coverage, very little information was received. Where information was received this was raised with the appropriate team and dealt with directly.

The Task Group also reviewed key documentation with regards to drainage and flooding:

- ▶ Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Her Majesty's Stationery Office
- ▶ Flooding Scrutiny Review Library Monitor of Best Practice, Centre for Public Scrutiny
- ▶ Strategic Review of Surface Water Risk produced by Jacob's for Lancashire County Council
- ▶ Lancashire and Blackpool Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2014-2017, Lancashire County Council
- ▶ Example Flood Investigation Reports, Lancashire County Council
- ▶ Making Space for Water in South Ribble Risk Assessments and Action Plans, Lancashire County Council, South Ribble Borough Council and partners

Key Findings

Following the devastating floods across England in 2007, the Government commissioned Sir Michael Pitt to undertake a review of flood risk. Sir Michael Pitt recommended that there should be a greater role for local authorities in managing flood risk from local sources, such as surface water run-off, groundwater flooding and from watercourses.

The Flood and Water Management Act took forward Sir Michael Pitt's review and designated county councils and unitary council 'lead local flood authorities' with a requirement to produce a local flood risk management strategy. The strategy should be compliant and align with the Environment Agency's national strategy.

The County Council prepared a local risk management strategy for 2014-2015 to respond to the Act, which outlines the new roles and responsibilities for managing flood risk:

- ▶ Lancashire County Council – As the lead local flood authority, responsible for surface water flooding, groundwater flooding, highway flooding, ordinary watercourses

- ▶ Environment Agency – has a strategic role and is responsible for main river flooding and coastal flooding
- ▶ United Utilities – manages flood risk from sewers and reservoirs
- ▶ South Ribble Borough Council – retains existing powers to carry out work on ordinary watercourses and powers to issue public health notices

The Task Group felt that the County Councils' Local Flood Risk Management Strategy had been very well put together in an inclusive and helpful way.

As part of the County Council's flood risk management service they would investigate flooding incidents where 5 or more houses are affected. This investigation is known as a section 19 investigation where a detailed report is produced about the probable causes of the flooding and possible ways the flooding risk could be mitigated in the future. The Task Group probed whether the threshold for investigating floods was set too high at 5, but was assured by the County Council that some flexibility was built into the system and that they work with partners and would try to help with flooding of dwellings under this limit.

The Task Group found that the partnership working with regards flooding was effective through the Making Space for Water Steering Group quarterly meetings including the County Council, Borough Council, Environment Agency and United Utilities. These meetings were felt to be helpful in tackling flooding hotspots and dealing with local areas of flooding and concerns from partner organisations and members of the public. After speaking with those involved with the Making Space for Water group, the Task Group would like to suggest that the Borough Council take the lead in chairing the partnership group to ensure it remains a local district council priority and meet South Ribble needs to a greater extent.

An element of the Flood and Risk Management Act which is yet to be enacted by the Government is for the County Council to become a sustainable drainage approval body. In practice this would mean that the County Council would become a statutory consultee to all planning applications so that applications are looked at to ensure developments consider sustainable drainage systems to reduce the risk of flooding as a result of the development. The County Council was already making plans for when this element of the Act is implemented by the Government. Whilst relationships were starting to be established between the County Council and Borough Council planning team, the Task Group felt that liaison could be improved and planning applications should consider drainage flooding issues to a greater degree than at present.

South Ribble Borough Council's public health role in drainage and flooding was explored and whilst the Borough Council has statutory powers, there is no statutory requirement to provide a drainage and flooding service. Following input from residents, performance indicators and seeing customer information, the Task Group felt that it was vital that South Ribble Borough Council continued to provide this important discretionary service.

The feedback provided by councillors and members of the public was about understanding who can help with drainage and flooding. It was felt that councillors should be educated about how to deal with drainage and flooding issues affecting their communities and how to engage with residents on flooding issues. The lack of information for our residents on how to deal with concerns and issues around drainage and flooding is something the Task Group would like to see improved.

Conclusions

We found that there was strong partnership working on drainage and flooding in South Ribble to deal with local issues and residents' concerns. Whilst the joint work between the County Council's flood risk management team and Borough Council's Planning Team is at an early stage, we feel this is a key relationship and role that should be developed further to minimise the risk of flooding and drainage issues in the future.

The Borough Council's discretionary drainage service does a great job for our residents and using local intelligence to solve local issues wherever possible. We would like this service to continue and to be resourced accordingly.

The key area for improvement is around the information and engagement with residents to help them to help themselves with issues and involve the right people at the right time.

Recommendations

1. The County Council's Flood Risk Management Team and Council's Public Health Team be commended for their work preparing for and implementing the Flood and Water Management Act.
2. The Council continues to provide a drainage service to residents and local communities even though it is a discretionary service.
3. There be improved liaison between the Council's Planning Team and Lancashire County Council's Drainage Team on planning applications to ensure drainage and flooding issues are fully considered, including encouraging the use of sustainable urban drainage systems.
4. The Council take the lead and Chair the Making Space for Water Steering Group with the County Council so that local issues are picked up and tackled.

5. Councillors are educated in roles and responsibilities as part of the councillor induction process following the elections and councillor learning hours organised so that they can more effectively deal with local resident issues.
6. An article on the role of the drainage team be included in a future issue of the FORWARD newspaper to educate residents about who is responsible for various aspects of drainage and flooding.
7. The Council's website provide more information to educate residents on the services available from the Council and other partner organisations and how residents can help themselves.