

**To:** Kent Flood Risk Management Committee – 21 July 2014

**From:** Michael Harrison, Chairman of Kent Flood Risk Management Committee

**Subject:** Report to Cabinet on the Christmas/New Year 2013-14 Storms and Floods

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** To update the Committee on the decision of the Cabinet meeting on 7 July 2014 in respect of how the County Council, in collaboration with its partners, can be better prepared to manage such future events and flood risk.

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## **1. Background**

1.1 The severe weather events that the County experienced from October 2013 to February 2014 were unprecedented, continuous and greatly affected many communities, residents and business across Kent:

- The East Coast tidal surge on 5th & 6th December was equal to a 1 in 200 year tidal event and the biggest tidal event to impact Kent since the devastating floods of 1953;
- This was also the wettest winter in over 250 years, with 120mm of rainfall falling between 19th to 25th December on already saturated ground;
- On Christmas Eve, the highest ever peak flows were recorded upstream of the Leigh Flood Storage Area;
- 929 properties were flooded across Kent, compared to approximately 1000 properties flooded in the 2000 floods;
- Additionally, high winds throughout this period cause extensive damage and disruption with, tragically, the loss of one life on October 23rd (the St Jude Storm) and 28,500 people without power on Christmas Eve.

1.2 These extreme weather events stretched and strained all public services, emergency responders, utilities and the transport network. The main risk and impact was to life and property, but events also significantly impacted on the environment, particularly the farming community.

1.3 After such events KCC, along with its statutory and voluntary partners, has a duty to examine and assess its plans and procedures to identify lessons to be learnt. To this end Cabinet requested the detailed paper attached, which was tabled on 7th July 2014. All 17 of its recommendations were formally approved by Cabinet. A copy of this report is enclosed at **Appendix 1**.

## **2. Next Steps**

2.1 A Cross-Directorate Steering Group (chaired by Paul Crick, Director of Environment, Planning & Enforcement) will be established to take forward the 17 recommendations outlined in the report.

2.2 As many of the recommendations in the report require partnership input, the group will maintain strong links with the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) via the Kent Resilience Team (KRT).

2.3 A further report will be presented to Cabinet in the Autumn to provide an update on progress in preparation for Winter 2014-15

## **3. Kent Flood Risk Management Committee's role**

3.1 In accordance with Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011, Kent Flood Risk Management Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the exercise by risk management authorities of flood risk management or coastal erosion risk management functions which may affect the local authority's area.

3.2 The Cabinet report has set out its targets which the County Council has set. Whilst it is open to this Committee to suggest variations, additions or deletions, our principal role is to monitor and scrutinise how successfully these targets are being implemented.

## **4. Conclusions**

4.1 The Committee has an important duty to examine how successfully the identified targets are being met and to suggest any other activities that may be identified as a result of this process.

## **5. Recommendations**

5.1 The Committee is invited to note the Cabinet report and its 17 agreed recommendations. This Committee will consider reports at future meetings on progress against the targets set.

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*Background documents: None*