

**Runnymede Borough Council**  
**CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 27 March 2008 at 7.30 p.m.**

**SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

The Chairman has agreed that this item be considered as urgent since the deadline for response is 31 March 2008, prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PITT REVIEW - RECOVERING FROM THE FLOODS** (DTS)

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of additional interim conclusions of the Pitt Review and to respond to the consultation exercise which concludes on 31 March 2008.**

**2. Background Information**

- 2.1 The Committee will recall the report to the last meeting on 28 February when comments on the urgent recommendations and interim conclusions of the Pitt Review were agreed. Those comments have now been submitted to, and received by, the Review Team.
- 2.2 At the end of 2007, John Healey, the Minister for Flood Recovery, recommended that the scope of the Review be extended to include the recovery phase.
- 2.3 A Supplementary Chapter has therefore been added to the Review Report and was recently published. Although views are sought on this, there is no indication that the 31 March deadline has been extended, hence this urgent report.

**3. Report**

- 3.1 This additional work adds a further 20 interim Conclusions relating to recovery from the summer floods, bringing the total to 92. The additional 20 interim Conclusions are set out in full in Appendix 'E' (attached).
- 3.2 As with the previous report, those that are considered to be directly relevant to Local Authorities are reproduced below with comment.

**IC 73** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that local recovery coordinating groups should ensure that coherent health and well-being support is readily available to those affected by flooding, using a variety of sources including voluntary and community groups.

**IC 74** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that the monitoring of impacts on health and well-being, and actions to mitigate and manage the effects, should form a systematic part of recovery work at the local level.

**3.3 Comment**

***This requires action from the Health Protection Agency, Local NHS, Social Services and Voluntary and Community-based support. Local Authorities can provide information regarding the tackling of public health risks and also fulfil a role distributing information, but they do not have a lead role in this area.***

**IC 75** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that communication strategies during recovery need to be agreed at the outset by all recovery co-ordinating groups and focus on reassurance, advice and progress.

**IC 76** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that local authorities should coordinate a systematic programme of community engagement in their area during the recovery phase.

3.4 **Comment**

***It is agreed that in the recovery phase, communities will look to Local Authorities to provide information, rather than the Emergency Services. Whilst there is good practice evidence about what can be achieved this requires to be adequately resourced.***

**IC 80** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that the central government guidance to local responders – *Emergency Response and Recovery* – should be updated to reflect the new formalised arrangements for recovery.

**IC 81** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that all Local Resilience Forums should plan, train and exercise on the basis of the recently published *National Recovery Guidance*.

3.5 **Comment**

***It is agreed that guidance in 'Emergency Response and Recovery' should be revised to contain up-to-date material on the recovery phase at the local level. It is also agreed that Local Resilience Forums and Local Authorities need to ensure that multi-agency recovery plans are in place.***

**IC 82** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that local authorities should have a clear plan for harnessing voluntary and community resources during the recovery phase.

3.6 **Comment**

***The community spirit that came out of the summer's flooding events was well documented. Councils need to take advantage of this voluntary resource in responding to the community needs in the recovery phase. However, whilst many of these will be well established local groups, the ad hoc nature of some volunteers coming forward could be very difficult to properly manage.***

**IC 83** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that for recovery from emergencies spanning more than a single local authority area, the Government Offices should enable coherence and coordination, if necessary, between recovery operations in different local authorities.

**IC 84** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that the Local Government Association and Government Offices should develop arrangements to provide advice and support from organisations experienced in recovery to areas dealing with recovery from an emergency.

3.7 **Comment**

***Support and assistance from other organisations would be welcomed during the recovery phase. Past experience is that locally, Districts would communicate amongst themselves rather than needing Government Office intervention, but the input of external resources would help local delivery.***

**IC 85** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that there needs to be an agreed framework – including definitions and timescales – for local-central recovery reporting, and that this should be included in all relevant government guidance.

3.8 **Comment**

***There is a need to ensure that Central Government input into local recovery is clearly defined, to avoid ambiguity.***

- IC 86** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that local authorities should continue to make arrangements to bear the costs of recovery for all but the most exceptional emergencies, and should revisit their reserves and insurance arrangements in light of last summer's floods.
- IC 87** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that central government should have pre-planned rather than ad hoc arrangements to contribute towards the financial burden of recovery from the most exceptional emergencies.
- IC 88** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that any future model for financial assistance should be designed to minimise unnecessary expenditure and maximise value for money for public finances collectively, rather than singularly for central or local government.
- IC 89** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that the arrangements for distributing any financial assistance during the recovery phase should be transparent and equitable.
- 3.9 The Review concludes that it can see no case for any arrangement other than that Local Authorities should, so far as is reasonable, expect and plan to bear the majority of costs arising from flooding. The Review recognises that Local Authorities show different levels of financial resilience, which it describes as being often a combination of local circumstances and decisions made by the Local Authority itself.
- 3.10 The Review further refers to well performing Authorities who can deal with the costs of flooding with existing resources. There is implied criticism of those Authorities that do not maintain adequate reserves and insurance and that resilience of financial arrangements to deal with emergencies should be reviewed.
- 3.11 **Comment**
- It is considered that strong objections should be made to this conclusion on several grounds. Firstly, Central Government has failed to adequately fund flood prevention measures that would reduce the likely incidence of flooding. This is evidenced by the lack of support for any scheme to provide alleviation to the Lower Thames or Chertsey Bourne, despite recurring major flooding events over recent years.***
- 3.12 ***Secondly, Runnymede could only be described as being financially prudently managed, being one of only five Councils in the Country that have been awarded the Audit Commission's highest score over the past three years in relation to the use of Resources Assessment. Yet this Council has been capped by the Government, despite having the sixth lowest Council Tax in the Country, on the basis of attempts to increase Council Tax to a sustainable level. It is therefore not financial prudence, but Government intervention that has led to diminished reserves and reduced ability to respond to emergencies.***
- 3.13 ***The provision of the Bellwin Scheme to reimburse Local Authorities for extraordinary expenditure associated with unforeseen emergencies recognises the responsibility of Central Government to fund such matters and the Review Team is urged to reconsider their conclusion.***
- IC 90** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that aims and objectives for the recovery phase should be agreed at the outset by recovery coordinating groups to provide focus and enable orderly transition into mainstream programmes when multi-agency co-ordination of recovery is no longer required.
- 3.14 **Comment**
- This is supported. The process of recovery can be long and complex so incorporating recovery work into usual patterns of service delivery is important to provide continuity.***
- IC 92** - The interim conclusion of the Review is that recovery coordinating groups should evaluate and share lessons from both the response and recovery phases to inform their planning for future emergencies.

3.15 **Comment**

***The sharing of experiences and best practice is welcomed.***

4. **Council Policy**

4.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2005-2010 includes policies on emergency planning to work with partners to ensure that the Borough is able to respond effectively and to ensure the Safer Runnymede Centre can provide an effective communications centre in the event of any major emergency.

4.2 Policies look towards achieving a sustainable community by ensuring that planning and development is environmentally sensitive. Special policies in the Strategic Plan encourage the Environment Agency to deliver a flood alleviation scheme at Chertsey and urge Thames Water to address problems of surcharged sewers.

5. **Resource Implications**

5.1 Many of the Conclusions in the Review have substantial resource implications for Local Authorities. Whilst it is accepted that the local community looks for leadership and guidance from local Councils, specific responsibilities can only be achieved where they are properly resourced. It is not reasonable for the Government to expect local Councils to take on additional responsibilities in this area without a commensurate increase in resources.

6. **Legal Implications**

6.1 The Council maintains up-to-date emergency plans in accordance with its responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act.

7. **Equalities Implications**

7.1 The Council's aim is to ensure that its services are equally accessible by all people who need them, irrespective of gender, race, disability, religion, belief, sexual orientation or age. The Council is committed to ensuring that whenever possible, all members of the community have access to the services it provides and to information about them.

7.2 During an emergency, the Council would wish to ensure that support to and communication with, the whole community is facilitated. It would particularly aim to provide support and reassurance to the most vulnerable members of the community.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

**the comments on the additional Interim Conclusions of the Pitt Review set out in section 3 of this report be forwarded to the Review as this Council's formal response.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

**Background Papers**

None.

**THE PITT REVIEW INTERIM REPORT – RECOVERY  
ADDITIONAL INTERIM CONCLUSIONS**

**IC 73** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that local recovery coordinating groups should ensure that coherent health and well-being support is readily available to those affected by flooding, using a variety of sources including voluntary and community groups.

**IC 74** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that the monitoring of impacts on health and well-being, and actions to mitigate and manage the effects, should form a systematic part of recovery work at the local level.

**IC 75** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that communication strategies during recovery need to be agreed at the outset by all recovery coordinating groups and focus on reassurance, advice and progress.

**IC 76** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that local authorities should coordinate a systematic programme of community engagement in their area during the recovery phase.

**IC 77** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that central government recovery coordinating groups should be established from the outset of major emergencies and in due course there should be formal handover from the crisis machinery to the recovery coordinating group – normally chaired by the minister of the lead government department for recovery.

**IC 78** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that Communities and Local Government should have lead responsibility within central government for coordinating recovery from wide area flooding emergencies.

**IC 79** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that roles and objectives of those in central government responsible for recovery should be developed on the basis of the model employed during the recovery from last summer's floods, and that these standing arrangements should be set out in the *Concept of Operations* (CONOPS) for central government's response to emergencies.

**IC 80** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that the central government guidance to local responders – *Emergency Response and Recovery* – should be updated to reflect the new formalised arrangements for recovery.

**IC 81** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that all Local Resilience Forums should plan, train and exercise on the basis of the recently published *National Recovery Guidance*.

**IC 82** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that local authorities should have a clear plan for harnessing voluntary and community resources during the recovery phase.

**IC 83** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that for recovery from emergencies spanning more than a single local authority area, the Government Offices should enable coherence and coordination, if necessary, between recovery operations in different local authorities.

**IC 84** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that the Local Government Association and Government Offices should develop arrangements to provide advice and support from organisations experienced in recovery to areas dealing with recovery from an emergency.

**IC 85** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that there needs to be an agreed framework – including definitions and timescales – for local-central recovery reporting, and that this should be included in all relevant government guidance.

**IC 86** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that local authorities should continue to make arrangements to bear the costs of recovery for all but the most exceptional emergencies, and should revisit their reserves and insurance arrangements in light of last summer's floods.

**IC 87** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that central government should have pre-planned rather than ad hoc arrangements to contribute towards the financial burden of recovery from the most exceptional emergencies.

**IC 88** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that any future model for financial assistance should be designed to minimise unnecessary expenditure and maximise value for money for public finances collectively, rather than singularly for central or local government.

**IC 89** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that the arrangements for distributing any financial assistance during the recovery phase should be transparent and equitable.

**IC 90** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that aims and objectives for the recovery phase should be agreed at the outset by recovery coordinating groups to provide focus and enable orderly transition into mainstream programmes when multi-agency coordination of recovery is no longer required.

**IC 91** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that recovery coordinating groups should make early strategic decisions about longer-term regeneration and economic development opportunities during and after recovery.

**IC 92** – The interim conclusion of the Review is that recovery coordinating groups should evaluate and share lessons from both the response and recovery phases to inform their planning for future emergencies.