

Cherwell District Council

Executive

6 October 2014

Outcome of the Review of Flooding at Hanover Gardens, Bicester

Report of Commercial Director (Bicester)

This report is public

Purpose of report

To update on the outcome of the investigation into the root cause of the flooding at Hanover Gardens on 24 December 2013.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the proactive response provided by Cherwell District Council to assist the residents and management team at Hanover Gardens.
- 1.2 To note the outcome and recommended actions from the Environment Agency Report in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 To note that the Council has agreed to run an information campaign in October 2014 throughout the District on the importance of preventing debris from entering the River Bure.
- 1.4 To note that a partnership meeting with all interested parties continues to monitor any outstanding actions and the Council has representation through the Head of Housing and Regeneration.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 On Christmas Eve 2013 the Council's Housing Service was contacted at 6.30am regarding a flooding incident and to request their assistance to provide emergency housing for those unable to stay in their accommodation at Hanover House, Hanover Gardens, Manorsfield Road, Bicester. This is a sheltered housing complex managed by Hanover Housing Association (HHA) containing ~60 units over 2 floors.

- 2.2 A housing officer attended the scene to find 19 households occupying ground floor accommodation had been displaced due to flooding.
- 2.3 Working hard in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Emergency Planning and Hanover Housing Association (HHA) we were able to ensure that all residents were evacuated to family, a neighbouring care home or in temporary accommodation over the Christmas period.
- 2.4 As is normal procedure in situations where residents are unable to remain in their homes through circumstances such as flooding, Cherwell District Council is responsible for providing emergency housing. In this instance, we were able to arrange short term accommodation over the holiday period at nearby hotels for affected households.
- 2.5 At the same time we began working with the Environment Agency (EA) and OCC to determine the root cause of the flooding. The EA began a comprehensive investigation and the Council reviewed the flood impact assessments and enabling works of recent planning applications granted in close proximity to Hanover Gardens.
- 2.6 As can be seen on page 4 of Appendix 1 the initial investigation by the EA on 24th December 2013 identified that blockages on the River Bure and Back Brook had been caused by large amounts of debris from below the water level at the Bure trash screen at Hanover Garden and trash screens downstream at Chapel Street & Priory Road.
- 2.7 Once the water receded as a result of the debris being removed from the brook, residents of the first floor returned to their properties. Intensive liaison then continued to ensure those displaced on the ground floor obtained suitable temporary housing whilst repairs were assessed and undertaken on the ground floor flats
- 2.8 Hanover Housing completed repairs in June 2014. All residents were advised of their opportunity to return to their tenancy. The majority have done so but some have made alternative arrangements.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 There was excessive rain fall in Bicester on 23rd December 2013 and in the early hours of the 24th December 2013 which led to the River Bure bursting its banks and the subsequent flooding at Hanover Gardens. Whilst the initial removal of the debris ensured water levels subsided, in order to determine the root cause of the floods at Hanover Gardens the EA undertook a detailed investigation which was supported by the Council and OCC.
- 3.2 The outcome of this investigation including recommended actions was published in July 2014 and can be seen in Appendix 1.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The immediate response provided by the Housing Team to the situation at Hanover Gardens on 24 December 2013 and for the period between Christmas and New Year was in line with Council policy and was at the high standard we expect. The team have been formally thanked for all the work that they undertook during the festive period.
- 4.2 As stated in Appendix 1 it is not possible to eliminate the risk of flooding from rivers but the recommendations identified in the report are positive steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of flooding from the River Bure in the future particularly in relation to preventing debris from entering the River Bure which was the root cause of the flood at Hanover Gardens.
- 4.3 The Council as a member of the partnership who worked together to review this issue will ensure that it fulfils its action by the agreed date and ensure that all residents of the District are aware of how important it is to prevent debris from entering the River Bure. An information campaign beginning with a press release concerning this report will run throughout October 2014.

5.0 Consultation

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|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Environment Agency | As part of the review of the flood root cause the Council has attended several meetings with the EA in order to assist the preparation of the report. |
| Oxfordshire County Council | As part of the review of the flood root cause the Council has attended several meetings with the EA in order to assist the preparation of the report. |
| Bicester Councillors | As part of the initial response to the flood on 24 December 2013 and in the 2 weeks following members were updated of the situation and actions being taken to assist the rehousing of the residents impacted by the flood. |

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To approve the recommendation

Option 2: To reject the recommendation

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications for this report. In processing the action in relation to raising awareness of the importance of preventing debris from the River Bure the Council will undertake some marketing and communication activities which will be met from existing budgets.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this information report.

Comments checked by:

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision **No**

Financial Threshold Met: **No**

Community Impact Threshold Met: **No**

Wards Affected

Bicester Town

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

District of Opportunity
Safe and Healthy

Lead Councillor

Councillor Debbie Pickford, Lead Member for Housing

Document Information

| Appendix No | Title |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| One | Environment Agency Report |
| Background Papers | |
| None | |
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