

SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
DOMESTIC FLOOD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council recognises the threat to local communities from flooding following severe weather events and as a result of rising sea levels brought about by climate change. As well as playing its part in taking action to mitigate against these changes, this policy supports the objectives within the Council's Climate Change Strategy to help communities adapt to future climate change.
- 1.2 This Domestic Flood Protection Policy provides the framework within which Suffolk Coastal District Council can operate to provide consistent and effective domestic flood protection support to communities in the lead up to or during flood events and should be read in conjunction with the more detailed response arrangements in the Local Flood Plan.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the Council's role in directing communities to information about the most effective methods of protecting their property from the risk of flooding and recognises the limitations of sandbags other than in certain circumstances for the protection of community infrastructure. The limited supplies of sandbags held by the Council will be deployed, at the Council's discretion, to protect strategic infrastructure at risk of flooding.
- 1.4 The Policy is in line with learning from summer 2007 flooding which identified the poor value of sandbags for domestic protection, the availability of better products and the need for large scale temporary barriers to be available through the Environment Agency.
- 1.5 The Council will work with the Joint Emergency Planning Unit to help support local communities prepare for, and respond to, emergencies such as flooding and provide them with information on the most effective measures for protecting property from flood damage. The Suffolk Community Resilience initiative, launched in April 2010, provides information for communities through a dedicated website and support in setting up local emergency response arrangements.
- 1.6 The principles of this policy have already been accepted by the Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel in March 2009 for adoption across the county.

2. Statutory Requirements

- 2.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 requires the Council to maintain arrangements to support the emergency services in responding to emergencies within Suffolk to protect life and prevent damage to the environment or communities. This act also requires the maintenance of essential services provided by the Council that are needed for public safety and well being.
- 2.2 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 implements a number of the recommendations arising from the Pitt Review and identifies Unitary or County Councils as the lead local flood authority with responsibility for leading the coordination of flood risk management in their area. The lead authority is responsible for developing and monitoring a strategy for local flood risk management in its area from surface run-off, groundwater and watercourses. The Act recognises the important role of district councils and other bodies such as internal drainage boards, highways agency etc in managing flood risk and enables partnerships of all the relevant bodies to be formed. This is delivered through the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership.
- 2.3 There is no statutory requirement for the Council to provide domestic flood protection materials for the public. However, there is a requirement for the Council to support the vulnerable and those on low income.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 the Council is required to:
- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this information to inform emergency planning and business continuity;
 - Put in place emergency and business continuity plans;
 - Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection measures and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
 - Cooperate and share information with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency and
 - Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.
- 3.2 With approximately 40 miles of coastline and numerous rivers and inland waterways both coastal and fluvial flooding has been identified as a major risk within the district. To help manage this risk the Council has prepared a detailed Local Flood Plan which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies in preparing for, and responding to, incidents of flooding.

4. Application

- 4.1 This Policy applies to Suffolk Coastal District Council and is part of a Suffolk wide local authority's strategic and tactical approach to domestic flood protection.

5. Purpose

- 5.1 This policy provides a structure through which:
- 5.1.1 Information and advice on domestic flood protection will be provided to the public.
 - 5.1.2 The Council will maintain materials for use during flooding incidents to protect communities.
 - 5.1.3 Roles and responsibilities are clearly assigned.
 - 5.1.4 Policy validation and review will be undertaken.

6. Scope

- 6.1 This policy will be implemented by the Council's Corporate Management Team and apply to the Council's emergency planning arrangements for supporting communities during a flooding incident and in the subsequent recovery phase and specifically to Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd for the provision of sandbags for the protection of strategic infrastructure and to the District Emergency Planning Officer with regard to advice on domestic flood protection.

7. Policy Statement

- 7.1 The Council will work within the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership to prevent flood risks from increasing through development activity and reduce the existing flood threat to communities by working in partnership to mitigate or resolve current flood risks.
- 7.2 The Council, in partnership with Waveney District Council, has completed work on a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the information from this assessment, which includes flooding scenarios from breaches in sea defences, is being used by the Council's Planning Service to guide its Development Control activities and in the determination of planning applications.
- 7.3 The Council will support domestic flood protection to mitigate or respond to the effects of flooding based upon the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and based upon the best practice outlined in:

- 7.3.1 Pitt Review - Lessons learned from summer 2007 UK floods report dated June 2008 included the recognition of the limited effectiveness of sandbags and the need for improved advice for local authorities and householders.

Recommendation 26 of the Pitt Review: The Government should develop a single set of guidance for local authorities and the public on the use and usefulness of sandbags and other alternatives, rather than leaving the matter wholly to local discretion.

- 7.3.2 Environment Agency - flood advisory documents including The Flood Map which provides information for the public, local authority planners and other organisations to help those in areas prone to flooding to find out more and take appropriate action to protect themselves.
- 7.4 The Council will promote the availability of advice on domestic flood protection through the Environment Agency who has the statutory duty to warn and inform the public of what to do prior to an emergency. This information and advice will be provided by the Council's Community Environmental Action Advisor delivered in partnership with Groundwork East of England and the EA. Flood protection advice will also be promoted through the work the Council is doing with local communities, including Town and Parish Councils, in partnership with the Joint Emergency Planning Unit on Community Resilience.
- 7.5 The Council will not provide domestic flood protection materials, such as sandbags, to individual properties at immediate risk of or experiencing actual flooding.
- 7.6 The Council will maintain materials appropriate to reducing the impact of flooding to communities where local authority flood defences are under threat of failure or where flood water is being channelled via roads or paths.
- 7.7 The Council will work with the Environment Agency to provide larger scale material response for communities at risk of failure from EA flood defences. If this is during a declared emergency, this will be done via the crisis management structure (Council Emergency Control Centre through to GOLD).
- 7.8 Suffolk Coastal District Council will contribute to the Council's Emergency Response Plan for the provision of advice/information and generation of Environment Agency support for larger scale flood threats and Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd will be responsible for the provision of sandbags for the protection of strategic infrastructure.
- 7.9 Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd also has responsibility for land drainage on Council land and for the enforcement of land drainage legislation on private land.
- 7.10 All Council staff must be made aware of the plans that affect their service delivery areas and their role following invocation.

8. Methodology

- 8.1. The Council will adopt a 5 strand process for supporting domestic flood protection within communities at risk of all forms of flooding. Domestic Flood Protection will be provided as follows:
- 8.2 Prevent/Mitigate. . The Council will prevent flood risks from increasing through development activity by implementing the provisions of Planning Policy Statement 25 - Development and Flood Risk. It will also work to reduce known flooding issues through the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership.
- 8.3 Advice/Information. . The Council will actively promote the advice and guidance on domestic flood protection provided by the Environment Agency to encourage households and business in flood risk areas to fit flood protection measures in buildings. Work will be carried out to identify and target information and support to vulnerable and low income groups in the highest flood risk areas.
- 8.4 Community Flood Protection. The Council will work with the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership to identify areas susceptible to localised flooding and, where appropriate, take action to reduce the risk of flooding. In responding to an emergency flood incident the Council

will arrange effective resources to protect communities from small scale flood water caused by road or path run off or by failure of small scale flood protection banks or ditches.

8.5 Environment Agency Support. The Council will request support from the Environment Agency for larger scale flood threats where risk is caused by weaknesses in large scale flood defences.

8.6 Emergency Response and Recovery Support. The Council will plan for and make all arrangements necessary to support a co-ordinated multi agency response to flood events and will fulfil the Council's roles and responsibilities with respect to the vulnerable by the activation of appropriate rest centre facilities.

9. Benefits

9.1 This policy provides a clear commitment from the Council to enhance the flood protection arrangements of households in Suffolk at risk of flooding. This will enable the Council to:

9.2 Provide advice and information that is consistent with other authorities within Suffolk, meets statutory requirements and fits with national best practice.

9.3 Protect communities at immediate risk of flooding by temporarily diverting water on roads or drainage systems to stop or reduce water levels.

9.4 Work with the Environment Agency to generate larger scale temporary flood protection of at risk communities.

10. Responsibilities

10.1. Responsibility for the Domestic Flood Protection Policy within Suffolk Coastal District Council is as follows:

10.2 The Council is responsible for maintaining plans to deliver services at section 8.

10.3 The Cabinet Member for Community Health will receive reports on domestic flood protection from the Chief Executive Officer and will report to Cabinet as required, highlighting key issues.

10.4 The Partnership Manager for Suffolk Coastal Services will deliver the relevant parts of this policy on behalf of Corporate Management Team. Responsibility for the effective delivery of services remains that of respective Strategic Directors/Heads of Service. The Council will be required to carry out regular and systematic reviews of their respective plans; the reviews will be included as part of the Risk Management Review process.

10.5. Specialist Staff.

10.5.1 The Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit provides a professional lead within the Council for Civil Contingencies issues and is responsible for:

- Representing the detail of the flood risk within the Suffolk Community Risk Register.
- Producing Council Emergency Response Plan for endorsement by The Emergency Panel.
- Progressing local authority flood response and recovery arrangements within the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning partnership and within the Suffolk Resilience Forum.
- Supporting Council senior managers during flood emergencies at Council Control Rooms, SILVER and GOLD.

11. Timelines.

11.1 This policy is effective from issue on 7 September 2010

Notes

Domestic Flood Protection Policy to be endorsed by all Suffolk local authorities and work on communicating key messages about self protection and Council community support started.

Within a year, Suffolk communities at risk of flooding will be aware of the available advice and information to improve domestic flood protection arrangements. Communities will also be aware of the day to day activity by the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership to prevent or mitigate known flood issues and for the community level support that will be provided during any flooding. Communities will have considered, with the support of the Council and the Joint Emergency Planning Unit, what measures they can take to become more resilient by preparing for, and responding to, emergencies such as flooding.