

## **Council Meeting**

**14 July 2020**

### **Questions Submitted by Councillors under Question Time (agenda item 12)**

#### **1. Question from Cllr Keating to Cllr Davies, Leader of the Council and Executive Members for Housing**

“While the lockdown has both led to a welcome surge in community support and volunteering, it has also increased isolation for many.

This is particularly true for individuals and families that have been placed in social housing in rural communities. For those used to living in a town, relocating to a village can be challenging - particularly if they have no access to a car. Shops are more expensive than the big supermarkets and access to support and social networks is more difficult during lockdown. Some support is being provided by community volunteers, but this is not sustainable over the longer term.

**What consideration or support is the Council providing for families relocated from towns to housing in rural areas?”**

#### **Response from Cllr Davies**

“Thank you for your question and note the very difficult impact of social isolation on very many during the pandemic. However I am somewhat confused by your question. In North Somerset Council we use our HomeChoice process for those who are on our housing list looking for a home or who are existing tenants who wish to move. This system is applicant led, in that no-one is allocated a home, rather they bid for a home of their choice. Anyone moving to a more rural location would do so because they have chosen to do so. Even when in exceptional circumstances the council make a direct let to discharge a statutory homeless duty we always take care not to allocate a home away from the persons support networks. Wherever they live those in social housing provided by Housing Associations will often have access to their dedicated support services.

One of the actions of this council has been to work as hard as we can to ensure that a reasonable level of public transport provision is maintained during the pandemic to assist in reducing social isolation. However from the point of view of my own ward, which has a very high level of non-private rented properties in a village setting, there is plenty of affordable shopping available for all without the cost of travelling to a supermarket away from the village as well as strong community support. This is certainly not unique as NS Together has demonstrated when during the Covid 19 pandemic the council has been able to work with 27 community led networks who have provided social support to residents across North Somerset. Many of these networks have been formed in individual villages and people have used local knowledge to identify and offer support help their immediate neighbours. In many locations, these networks are intending to continue providing support beyond Covid 19, and across a wider range of issues. NSC is committed to working with them to

ensure that we can continue to connect people who approach the council for support to these local partners.”

## **2. Question from Cllr James to Cllr Petty, Executive Members for Climate Emergency and Environment**

“Residents in my ward along Lipgate Place, the High Street, and Gordano School suffered from flooding last week, which was a threat to their livelihoods and wellbeing. People along these road face fears of flooding every time it rains heavily during a high tide. I spoke to Officers earlier this month and they made it clear the problem was a lack of capacity for extra floodwater - and that the solution is extra flood infrastructure - investing in flood management and prevention locally.

An upgraded length of pipework providing a suitable outfall is essential to reduce the painful flooding experienced along the High Street, Bristol road and Lipgate Place in long term, and also the Council and its partners like Wessex Water needs to more actively manage the rhynes and gullies along Portishead South to improve the surge capacity.

Problems like these are going to become more and more apparent as the Climate Emergency gets worse and worse in North Somerset.

1. What are the council doing to reduce the flood risk in Portishead South, and wider North Somerset?
2. What level of funding is required to deliver better flood management infrastructure?”

## **Response from Cllr Petty**

[“What are the Council doing to reduce flood risk in North Somerset?”](#)

North Somerset carries out the Council’s duties as Lead Local Flood <sup>1</sup> Authority (LLFA) under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Land Drainage Act 1991.

Flood risk across North Somerset is widespread and varied in its nature and, requires management through a prioritised risk-based approach. Internal property flooding is the most disruptive and damaging, with external property and Highway flooding second and flooding of open land at the bottom of the vulnerability hierarchy.

In line with responsibilities as Lead Local Flood Authority, North Somerset Council produced a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS), approved and published in 2014. The LFRMS identifies the communities most vulnerable to local flood risk, using numbers of properties at risk of internal flooding as the primary indicator of community vulnerability and outlines how we, in partnership with other agencies and the community, will seek to manage these risks.

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<sup>1</sup> Local Flood Risk is flood risk from Ordinary Watercourses, Groundwater and Surface Water. Flood Risk from Main Rivers and the Sea is Managed by the Environment Agency.

The output from the LFRMS is a list of the top 15 communities most at risk from flooding. These are listed (in alphabetical order) in table 1 below.

**Table 1 List of most vulnerable communities identified for the strategy (in alphabetical order)**

Community				
Backwell	Clevedon	Langford	Pill	Wrington
Churchill	Congresbury	Long Ashton	Portbury	Weston-super-
Claverham	Hutton	Nailsea	Winscombe	

*\* It should be noted that the strategy has identified two specific parts of WsM which are most vulnerable: 1) Milton Hill and Worle, and 2) Central and West WsM.*

It will be noted that Portishead does not appear as one of the communities most at risk from flooding, but this does not mean we will not take action where this is considered appropriate.

Following the LFRMS, an Implementation plan was developed which is regularly, reviewed and updated

Following the Strategy and Implementation Plan. schemes to reduce flood risk which have so far been completed are:

- Weston super Mare – Milton Hill £150k Joint Wessex Water and NSC funded project to reduce the risk of surface water flooding to properties and the highway;
- Wrington – £600k central government grant funded project, reducing the risk of flooding from an Ordinary Watercourse to 95 properties.

Since the approval of the LFRMS in 2014, we have continued to collect flood risk data through flood incident reporting so that, along with updates to computer modelling, this information can be used to update the strategy and the vulnerable communities list as appropriate.

The Environment Agency are currently updating their National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy and we are expecting guidance on the requirements for subsequent updates to Local Flood Risk Management Strategies to be provided later this year.

#### [What are the Council doing to reduce flood risk in Portishead](#)

While Portishead does not feature on the list of the top 15 most vulnerable communities, we recognise that there are further communities at risk from flooding throughout the district.

Although the strategy focuses on high vulnerability communities and larger schemes, consideration is still given to the management of frequent flooding in areas with lower vulnerability and fewer property numbers, particularly where this can be managed through minor interventions.

Recent flooding in Portishead was caused by a known issue which has been under investigation by Wessex Water and the Highways department. Unfortunately, the

combination of locally high rainfall intensities, steep topography and issues with the drainage system connections and how it connects to a blind ditch mean it is not straightforward to resolve. However, we are liaising with both Wessex Water and the highways teams internally to agree how the risk of flooding can be reduced.

#### Funding to deliver better flood risk management

Funding for large flood risk management schemes comes primarily from external sources including central government grants, partnership contributions and local levy. We also have a small Local Flood Risk Management and Coast protection operational budget which allows us to progress small schemes. Some schemes are also funded from highways budgets, the bulk of which also come from central Government. Unfortunately, this is insufficient to address every location across North Somerset and therefore schemes need to be prioritised.

Upcoming larger scale Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Schemes include:

- Weston super Mare (Summer Lane) £1.4m, primarily central government funded, with partnership funding contributions from Wessex Water and NSC, reducing the risk of surface water flooding to 89 properties. This scheme is the only scheme of its type in England which has been supported for funding by central government in the last 5 years.
- Weston super Mare sea defence upgrade – required to be complete in approximately 25 years' time to reduce risk to 1500 properties from the effects of climate change - £30-40 million.

Flood Risk Management interventions are generally long term and often technically complex projects requiring a phased approach to assessment and design, particularly with respect to capital investment measures.

It is important to note that the delivery of any proposed flood risk reduction measures, major or minor will be dependant on the availability of funding relative to wider priorities. For internally funded and LTP projects, scheme prioritisation is balanced with other highways projects and for external funding priorities are balanced regionally or nationally.”