

To Members:

Local Flood Risk Management Scrutiny
Working Group

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas

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Our Ref: MT/JW

Your Ref:

Date: 19 April 2018

Dear Councillor Peter Jones

LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP
20 FEBRUARY 2018

Thank you for your letter dated 3 April 2018 regarding the views and recommendations expressed in the Local Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Working Group meeting on the 20 February 2018.

Referring to the recommendations that you have made, I wish to respond by answering the points raised as they have been listed.

We would like to see the Prioritised Programme of Works available to the public on request.

The Authority has outlined the Flood Risk Management Plan for the cycle 2015-2021 which outlines the Authority's actions and measures which are available to share with members of the public. As you can appreciate the actions proposed in the plan will be implemented should sufficient funding and resource become available. The prioritised programme was developed to demonstrate an internal programme of works devised by assessing the level of flood risk in a community. This information can be made available to the public but on the understanding that prioritisation may change and the delivery of the proposed actions depends on funding availability.

We were pleased to hear that communications are a priority for the Department, as this is essential. We would therefore like to receive a timeline detailing when the website will be updated, and when the Flood Risk leaflet with new content will be on line. We would also like to see paper copies of this leaflet made available in public places.

I am pleased to inform you that the Emergency Management website has been completed which will incorporate the Flood risk Leaflet and other useful information relating to flooding advice and links to key stakeholders e.g. Natural Resources Wales, National flood forum and Met office. The website will go-live as soon as the website translation has been completed, so I expect this to be done in the next few weeks. With regard to the paper copies, I agree that these need to be disseminated in public places and this will be arranged accordingly.

We feel that the Flood Risk Management Plan is based on historical data, is out of date and therefore needs to be reviewed. Also, we think it is important to raise awareness of the studies, with the public in the area to be made aware of the situation and given a timetable

The flood risk management plan has been produced consistently across Wales and uses the latest technology in the form of flood risk and hazard maps to inform the highest significant flood risk in our communities. It also takes into account both the projected future flooding risk and historical flooding incidents. This has been published on the Authority's website to outline the Authority's intention to manage flood risk, but the success of the plan will be delivered in accordance to available funds. In terms of the ongoing studies, once they have been completed then this information will be shared with the ward members and any residents who have been affected by flooding.

Notwithstanding the financial effects of austerity, we feel that flood risk, as a major issue, needs to be properly resourced. We note that, despite budget constraints, some work is going on to prevent flood risk. We would like to know if it is possible to put a number of schemes together, and submit one major application for grant funding.

I wish to confirm that the Authority has an opportunity to access grant support on schemes up to the value £100k. This can be used for one or multiple schemes up to this value with the condition that the schemes need to be completed by the end of the financial year. For information, last year the Authority had received £60k grant support for two schemes which supported culvert repair works situated on Enid Road, Clydach and support to complete the design of headwall and culvert improvements to the watercourse situated adjacent to 300 Birchgrove Road, Birchgrove. The Authority had also applied for, and received, revenue grant support to the value of £30k which has allowed for access improvements to undertaken to allow safe working accesses and platforms for operatives to maintain grids.

This year, as part of the Coastal Risk Management Programme, I am pleased to inform you that the Authority has received 85% grant support which is valued at £682k to complete the design to enhance the sea defences at Mumbles and this will include consideration to the provision of wider benefits in terms of potential opportunities for increasing visitors' numbers to Mumbles.

We welcome Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) being introduced and would like to be informed if they apply to commercial properties. We feel that use has to be made of all methods for drainage and flood management, and SuDS will be good for the environment as well as doing the job.

The introduction of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act covers all Construction work which has drainage implications and these works may not be commenced unless a drainage system for the work has been approved by the SAB approving body. This will apply to all new development both commercial and residential.

We would like to see awareness raising re SuDS, particularly for Planning Officers, and with training possibly for all Councillors.

The Welsh Government is currently finalising the guidance which will accompany the legislation in May and is working with all Authorities in Wales to develop a common process. In the meantime, The Welsh Government has commissioned a training package to relevant LA officers, to provide improved understanding of the new system. All guides, processes and standards will be made available on the Authority's website and will be closely linked with the Planning department for all interested parties.

With regards to Planning, we feel that there is a need to look at historical records when considering applications, and to be prepared to question the advice from Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Water.

The Planning Department consult the statutory flood risk management Authorities as a matter of course in order to gather a formal response on flood related matters which are used to inform the planning decision process. In addition to this, our Drainage Section are also consulted and where there has been an historical issue relating to flooding then in these cases betterment is sought from developers in order not to exacerbate flood risk in these areas. Any local concerns with regard to historical flooding can be brought to the Planning Department's attention as part of the planning application process who will manage the concerns accordingly. In terms of Planning and the potential impacts in terms of flood risk, I wish to confirm that there is good collaborative work being undertaken between relevant departments and external bodies so that flood risk from all sources is properly assessed.

We believe that quite often the solution to issues is a good maintenance programme and that local knowledge for maintenance is very important. We suggest that a trawl of councillors is undertaken for issues in their local areas that are not on the current maintenance list. We feel that the Department should be able to deviate from the current works schedule if an important risk arises.

I agree that local knowledge does provide good and useful information on where the flooding 'hotspots' are located. In effect, this information is already collected by the Authority's reporting system where frequent problems are brought to the attention of the Highways operations. These incidents are taken into account in terms of reactive attendance to problematic sites especially during the Autumnal months. However, I would like to confirm that the maintenance list, especially for watercourses, has been devised to take into account the level of flood risk which could occur as the result of screens 'blocking up' and have been prioritised to take into account the consequences of flooding with the likelihood of potential damages. To reply to your suggestion, I am happy to forward the Highways maintenance schedule of watercourses to local members, to comment on whether there are any additional concerns which may exist outside of the committed programme. The concerns and locations can be investigated for ownership, and if applicable, can be added to the Authority's list of assets to maintain. It is my understanding that maintenance of watercourses and ditches are carried out by other departments and not just highways, so this will be beneficial in identifying those locations which may not covered by Highways operations to ensure that the Authority provides a consistent approach to maintain drainage assets across the whole of Swansea.

We would like the programme of works for gullies to be made available to Councillors.

For your information I would like to confirm that the Swansea is split into 3 areas, one for each gully tanker. These areas are sub-divided into 12 monthly areas as shown on the attached plan which is in effect the schedule for visiting areas in Swansea. The current protocol is for a road gully to be cleaned at least once in three years. This is a minimum standard, but of course there are locations where cleaning is undertaken more often in flood affected areas, with the effect that maintenance schedule can change due to additional demands such as reactive emergency works.

We feel an opportunity is being missed with regards to self-help. We all need to take pride in where we live. We would like to see a scheme put in place to encourage this. Maybe there could be something in the new leaflet to encourage people to take responsibility for the area outside their own front door?

Whilst I agree with your comments regarding self-help, the Authority needs to consider health and safety concerns in encouraging people to take on responsibility for their own area. This will be given further consideration and will be reported back to you at the next scrutiny meeting.

We feel that an update will be needed in six months' time to ensure that progress on the recommendations is being made; we will therefore be recommending to the Scrutiny Programme Committee that they consider adding this to their work programme for 2018/19

I agree that an update will be beneficial in 6 months time due to the imminent changes in legislation and to report on further progress on the actions previously identified.

To conclude, I wish to acknowledge and thank you for the recommendations of the Scrutiny Working Group and I hope that I have responded to the matters you have raised.

Yours sincerely



**COUNCILLOR MARK THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT SERVICES**

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