

Somerset County Council  
Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee  
– 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

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Section 19 Investigations – Chard and Ilminster

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Cabinet Member: Sarah Dyke

Division and Local Member: All

## 1. Summary

- 1.1.** This report is to update the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the draft Section 19 Flood Investigation Reports that were developed as a result of severe weather events and subsequent flooding in and around Chard and Ilminster during the summer and autumn of 2021.

## 2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** Members are asked to consider and note the contents of the draft reports and provide feedback on any factual inaccuracies and upon any of the recommendations contained therein prior to their finalisation and publication, as required by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010).

## 3. Background

- 3.1.** In June and October 2021 extreme weather events in South Somerset resulted in extensive flooding to properties, roads and land in and around the areas of Chard and Ilminster.

The internal flooding of 5 or more properties resulted in the requirement for the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) at Somerset County Council to undertake a Section 19 Flood Investigation Report – a duty under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010)

- 3.2.** Under this duty, upon becoming aware of a flood in its area, an LLFA must, **to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate—**
- (a) which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and
  - (b) whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must—

- (a) publish the results of its investigation, and
- (b) notify any relevant risk management authorities.

- 3.3.** The threshold for triggering a Section 19 report is set by each LLFA under local policy; SCC's current policy defines this trigger as 5 or more properties flooding internally.

There is no statutory timeline for completion of an investigation, nor a requirement to include or implement any recommendations for resolution of the flooding issues however, our s19 reports often do include lessons learned, some potential recommendations and possible next steps.

**3.4. Chard June 2021**

Flooding was widespread across Chard and surrounding villages on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Chard itself was extensively flooded, especially across the centre of the town, the Furnham Road area, Glynswood, and roads on the western side of the town.

The flood waters were deep enough to prevent traffic moving around the town, especially in the High Street and around Furnham Road, and many houses and businesses were flooded internally. Elsewhere Forton, Tatworth, Wambrook and Higher Wambrook, Wadeford, Combe St Nicholas, and Scampton Lane were all affected by property flooding. Whitestaunton also suffered road damage, as did Scampton lane.

- 3.5.** Homes and businesses have seen property damaged and belongings destroyed. Businesses have been prevented from trading and are now finding insurance hard to secure. Some people found themselves in life threatening situations or in fear of personal harm. Many were recovering when another flood incident occurred the following October (this will be covered in a separate report – this is still in development and will be tabled at a later date).
- 3.6.** The overarching problem was the sheer volume of rainfall. This was well beyond what any residents of the area had seen in their lifetimes. This combined with the topography of Chard to funnel large volumes of water across Chard and down through many villages and hamlets at great speed and depth.
- 3.7.** As is statutorily required, the attached report examines the response of the Risk Management Authorities and the sources and causes of the flooding, how the infrastructure coped with the exceptional volume of rainfall and provides recommendations for what can be done to reduce the effects of extremely high rainfall events in future.
- 3.8.** A number of Recommendations and next steps are included within the report, these include:
- Working with the community to ensure that Riparian responsibilities are

fully understood

- The provision of multiple Control Centres in Chard due to the risk of flooding bisecting the town
- Review of communications protocols to ensure clarity for communities of who to contact during a flooding event
- The auditing by the Highways Authority of gully and drain-management regime to ensure maximum effectiveness of infrastructure
- Continue analysis of possible flood mitigation and alleviation measures in Chard and surrounds
- Develop protocols for mill and sluice gate owners to follow to manage water and reduce the risk of flooding in effected areas more effectively
- Auditing of a number of gullies and culverts to ascertain ownership and condition

### **3.9. Ilminster – October 2021**

Severe flooding took place in Ilminster and Sea on the 20th of October 2021. High rainfall on the back of previous wet weather created high river flows and overland surface water flows in the area.

The residential park home developments on the west of town were particularly hard hit. Residents, many elderly, had to be evacuated, and some have lost everything. Some people found themselves in life threatening situations or in fear of personal harm.

**3.10.** The overarching problem was a combination of the very high rainfall and the already wet ground conditions following recent rain in the preceding period, making October a very wet month overall. This is combined with a relatively impermeable underlying geology and soils, which would have had very little moisture deficit to absorb more rain. Hence the Isle experienced it's highest water level in 30 years gauge history.

**3.11.** The resultant flooding was well beyond what any residents of the area had seen in their lifetimes, and flows on the river Isle were the highest recorded. This created two issues – the Isle coming out of its bank and flooding areas to the west of town, and rainwater accumulating in North Street, Ditton Street and Shudrick Lane.

**3.12.** This report examines how the infrastructure and stakeholders coped with this very high volume of rainfall, examines the response of the Risk Management Authorities, the sources and causes of the flooding and provides recommendations for what can be done to reduce the effects of extremely high rainfall events in future.

**3.13.** A number of Recommendations and next steps are included within the report, these include:

- The formation of a Local Resilience Group and the development of a Local Resilience Plan in conjunction with the Town Council and Environment Agency
- Improved lines of communications between residents and Risk Management Authorities and improved use of Emergency Duty Team
- Information needs to be distributed more widely about how to prepare for flooding.
- Greater clarity and transparency for residents of who to contact with different concerns e.g. blocked drains, overgrown ditches etc.
- Liaison with local landowners regarding Riparian responsibilities and land management issues
- Recently undertaken surface water risk modelling be expanded to include fluvial risks and the interaction between the two
- The auditing by the Highways Authority of gulley and drain-management regime to ensure maximum effectiveness of infrastructure

## **4. Consultations undertaken**

### **4.1. Chard**

In the immediate aftermath of the event, a number of consultations and site visits were undertaken by the LLFA to gain intelligence and evidence to inform the investigation.

A multi-agency emergency meeting was held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021 attended by the LLFA, the Environment Agency, South Somerset District Council, Chard Town Council, Wessex Water, the Devon and Somerset Fire Service to gather intelligence on the event and to ascertain the Risk Management Authority, Incident Response Agency and multiple stakeholder responses during the event

Visits to Forton and the Glynswood area of Chard occurred in June to meet affected residents was followed by further visits to Combe St Nicholas, Scampton Lane, Wadeford, & Furnham Road, Chard on 13<sup>th</sup> August.

Public meetings were held in Combe St Nicholas and in Chard during August and December 2021 respectively to gain further intelligence.

Iterations of the Draft report have undertaken reviews coordinated by the Chard Area Resilience Group, the South Somerset Area West Committee, Wessex Water and the Environment Agency

### **4.2. Ilminster**

A multi-agency emergency meeting was held on 10 November 2021 attended by

the LLFA, the Environment Agency, South Somerset District Council, Chard Town Council, Wessex Water, the Devon and Somerset Fire Service to gather intelligence on the event and to ascertain the Risk Management Authority, Incident Response Agency and multiple stakeholder responses during the event

A drop-in session was held in Ilminster on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to gain personal testimony from residents effected by the flooding to gain intelligence on the sources and impact of the extreme weather event.

Iterations of the Draft report have undertaken reviews coordinated by the Ilminster Flood Group (hosted and led by the Ilminster Town Council), the South Somerset Area West Committee, Wessex Water and the Environment Agency

## **5. Background papers**

### **5.1. Section 19 Reports**

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author