

Tenants' Strategic Group – 25/3/24

Name of Report:

Final Lessons learnt from recent flooding of HRA properties in Wellington

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1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

During an evening of the week commencing 18th September 2023, heavy rain resulted in localised flooding that affected 19 HRA (Housing Revenue Account) properties in Wellington, primarily 17 bungalows at Bovet Street, as well as two houses at Oaken Ground.

A report was brought to Tenants' Strategic Group on 27th November 2023 providing an overview of lessons learnt. The group were asked to note the report and the progress being made to improve our approach to responding to flood incidents and to provide any comments and questions.

Tenants Strategic Group have now requested to see the final product from this piece of work. This comprises of a flow-chart and action plan.

2. Reminder of findings from Interim Report

What went well:

- Excellent response on the night and during the following days, where officers were on the ground daily, supporting every affected household
- Excellent cross-working between Property Services and Tenancy Services, coordinating our support to tenants
- Supportive and caring approach which was customer focussed and empathetic.
- Elected to cover the costs of carpet replacement and removal of furniture during cleaning, as many tenants would have struggled to afford this.
- Officers went above and beyond, many volunteering and working anti-social hours and showing agility and flexibility to find solutions
- Dehumidifiers were provided to all properties early in the process and we committed to pay excess heating and electricity costs for their use.
- Creative support solutions identified for complex tenants bringing in other agencies as needed. For example, one very elderly tenant was partially sighted and had support needs and needed decant; we also had examples of people with significant hoarding and other tenants struggling with their mental health – all of whom required sensitive support to meet their needs.
- Regular communication with those displaced and with their properties being prioritised to be made ready to return.
- Daily project meetings taking place and communications to tenants, with people on site every day meant our communications was clear and frequent.
- We identified a cost effective, empathetic contractor to undertake the removal and cleaning works required for each property.

What could have gone better:

- Having a clear process, allocated coordinator and allocation of resource for a significant event like this, including backfill / reprioritisation of work from the start and ensuring a rota of officer to avoid burn-out.
- Better anticipation of the sheer amount of work this would entail.
- Ability to get hold of Deane Helpline and for them to bring in support was limited.
- A wider list of officers available for call out in an emergency, particularly when bad weather is forecast.
- Needed a single point of contact to be responsible for identifying works required. In practice actions were being identified by officers on the ground and being phoned in by tenants which duplicated work.
- Understanding of insurance arrangements and earlier involvement of the Council's insurance agency (note self insurance requires service to take all responsibility for works and repairs)
- Ability to secure temporary accommodation was a significant challenge and needs to be easier
- A necessity to have professional, accredited cleaning and sanitisation of properties earlier in the process, which is certified.
- Necessity for dry certificates to evidence that property is dried.
- Few tenants had contents insurance and we require clearer principles on what the HRA will pay for when tenant does not have contents insurance – for future cases. This needs to align to a hardship policy and fund. Note our current position sends out mixed messages.
- A clearer position on when we would insist on a decant, normally when the property or a person is at risk by staying in their home. Most incidents where water has entered a property will require a decant.
- Clearer guidance on our position when tenant refuses to leave or to use dehumidifiers, or for contaminated carpets to be removed. Legal Services has advised that a signed disclaimer would not suffice.

3. Follow-up to Incident and next steps

We held lessons learnt meetings with a cross-section of staff and services involved in the incident and developed a flowchart setting out the ideal process flow for future flooding incidents. We also intend to adapt this for other similar events such as fire. The process flowchart will be accompanied by prompt lists for staff involved in future incidents to aid them in what is required.

[Guidance - Flooding Visio.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Accompanying this flow-chart was an action plan which was approved by HSMT. A separate meeting took place with Property Services to identify properties and addresses that are prone to flooding to agree appropriate mitigation measures that can be put in place to reduce the risk of future flooding and / or limit the extent of damage caused. This includes improvement to drainage, guttering and downpipes and engagement of specialist flood consultants to assess other measures.

The Action Plan set out the following actions:

Action Plan as at February 2024

Action	Owner	Target Date	Progress
List of Contacts/ Directory, including the 'Next Level Up' for Duty Managers and Kilkenny	SM	15/3/24	KF merging our two rotas together. SL to then ensure this is added to Somerset Council directory and this to be shared with all our duty managers
Create accommodation providers list including those for pets and the approved providers	TK	Tbc	TK currently off work, but will set new target date on return
Create contact list of Housing staff who consent to being called out for additional support if needed	SL	Complete	This has been shared with Civil Contingencies to make available as part of action 1.
Obtain clarity on how Duty Manager can trigger Civil Contingencies (e.g. rest centre) if needed	SL	Complete	Flowchart updated to show this. Duty Officer can request to speak with CCU Duty Manager to discuss wider civil contingencies support, through Kilkenny line.
Agree principle for additional DLO staff to be paid on call when amber/ red weather alerts	IC	In progress	Principle agreed – implementation underway.
Obtain clarity on powers to decant & potential change to Tenancy Policy	SB	Complete	We have obtained legal advice and cannot enforce a decant, but need to try and persuade
Permanent placement of 4x4 vehicle at DLO	OW	Complete	This has been relocated to Depot
Vehicle on standby with sandbags for emergencies	OW	Complete	A compromise with vehicle always available and pallet of sandbags ready to load on
Create a dedicated line for staff to return calls to Kilkenny to ensure access AND establish principles of Kilkenny booking & paying for accommodation if required as they have P card	SL	Complete	G Allgood has confirmed that P Cards are in place and that new line is now in place and operational
Create 'Safety & Compliance checklist' for Snagging Co-ordinator	OW	Complete	Uploaded to document site

Check position on insurance for transferring tenants in Council vehicles during emergencies (e.g. to hotel or rest centre)	IC / OW	Ongoing	Insurance position checked – Risk Assessment being produced. Confirmation that this is allowed, assuming appropriate risk assessments in place. OW to write a generic risk assessment for this scenario
Advocate to ASC EDT service to support SC tenants by booking hotel accommodation on behalf of Housing on night of incident (rather than Duty Mgr needing to)	SL	Ongoing	ASC have said they are unable to resource this but I have appealed and asked that this decision be revisited
Source more dehumidifiers (Depot has limited supply)	OW	Complete	Facilities Management have a number they can loan out, plus we have other contractors who can provide these
Source contract for contamination testing and cleaning / sanitisation and dry certificate	OW	In progress	OW is chasing this up through Procurement
Check whether contents insurance can be included for all tenants and included within service charge	SL	Complete	Checked. No, this is not possible
Roll out procedures and training to Duty Managers, new people on rota, Civil Contingencies and Kilkenny	SL / SB	Complete	
Create Flood Incident SharePoint Site to store documents.	SL / CD	Complete	Guidance - Flooding Response - All Documents (sharepoint.com)
Collate suite of letters from last incident for flooding sharepoint site. Guidance - Flooding Response - All Documents (sharepoint.com)	FD	Complete	Letters added
Add list of meeting halls and locations to Sharepoint Site, to use in case of emergencies	FD	Complete	Meeting Halls (sharepoint.com)
Consider whether guest rooms can be brought back into use as possible sources of	IC	In progress	Option appraisal process underway

accommodation in emergency (i.e. survey and undertake cost analysis)			
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4. Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note the Flow Chart and progress on the Action Plan and to provide any comments and questions.

3. Background and Full details of the Report (insert here)

As set out above

4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?

There are no quantifiable financial implications known yet in relation to the recommendations in this report. However, there will be some capital costs that come as a result of the related work to put in place flood mitigation measures to properties at risk. This will be considered and added to the Capital programme which is approved through the normal budget-setting process.

6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no data protection implications directly to do with this report

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