

FLOOD MANAGEMENT AND ALLEVIATION REVIEW (ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY TASK GROUP)

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF FLOODING

Background

1. At the meeting of the above group held on 14th January 2010, following a presentation by Alexis Wood (Resilience Manager) it was agreed that a brief paper should be produced outlining the issues, concerns and possible solutions to the awareness raising to the public of the matters surrounding flooding. This would also be an important step for the City Council toward achieving national performance indicator NI37.
2. Particular emphasis was placed not just on awareness that flooding happens, but also the need to encourage people to exercise their right to protect themselves and their property. In addition to this, what the effect of flooding could be on those not directly experiencing the flooding was emphasised.

Current Activities

3. Although efforts have already been made to raise awareness of the flooding issues with the public, there has been very limited success. Actions include:
 - Radio “appearances”
 - Community Wardens
 - Community Ward Meetings – Information Fair part

Draw backs

4. The activities undertaken so far, although time consuming, have made very little impression on the public. The public do not perceive the risk as being theirs, they are disinterested and the efforts made have not been very well supported.
5. Raising awareness of the issues and ensuring people take on their own responsibilities requires appropriate resources and staffing, none of which currently exist within any of the areas concerned.

Areas to be considered

6. There is no capacity or expertise within either the Highways or Emergency Management Sections on marketing/communications, although the following initial ideas have been put forward:
 - **“Brand Name” - FLOOD DEFENCE BEGINS AT HOME**
 - Local media engagement/articles/features
 - Leicester Link feature

- Flood pack to be sent to every resident living in a flood plain, and those that have the potential to be affected by an area being flooded (no power or other utilities, etc)
 - Use of big screen TV in the City Centre
 - Use of other display boards around the City
 - Tie up with national and local campaigns being run by other agencies, such as EA, Defra, Severn Trent, etc.
 - Multi-agency/organisation attendance at festivals and events, along with flood fairs
 - Stand with pictures, maps, etc
 - Leaflets
 - “give aways”
 - Demonstrations of equipment available
 - Water butts
 - In conjunction with Climate Change team to “explain” what uses the grey water can be put to
 - Could the Council consider giving away or reducing the cost of water butts to every home (similar to those which encourage the composting bins)
 - Advertising
 - Back of buses
 - Features in ward newsletters
 - Education
 - Getting emergency management on the schools curriculum (children ultimately take their learning home)
 - Getting into colleges and universities to give multi-agency presentations
 - Permeable Paving
 - Green Roofs
 - Soakaways
 - Insurance incentives (if possible). Possible sponsorship by insurance company or organisation
 - “Show house” with flood protection so that people could visit at agreed times and see what it looks like and the costs – rather like the Environ House
 - City Wardens
 - Presentations at local community meetings (such as WI, lunch clubs, etc)
 - Presentations to vulnerable groups (such as Action Deafness, etc)
 - Presenting at Ward Community Meetings
 - Improved website information (although information already exists on the website, it should be more appropriately placed and monitored)
7. Clearly there is a huge opportunity and scope for the public to be engaged and educated, although there needs to be a balance to ensure that the awareness raising does not cause panic. However, it will need “professional” marketing and communications people with the capacity to take on the work to see it through in a co-ordinated and measured approach, engaging all relevant parts of the organisation and external

agencies where appropriate. The options for this, which are available to us are:

- a. To employ a dedicated Marketing/Communications person to sit in Emergency Management and carry out awareness raising, not just about flooding (although this would be the priority), but about other emergency situations and self-help.
- b. To allocate an existing Marketing/Communications section/person with the task of dedicating some of their time and resources to this awareness raising.

Recommendation

8. Due to the budget reductions being made across the Council, it is felt to be more efficient to opt for b. There are Marketing people across the authority and it is understood that the Environmental Sustainability Team already have a communications/marketing person allocated to carry out their work, and as this work is closely linked with climate change, it is suggested that the same person should work on both to ensure the issues are joined up as much as possible – we are looking for a communication plan to raise awareness and the involvement of the press office.

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