



## **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FLOODS HARDSHIP FUND**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Policy Committee of the exercise of emergency powers by the Chief Executive to set up a hardship fund from the Council's General Contingency fund to provide immediate financial support for households and small businesses directly affected by the recent flood events.
2. The exercise of these powers includes the allocation of up to £100,000 from the General Contingency to fund the hardship payments.
3. This matter is being reported to Policy Committee as an urgent item as it is the first available committee and because the above powers affect more than one committee.

#### **Information and Advice**

4. Significant rainfall over the past week has resulted in major flooding to regions of the county. This includes flooding to parts of Bassetlaw including Worksop, Retford, Rhodesia, Shireoaks and Gateford and areas in Newark and Sherwood district. There has also been an associated mudslide affecting properties at Berry Hill in Mansfield.
5. This has triggered urgent action by a number of council services and functions including emergency planning, highways and the flood risk team as part of the multi-agency response to the emergency. This has been coordinated through the Local Resilience Forum and has included council officers working closely with the emergency services, affected district councils, Highways Agency, Environment Agency, utility companies, Red Cross and other relevant public bodies and voluntary sector services. County council officers have been present in the impacted areas as part of the multi-agency response.
6. The response has evolved and over the weekend moved from the emergency response, co-ordinated by a high level Tactical Co-ordinating Group, to the recovery phase of activity. This involved the establishment of a local Recovery Co-ordinating Group chaired by the county council with representation from across the partnership including the organisations identified above. Membership of this group has evolved as recovery efforts have progressed. The group currently includes membership from a number of additional

county council services including communications, economic development, adult social care and health, customer services, finance.

7. Feedback received from calls to the customer service centre, the drop-in centre operated from Worksop bus station on Sunday and from speaking to local residents more widely over the weekend identified the need for urgent access to financial assistance for local residents and businesses; with many being uninsured. Derbyshire county council, in response to the flooding in their area, confirmed that they would be establishing a hardship fund which began operation on Monday morning. The Local Recovery Coordinating Group operating in Nottinghamshire was supportive of the establishment of a similar scheme for affected residents and businesses in Nottinghamshire.
8. In order to ensure that the scheme could be operational and local people and businesses have access to financial support as soon as possible the Chief Executive, has taken the decision, under the emergency powers available to him under the Constitution, to set up a hardship fund to provide immediate support to affected people and small businesses. This was launched on Monday afternoon with the first payments made on Tuesday morning.
9. The proposed payments will be available to those either flooded or evacuated from areas identified by the Council's Flood Risk Team as having been directly affected by the floods. Payments offered will be £120 per household or £300 per business. This is to ensure that households and business have immediately available funds to assist them to address the immediate problems caused by the flooding.
10. Eligibility will also be based on information provided by the relevant district councils from their lists of households and businesses affected.
11. In addition to individual households, the hardship payment will be available to small and micro businesses. This generally means local businesses with less than 50 employees. Affected businesses will also be offered the chance to have their details passed to a D2N2 Growth Hub adviser to review the additional business support available to them.
12. The fund has been set up to be as straightforward as possible to access. Those wishing to make a claim should call the County Council's Customer Service Centre where a process has been set up to confirm eligibility, take necessary details and pass these to the payments team to make an immediate payment to their bank account. Payments will be credited directly to relevant bank accounts within three hours.

## **Financial Implications**

13. Current estimates are that 400 households and 50 small or micro businesses have been affected. Based on the proposed payments this would equate to circa £65,000, however these numbers may increase.

## **Other Options Considered**

14. The Council has and will continue to provide support to the areas affected. The Council could also direct people and businesses to other agencies willing to assist. However, in this instance following feedback from residents and businesses it was felt that a small

direct financial payment was an important way to support Nottinghamshire residents and businesses.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

15. To report the use of emergency powers by the Chief Executive at the earliest opportunity and to acknowledge the payments to be made to assist those directly affected by the recent flooding. To ensure that members are aware of the decision and the scheme in place and able to signpost their residents and small businesses to the Customer Service Centre to access the scheme.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation with other agencies has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- a) acknowledge the decision to set up a hardship fund as set out in the report.

**Anthony May**  
**Chief Executive**

### **Financial Implications (NS 12/11/19)**

The financial implications are stated within the report itself.

### **Constitutional Comments (SSR 12.11.2019)**

17. Under the scheme of delegation to officers, the Chief Executive has authority to exercise the powers of the County Council, in the event of an emergency or a disaster and will report back to the relevant committee meeting when this authority is exercised.
18. In addition, under the Urgency Procedure rules, the Chief Executive may make any decision normally reserved to committee or another officer. The powers exercised on this occasion usually rest with Finance & Major Contracts Management Committee for the allocation of contingency funds and with Communities and Place Committee for emergency planning activities. As a result, reporting to Policy Committee is appropriate.

**Background Papers Available for Inspection**

None

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

Any electoral division affected by severe flooding as part of the current emergency in the north of Nottinghamshire.