

## **COST OF THE RECENT SEVERE WEATHER**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report sets out to identify the scale of costs that were incurred by the Council in response to the recent severe weather and the actions put in place both to recover costs from central Government and to provide financial support to those adversely affected in the community.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

The Council was part of a multi-agency response to this major incident that resulted in many actions to safeguard life and property across the New Forest. The parts of the District most significantly affected from tidal flooding and storm damage were Milford-on-Sea, Hordle Cliff, Keyhaven, Lymington Quay, Eling, and Marchwood together with other communities. Flooding and extremely high levels of groundwater led to significant flooding in the Avon Valley, affecting communities including Fordingbridge and Ringwood. There was also flooding in Beaulieu and Brockenhurst.

### **3. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE**

The Council's direct response included:

- a. Distribution of 10,000 Sandbags (the subsequent collection is on-going)
- b. Establishment and leadership of a multi-agency (Police, Fire & Rescue Service, Armed Forces, Environment Agency, County Council and District Council Services) Emergency Centre.
- c. Opening of a Rest Centre at Lymington Health & Leisure Centre to manage the evacuation of people from properties affected by extreme weather and providing some resultant temporary accommodation.
- d. Clearance of debris that was a danger to the public and the safeguarding of dangerous structures resulting from the weather, including tree removal.
- e. Emergency works to protect coastal defences at Hurst Spit and Milford on Sea to ensure ongoing defences and public safety.

Costs are not currently finalised, but it is estimated that the direct additional cost of the response to the emergency is in the region of £415,000.

In addition, the Council is providing financial support, backed by Government grant, to those who were adversely affected in the community by the severe weather.

#### **Support for businesses**

- a. Business Support Scheme - £20,000 is available to support small and medium sized businesses to develop and implement recovery plans.
- b. 100% Business Rate relief for those affected by the severe weather, estimated cost £45,000 (approximately 200 properties including beach huts).
- c. A Government Repair and Renew Grant that will support a property's ability to withstand future flooding.
- d. Funding for Farmers is available to support bringing production back as quickly as possible.

#### **Help for homeowners**

- a. Council Tax rebate, funded by Government. The estimated number of homeowners eligible is 20 and the potential cost is £10,000.
- b. A Government Repair and Renew Grant that will support a property's ability to withstand future flooding.

### **4. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

The Government has set aside grants to fund the schemes outlined above and to support the Council in its direct response to the severe weather.

Although there are currently some uncertainties, it is anticipated that Emergency Funding from the Environment Agency (DEFRA) will support the main coastal works and other funding will come from the Bellwin scheme (DCLG). However, all payments are subject to the individual approval of the Government departments.

The Bellwin Scheme requires the local authority to meet a proportion of the costs incurred. For New Forest District Council this is £38,573.

### **5. REMEDIAL WORKS**

The impact of the severe weather does not end with the emergency works. Particularly around the coast, many assets have been adversely affected and it is likely further works will need to be undertaken. This will include repairs to buildings and pathways. These projects will need to be managed through the ongoing work of either the Asset Management Group or the working group established by the Portfolio Holder to review the Beach Hut position.

## 6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

The severe weather has created many difficulties for our community. I am pleased with our response and the efforts made to get back to normal. There have been significant costs incurred and I am pleased that the Government will fund the majority of this work. There still remains, for some in our community, uncertainty resulting from the storms and this, for a few, will likely remain for some time.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet are asked to:

- a) Note the position outlined above;
- b) Approve the provision of a budget for £38,573 in relation to the Bellwin Scheme
- c) Request that actions be taken to recover all other costs from the Government; and
- d) Receive a further report when all the costs have been recovered.

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### Background Papers:

None