

## **Derry City and Strabane District Council**

**Open Minutes of Special Meeting of Derry City and Strabane District Council held in the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Derry on Friday 8 September 2017 at 4.00pm.**

---

**Present:- Councillor McMcHugh (Mayor) (in the Chair), Aldermen Devenney, M Hamilton, Hussey, Kerrigan, McClintock, Ramsey, Thompson and Warke, Councillors Boyle, Campbell, Carr, Cusack, Dobbins, Donnelly, Duffy, Fleming, Gallagher, Gardiner, Hastings, Jackson, C Kelly, D Kelly, P Kelly, Logue, McKnight, McGinley, M McHugh, McKeever, McMahan, O'Reilly, Robinson and Tierney.**

**In Attendance:- Chief Executive (Mr J Kelpie), Director of Health and Communities (Mrs K McFarland), Director of Business and Culture (Mr S Gillespie), Head of Health and Community Wellbeing (Mr S Donaghy), Head of Environment (Mr C Canning), Head of Community Development and Leisure (Mr B O'Hagan), Lead Finance Officer (Mr A Dallas), Lead Assurance Officer (Mrs D McDonnell), Lead Legal Services Officer (Mr P Kingston) and Committee Services Assistant (Ms N Meehan).**

**Representing Statutory Agencies: Mr B Doherty, Ms P McNamee and Mr G Fallows (DAERA), Mr C Loughry (Roads) and Mr J McKee (Rivers) (Department for Infrastructure, Mr E Doherty (NIHE), Chief Inspector A Hutton (PSNI), Ms J McCaffrey (Regional Officer) (Local Government Civil Contingencies), Ms L McLaughlin (Red Cross), Ms D Gallagher and Mr M Mailey (NI Water).**

---

### **SC33/17 Notice and Summons for Meeting**

The Chief Executive read the Notice and Summons for the Meeting.

### **SC34/17 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Alderman R Hamilton and Councillors Hassan, McGuire, R McHugh and Reilly.

### **Open for Decision**

### **SC35/17 Flooding Incident Response**

The Mayor welcomed Members, Officers and those representing the various Statutory Agencies to the Meeting. He referred to the fact that two meetings had taken place in the aftermath of the recent flooding to discuss the situation and input by each of the Agencies involved.

The Mayor then referred to and quoted for Members' information letters of support and commendation which had been received from the Lord Lieutenant Denis Desmond, Balmoral Castle, Dr Angela Garvey Lord Lieutenant.

Denis Desmond Lord Lieutenant

"In my role as Lord Lieutenant of the County I considered it appropriate for me to make a brief report to Buckingham Palace about the unprecedented flooding that occurred two weeks ago in Eglinton and Drumahoe. I attach the letter received from Her Majesty the Queen. I would appreciate if you would share this with Members of Council, the emergency services, local press and anyone else with whom you feel is appropriate. As mentioned I plan to visit both the Eglinton Community Centre and YMCA Drumahoe to enable the message to be posted on their notice boards.

May I also take this opportunity of saying how much I appreciate the manner and speed at which the Council coordinated the response to the flooding. Many people have spoken to me about how much they appreciate the support and help which they received during this extremely difficult period.

If I can be of any further help or assistance please let me know."

Balmoral Castle

"I was saddened to learn of the devastating flooding which has affected County Londonderry and the surrounding areas. Please convey my sympathy to those who have been affected, and my thanks and appreciation to the volunteers, community workers and members of the emergency services who have been involved in the response."

Dr Angela Garvey, Lord Lieutenant

"Please convey my thanks to all at Derry City and Strabane District Council for their outstanding response to the recent flooding episode in Eglinton.

I saw for myself how the variety of agencies came together in the Community Centre to respond to the needs of the very many families affected. Everyone was treated with great dignity and respect.

I am sure you will continue to ensure ongoing support in the weeks and months ahead.

With kind regards.”

The Chief Executive advised that in accordance with the two previous briefing sessions held during and in the aftermath of the recent flooding it would be appropriate to provide a brief overview of works underway by Council and the Statutory Agencies.

The Chief Executive stated that from a Council perspective the flooding had been prioritised and work was being carried out in relation to domestic properties affected across the areas of Environmental Health, Building Control and Planning. He stated that Officers from a range of Councils across the region had assisted Council in its efforts. He stated that at the height of the flooding sixty Council staff were involved in visiting properties with two hundred additional staff involved in co-ordinating responses and clean-up operations.

The Chief Executive advised that each of the Heads of Service would provide an update on Council’s input and works carried out within Council’s powers.

The Chief Executive then invited a brief update from Council’s Senior Management Team.

The Head of Health and Community Wellbeing advised that to date 510 domestic properties had been affected across the City and District. All of these properties had been assessed however, Council continued to receive service requests. He stated that 370 properties were currently eligible for financial assistance under the SEFA scheme.

The Head of Health and community Wellbeing advised that an appeals process existed for anyone who was not eligible and was seeking a second opinion. He continued that during the initial period fifty Council staff were involved in responding to service requests and he expressed his gratitude for the support provided by a number of other

Councils who released staff to assist with the assessment of properties under the mutual aid protocol.

The Head of Health and Community Wellbeing concluded that Officers would continue to deal with service requests about a range of issues as a result of the flooding and were liaising with various statutory agencies to resolve these.

The Lead Finance Officer said his staff had worked to ensure that those people who were entitled to funding received their money without delay. He advised that during the August Bank Holiday weekend money and cheques were issued to those affected and to date from the 370 deemed eligible 360 had received payment. He stated that Officers had visited properties directly to deliver cheques. He stated that this situation would continue to be prioritised in terms of issuing payment to those eligible claimants.

The Head of Environment advised that to date Officers from his section had provided assistance to ninety eight per cent of those seeking help with only a small number still awaiting assessment. He stated that 350 skips containing 200 tonnes of waste had been collected and this service would continue into the following week.

The Head of Environment advised that whilst there had been a slight disruption the refuse collection service had now resumed in all areas. He stated that street cleansing services had also recommenced and a full service would be operational by the following week. He advised that issues would be dealt with on a case by case basis.

The Head of Environment advised that twenty six Council properties had been impacted by the flooding and these were currently being assessed. Works were ongoing at Tullyally Community Centre which were mainly in relation to electrical and heating. He stated that the Centre had partially reopened and it was hoped that normal operations would resume the following week. He stated that a quote was currently being sought in respect of assessing damage at play areas and open spaces which it was anticipated would conclude the following week.

The Head of Environment advised that the changing rooms at Donemana Community Centre had been condemned and would require replacing at a cost of £100,000. However Donemana Civic Amenity Centre had reopened and a report was awaited in respect of buildings and equipment.

The Head of Environment referred to the play area at Plumbridge which would require to be deep cleansed by the contractor. He stated that a considerable amount of damage had been caused to sewers in respect of which it was estimated that repair works would cost approximately £65,000.

The Head of Environment referred to the community association site in Newtownstewart which was operational a report was awaited in respect thereof however regarding electrical equipment. He referred to a number of football pitches throughout the Council area which required remedial works.

The Director of Business and Culture advised that on the Wednesday morning following the flooding Council opened two Incident Centres which became the focal point of the operation. By the Thursday Council was in receipt of assistance from many of the statutory agencies who were also based in the Incident Centres to offer assistance. He advised that a number of donations were received from private sector organisations. These donations included cleaning materials and bedding. Through the coming days as needs grew so did the assistance.

As well as statutory assistance, the local community particularly in Eglinton volunteered and offered tremendous support. He continued that during the initial ten days following the flooding the Centres were operational from 8 am – 10 pm every day including the bank holiday. After the initial ten days the centres were opened from 10 am - 7 pm on the Thursday and Friday and 12 pm – 2 pm Saturday and Sunday. From Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September the Centres were operating on a normal basis although Officers continue to be available for any assistance and support which was required.

The Director of Business and Culture continued that in Eglinton there was an unprecedented joint approach and it would have been impossible to achieve the outcome without the assistance of all those who were involved. He stated that the Incident Centres would remain a focal point for as long as necessary in order to ensure that as many people as possible receive the support and assistance they require.

The Director of Health and Community advised that her staff had been liaising with Senior Officers from all of the key Departments, DAERA and the Department for Communities to identify issues affecting rural

communities. She stated that Officers worked to ensure that a response could be made as quickly as possible in relation to environmental issues and community development. She stated that sports NI had committed to small scale enabling funds for sports clubs affected particularly in relation to soil testing. Additional information in respect thereof would be made available and would be relayed to Members accordingly.

The Head of Community Development and Leisure advised that a community services emergency fund had been created in respect of which nine and a half thousand applications had been received. He stated that £32,000 had been distributed to community groups through the emergency fund as follows:

1. Plumbridge Parish Hall	£1,500
2. Northern Ireland Cancer care	£1,500
3. Jack and Jill Community Playgroup, Plumbridge	£2,500
4. Institute FC	£1,000
5. Club United Community Playgroup	£1,500
6. Glenelly Development Trust	£2,000
7. Ardstraw FC	£2,000
8. Derry and Raphoe Action	£1,500
9. Charity Shop, Another Chance, Glendermott	£2,000
10. Tullyally Community Partnership	£2,000
11. Londonderry YMCA	£2,500
12. St Eugene's GAA Newtownstewart	£1,000
13. The Drummond Centre Project, Donemana	£1,500
14. St Canice's Church Parish of Faughanvale, Eglinton	£2,500
15. Red Hand Defenders "Newtownstewart Flute Band"	£1,000
16. John Mitchels GAC Claudy	£1,000
17. Eglinton Community Centre	£5,000

He advised that work would continue with community organisations to provide support and work would also continue with the rural development team and DAERA to fast track funding for these areas.

The Head of Community Development concluded that a follow up meeting had been scheduled with representatives from the Red Cross the following week in order to determine how Council could continue its support in going forward and pointed out that considerable work was still required with residents and local community groups.

The Chief Executive advised that there had been a multi-agency approach which was controlled by Ms Joan McCaffrey, Regional Officer, Local Government Civil Contingencies. He advised that each of the agencies involved had met on a daily basis since the flooding incident until Friday 1 September to assess the situation and progress to date. He concluded that at 4.30 pm on the day of the flooding the emergency was classified scale 2 and this was dealt with by all agencies throughout Northern Ireland and co-ordinated by the Head of the Civil Service.

Members from all Parties commended and applauded the work carried out by Council staff and all of the statutory agencies on their response to the flooding incident and the continued support and assistance which was being made available. They acknowledged the progress to date which was highly commendable given extent of the damage caused and acknowledged that this would not have been achievable without the professional, compassionate and co-ordinated approach which had been adopted.

Members also recognised and commended the input from local communities to assist those in need during this difficult and prolonged situation.

The Chief Executive then invited the representatives from the various statutory agencies in attendance to update Members on the position to date.

Members received Mr B Doherty, Chief Executive and Ms P McNamee and Mr G Fallows, Veterinary, who provided Members with a brief overview of the situation to date concentrating on the following issues:

- Focused on providing practical support to rural communities by liaising with local representatives to gather information on the situation and provide support to those impacted.
- Advised that aerial photographic surveys of local farm land had been carried out for the purpose of allocating EU farm payments.
- Advised that the Department had received 85 force majeure applications for emergency funding from farmers.
- Stated that up to 6,500 hectares of local farmland has been impacted.
- Advised that the Department was currently working with EU and representatives to examine the possibility of having a system in place which would allow farmers to receive 70% rather than 50% of

the areas based funding which would offer tremendous help with the cash flow and was awaiting a response in relation thereto.

- Pointed out that whilst there was no specific scheme in place in respect of flooding were currently considering alternative funding options.
- Advised that network advisors were available to provide information where needed together with representatives from the Education Authority.
- Were working with LPS to analysis the impact of the flooding.
- Advised that the deadline for force majeure applications was pending.
- The department continued to encourage farmers to take precautions to prevent further flooding.
- Referred to the Fish farm issue in respect of which there was no financial support available. However home visits had taken place to offer advice and support.
- Advised that the Department was working with the NIEA carrying out reviews of the Faughan and Mobuoy sites. These were under constant review and sampling analysis would continue and had increased the frequency of monitoring.
- Referred to country parks and woods areas wherein some issues had arisen. The Department were on-site to review public access and assessing damage caused to bridges.
- Continuing to offer advice and support to Farmers and rural dwellers.
- Advised that to date a reported 61000 birds had been lost.
- Advised that a 24/7 out of hours support line was in operation. No calls had been received to the out of hours service.
- Advised that a bulletin had been issued containing practical advice and guidance on land restoration.
- Requested Farmers to contact the Department prior to carrying out any works given the geographical impact.
- Advised of the availability of a helpline and to date 13 calls received reporting 325 missing sheep and 8 missing cattle and these were being responded to.
- Practical measures had been put in place in respect of the removal of animal by-products.
- Referred to extremely poor land conditions leading to difficulties having been experienced in relation to the removal of carcasses. Work in relation thereto would be ongoing as and when conditions were safe.
- Would be examining any increase in diseases which might impact on Farmers.

- This was an ongoing process but would continue to work and offer support where possible both to Farmers and in terms of animal welfare.

Members raised the following issues:

- Welcomed the assistance given to rural Farmers and the Department's endeavours to have the area based fund increased from 50% to 70%.
- Concern at confusion regarding the relevant individual/agency to be contacted in specific situations.
- Concern at the lack of specific emergency funding for Farmers devastated by the floods.
- Urged the Department to do all in its power to consider alternative funding options for those Farmers worst affected by the floods.
- Some concerns expressed that Departmental officials were not out on the ground meeting with Farmers or endeavouring to identify those Farmers in need of assistance.
- Referred to the need for major routes to be reopened in order to permit Farmers to carry out their business.
- Referred to the large farming community within the Derry City and Strabane District Council area and enquired if there was any assistance available for those Farmers whose businesses were completely submerged in water.
- Enquired as to what extent current schemes could be extended particularly in relation to those farms which were worst affected.
- Referred to the tremendous devastation much of which impacted on small Farmers who may not understand protocol. Enquired if the Department had engaged pro-actively with individual Farmers. What had the Department done to assist those Members of the agricultural community who had not attended engagements which had been set up?
- Concern expressed that the Department had not been proactive in meeting its clients.

The representatives from DAERA responded as follows:

- Advised that there was no specific individual assigned to deal with the situation but undertook to direct any Members of the public to the appropriate agency.
- Advised that the farming community were resilient and had been instrumental in addressing many of the problems which had arisen.

- Confirmed that work was ongoing with a number of farmers to ensure the safe removal of carcasses from unacceptable areas and they had proved tenacious in their efforts in this regard.
- Whilst acknowledging the scale of the problem stated that unfortunately the Department did not have the power or the financial resources or esteem to provide additional funding outside the current schemes and was constrained by regulations. Advised that work was ongoing with DEFRA and the EU to identify what funding, if any, could be made available.
- Referred to the two schemes currently available.
- Acknowledged the problems arising from land being submerged in silt.
- Explained that it was necessary for silt to dry before it could be removed which given current conditions presented a major problem.
- Undertook to do whatever was possible to ensure that schemes were flexible.
- Advised that a technical bulletin had been prepared which provided advice from a range of services.
- Acknowledged that there would be an increased pressure on animal health and welfare as a result of the incident
- Advised that during the previous two weeks meetings had taken place with senior Members of Political Parties and services had been provided in areas frequented by farmers. Advisors were also available in these areas. Acknowledged that there may be a number of smaller farmers who may not be engaging with the Department.
- Advised that the Department's capacity was limited and depended on all of the co-agencies to communicate the message to those concerned.
- Assured that the Department had been pro-active in meeting its clients and setting up claims and would endeavour to ensure that all applications were received by the Department.

Members received Mr C Loughrey (Roads Division) and Mr J McKee (Rivers Agency), Department for Infrastructure who provided Members with a brief overview of the situation to date concentrating on the following issues:

- Advised that the key priority was keeping culverts and gullies free from debris and staff were working continuously on this. However, this would take a long period of time.
- Advised that over one mile of damage was done to flood defences.

- Pointed out that the Department was currently working to replenish stocks of sandbags.
- Stated that 1700 metres of damage had been identified.
- Pointed out that works were being carried out at the Faughan and Burndennet.
- Contractors were on site removing debris from blockages and the removal of trees from watercourses which would continue for some months.
- Referred to possibility of feasibility studies being carried out to consider short term measures with Council and the other statutory agencies involved.
- The Department was keen to embark on community engagement which it regarded as a useful approach and had participated with DAERA in clinics offering advice to Farmers.
- Advised that the flood risk management plan had predicted that Drumahoe, Tullyally and Ivy Meade were at risk of flooding but not of the magnitude which had been experienced.
- Referred to the need for flood alleviation measures to be implemented.
- Advised that the recent flood was 2 feet higher than the 1987 flood which was considered a major disaster.
- Advised that work was continuing to repair roads and bridges using both internal and external contractors.
- Pointed out that from the sixty roads which had initially been closed only twenty two remained closed. Twelve of the remaining twenty two were within the Derry City and Strabane District Council area and were located mainly around Drumahoe, Glenelly and Plumbridge.
- Stated that the main routes had been prioritised all of which had reopened three days after the flooding incident. The B routes would be addressed next.
- Advised that the collapse of the Church Street Claudy Bridge was caused when one of four piers was wiped out by the force of the river causing two of the five arches to collapse.
- Contractors were currently on-site considering options and assessment was ongoing with the possibility of a footbridge being considered to facilitate the community. Discussions had taken place with landowners and agreement had been reached and it was anticipated that this would be operational in the coming weeks.
- Advised that the Park and Ride at Drumahoe remained closed. Contractors were currently on site and it was anticipated that it would reopen the following week.

- The Department was limited in terms of when works would be carried out at Drumahoe Road. However work was ongoing with Planning and the other agencies involved. However it was anticipated that it would be approximately 4-6 weeks to have the situation resolved.
- Concluded that 600 structures within the Derry City and Strabane District Council areas were being inspected.

Members then raised the following points:

- Enquired if there were any plans to bring in additional resources?
- Had consideration been given to getting additional support from the Irish Army/military as was the case in Donegal?
- Referred to buildings which were structurally unsound in Donemana and Glenelly valley.
- Enquired if a thorough structural inspection would be carried out at the bridge in Plumbridge?
- Acknowledged that works were being prioritised but referred to the gullies in a number of housing estates in Strabane which were blocked and requested that necessary works be carried out.
- Referred to the possibility of co-ordinating a multi-agency approach between Derry and Donegal.
- Made specific reference to the need for preventative measures to be put in place to ensure this does not happen again and urged cross border co-operation and further multi-agency working to look at ways in which this could be achieved.
- Referred to the impact of the flooding on the Culmore area and the fact that seven families were currently displaced.
- Expressed concern that a small roadway at Culmore Point which served six cottages which housed a number of elderly and disabled tenants which had been destroyed by the flooding had been overlooked.
- Welcomed the progress to date in relation to the Park and Ride.
- Enquired if it was proposed that the Faughan Bridge would be fully operational following the suggested 4-6 weeks in respect of the completion of works?
- Referred to major issues regarding safety at the Faughan Bridge as a result of it being used as an alternative route due to road closures in the area.
- In terms of community engagement referred to serious concerns expressed by residents of Ivy Meade that this type of disaster could happen again. Referred to the need for preventative measures to be implemented without delay.

- Enquired if the clean-up works included the Burn at Ivy Meade.
- Enquired if given the scale of the emergency additional contractors could be made available to carry out works at the Park and Ride.
- Referred to the need to analyse the situation with a view to implementing necessary preventative measures.
- Acknowledged financial cuts across the board and referred to the fact that these cuts were having a significant negative impact. If the necessary funding had been made available the situation could have been avoided and the damage minimised.
- Expressed concern at suggestions that the British Army be engaged to assist in the clean-up operation.
- Enquired if an audit of all works recently undertaken would be carried out by the Department and the impact of the flooding thereon?
- With regard to pre-emptive measures enquired if the Council area referred to related specifically to the former Derry City Council area?
- Enquired if the Department were aware that a local GAA Club in Newtownstewart had installed a river banking which had not been granted approval causing a water build up in the surrounding area. This was an area in which previous flooding had occurred. Enquired as to hydrological effect on the surrounding area of this alleged illegal banking.
- Queried why the British Army had not been engaged to assist in these works as British people were suffering?
- Referred to a number of rivers together with a large pipe which had overflowed in the Rosnagalliagh area of the City. These had overflowed on 3 previous occasions and requested that these be investigated with a view to long term solution being identified.
- Enquired if the Department would be examining the cause of the flooding at Muff which was not due to river overflow.
- Queried proposals in respect of Claudy Bridge.
- Expressed concern regarding safety in respect of diversions which had been created due to necessary road closures in both Eglinton and Drumahoe. In terms of dealing with greatly increased traffic levels and possible impact on drainage.

The representatives from the Department for Infrastructure responded as follows:

- Assured that a thorough inspection of all structural sites would be carried out.
- Confirmed that additional resources were being utilised.

- Confirmed that only twenty one of the initial sixty roads remained closed. However these required a greater degree of planning and it was not a simply a matter of engaging additional resources.
- Advised that the Department had emergency resources which they were using however they were limited in what they could do because of the situation,
- Whilst the reopening of Roads was the Department's priority undertook to investigate blocked gullies in housing estates in Strabane.
- Confirmed that there were good cross border links between each of the agencies with information being shared in terms of building risks. However this could be further utilised in the future.
- Undertook to investigate the damage caused to the roadway at Culmore Point and report thereon to the said Member.
- Confirmed that the damage had been caused to the approach to the Faughan Bridge and not the actual Bridge.
- Referred to difficulties arising from the fact that there was a massive co-ordinated exercise to divert additional resources away from the Bridge in order that essential works could be carried out following which the contractor would return and complete the work. It was anticipated that if things went according to plan the Bridge would be fully operational in the suggested 4-6 weeks period.
- Confirmed that clean-up works would only be carried out in designated waters which would involve larger rivers.
- Advised that the Department would be willing to provide advice sessions in the North West as had been provided in other areas.
- Acknowledged public concerns regarding what action should be taken following the issue of a serious weather warning and stated that the Department would share with communities information received in order that they could be made aware which would prove beneficial in the longer term.
- Referred to the need for preliminary works to be carried out at the Park and Ride prior to the contractor coming on site.
- Confirmed that investigations had been carried out which had identified areas of concern within the Council area. In identifying vulnerable areas this would allow the Department to reinforce the need for necessary preventative works to be carried out in areas of concern which would limit damage in the event of an incident of a similar magnitude.
- Confirmed that a thorough inspection of all recent works undertaken had been carried out and pointed out that some of the defects identified following the flooding were due to difficulties in terms of design. Explained that event with the inclusion of a safety

net considerable damage would still have been caused due to the force of the flow.

- Assured that where identified the Department would endeavour to have all necessary works carried out to ensure greater safety in the event of an incident of a similar scale.
- Stated that it was not possible to build your way out of flood risk.
- Requested that information regarding any areas of concern be relayed to the Departmental headquarters.
- Advised that under the floods directive the Department was obliged to identify flood risk areas and areas within the City had been identified as flood risk. These were the areas where the greatest damage might occur and preventative measures were necessary.
- Was unsure of any illegal banking having been erected and requested that any information in relation thereto be forwarded to the Department.
- Advised that the engagement of additional resources was a matter for the Department.
- Confirmed that the rivers and piping in the Rossnagalliagh area would be included in the Department's water investigations. Given the flooding history would try to assess the situation with a view to identifying a long-term solution to the problem.
- Confirmed that an inspection would be carried out to determine a number of flooding mechanisms in respect of Muff River.
- Advised that it was difficult to assess the cost of emergency repair works to be carried out.
- Advised that twelve roads in the rural area remained closed. A total of 140 roads were damaged which remained passable. It was necessary to identify funding in respect of repairing these damages.
- Advised that there were in total 160 bridges to be inspected. Claudy Bridge was on a B route and was therefore not regarded as a priority. However, it was proposed to install a pedestrian footbridge.
- Undertook to investigate diversion routes in terms of dealing with increased traffic levels and drainage.

Members received Mr E Doherty, Northern Ireland Housing Executive who provided Members with a brief overview concentrating on the following issues:

- Advised that following the flooding an immediate emergency was declared by the Housing Executive and additional resources were put in place.

- Advised that the Waterside office had operated as an Incident Centre.
- Pointed out that staff from Coleraine, Ballymena and Limavady had been appointed to rest centres.
- Stated that 55 emergency orders had been issued to contractors.
- Advised that contractors had also attended private occupiers to offer assistance.
- Stated that 94 Housing Executive properties were affected in total- Waterloo Place 13 properties with minor damage – Waterside 15. Actual 26 – 19 severely.
- In relation to progress to date explained that all properties had been cleared out and technical inspections carried out and reinstatement works continued.
- Advised that staff had engaged with specialist electrical contractors for all properties including private however 12 still remained without electricity. 44 dehumidifiers had been provided and were aiming to have these works completed by Christmas.
- Stated that 58 householders sought assistance and 26 had to be placed in emergency accommodation. 20 of those had since been relocated in hotels and Bed and Breakfasts.
- Stated that 46 families had been granted placements in one week.
- Advised that apartments at Magee Campus had been secured for some of the families affected however these had to be vacated by 8 September.
- Stated that officials had examined the possibility of private rentals however this had not proved successful.
- Advised that other social providers had been identified with four housing associations providing 11 properties. As many were left with few belongings these were fully furnished, carpeted and included white goods, beds and bedding, sofas and tables and chairs, homeless packs including kettles, cutlery etc all provided by the Housing Executive.
- Pointed out that these were offered and accepted and the sign ups were ongoing.
- Pointed out that a number of further properties had been earmarked and were on hold.
- Referred to the need for many residents to be housed in the locality where they live for schools and health reasons.
- Stated that 11 Mobile homes had been secured to be located on Council owned sites at St Canice's Park – these had been offered and accepted and were in good condition. An engineer was onsite to carry out necessary works to render it suitable. Work was ongoing with Planning and Roads Division assisting them to

expediate this and consultation was ongoing with residents and the feedback was positive. Works would begin the following week.

- Advised that a number of other Mobile homes were on standby to be delivered with additional accommodation having been identified in St Columb's Park House.
- Advised that currently only two families remained in emergency accommodation.

Members received Chief Inspector Alan Hutton, PSNI who provided Members with a brief overview concentrating on the following issues:

- Praised the multi-agency response and stated that PSNI had dealt with 191 requests for assistance on the night of the flooding and a further 180 the following day.
- There was a significant demand for assistance which meant they had to use local and regional Officers to assist.
- The PSNI's key priority was for health and safety to the public.
- Advised that normally his team at Strand Road would deal with 100 calls in a week.
- Said it was most fortunate that there was no loss of life.
- Applauded the community support which was tremendous.
- Following the initial emergency the PSNI's main focus was on protecting homes vacated by the floods.

Members received Ms L McLaughlin, Red Cross who provided Members with a brief overview concentrating on the following:

- Advised that Red Cross 49 volunteers had operated from the two Incident Centres with a main focus in Eglinton.
- Volunteers had visited homes and carried out door to door visits in order to identify need.
- Key priority was to provide food and support to those affected and would continue to do so in the coming weeks as people tried to deal with what had happened.
- The Red Cross was currently assessing local need.

Members received Ms D Gallagher (Head of Safety and Drinking Water) and Mr M Mailey (Head of Networks) NI Water who provided Members with a brief overview concentrating on the following:

- Advised that the stopping of drinking water extraction at Carmoney on the Faughan for five days resulted in water for the City being pumped from Banagher and Coleraine.

- Advised that the pumps at the Water Treatment works were flooded and staff had worked over the August Bank Holiday weekend to carry out necessary repair works and have the pumps back working.
- Advised that the river banks had broken.
- Assured Members that NIEA and NI Water were working closely to monitor the River Faughan at all points.
- The subsequent testing of water at the River Faughan had given no cause for concern. Testing would continue.
- Advised that serious damage had been caused to NI Water's key sites.
- Referred to flooding which had occurred at the Faughan pump which was out of use for five days however this was now fully operational.
- Advised that the water network had sustained serious damage particularly in terms of infrastructure and bridges.
- There was a loss of six water mains. A number of stringers were being used to ensure the network was kept in supply.
- Work was ongoing with Transport NI and the other agencies to continue to address the problems which had arisen.

Members received Ms J McCaffrey, Regional Emergency Co-Ordinator, Local Government Civil Contingencies who provided Members with a brief overview concentrating on the following:

- Praised the multi-agency co-ordinated approach and provided an overview of how it was adopted.
- Advised that the recovery period continued and all Agencies in attendance had committed to continue their work and would address the issues raised.
- Advised that there had been cross border co-ordination and a cross-border emergency group had been established which dealt with cross border areas.
- There was a cross-border EU Directive which covered cross-border issues.
- Referred to the need to work with OPW.
- Advised that the matter would be discussed at the North West Regional Development Group Meeting and activation protocols would be reviewed together with communication on a local basis.

Members then raised the following issues:

- Enquired if the Housing Executive were dealing with non-Executive tenants and with issues within the entire Council area?

- Sought assurances that there would be no recurrence of the major traffic issues experienced during the flooding.
- Queried the longer term situation for Housing Executive tenants affected by the flooding.
- Expressed concern that a representative from Western Care Trust was not in attendance particularly given the emotional impact of the flooding on those affected. Suggested engaging with the Trust in this regard.
- Suggested writing to the Secretary of State and the Civil Service seeking financial assistance which would allow reserves to be renewed and the expansion of the financial scheme.
- Pointed out that community and voluntary organisations had sustained huge losses.
- Suggested that funding be sought for the community and voluntary sector and local businesses.
- Concern expressed regarding those affected by the flooding, particularly in Eglinton who did not have insurance.
- Referred to the need for dehumidifiers to be made available to assist in drying out properties in Eglinton.
- Expressed concern regarding staff in Northern Ireland Housing Executive offices in the Waterside and Strabane not being able to deal with some of the issues being reported. Stated that there was a clear breakdown in communication between the Waterside Office and the Strabane in terms of dealing with queries.
- Clarification was sought on the yellow weather warning which had been issued and queried if more could have been done by the Met Office.
- Expressed serious concern that the primary ambulance route in Burndennet had been closed for five days.
- Made reference to the 1987 flooding in Strabane when the then Secretary of State had visited the area. Suggested that the ~current Secretary of State be invited to visit the City and District to assess the damage caused.  
Referred to the fact that people had been affected in many different ways however acknowledged that work was ongoing.
- Referred to the need for the community and voluntary sector within the Eglinton and Drumahoe areas not to be overlooked.
- Referred to the need for lessons to be learned in terms of preventative measures.
- Stated that it was incumbent upon all of the agencies involved that wider financial support was made available.
- Referred to the possibility of those residents with no insurance availing of the Warm Home Scheme introduced by Council.

- Queried if an audit had been carried out of those businesses affected by the flooding and if this would be feasible.
- Expressed concern that representatives from the Education Authority were not in attendance particularly given that they had not resolved the ongoing transport situation.

The representatives from the Statutory Agencies responded as follows:

- Confirmed that the Housing Executive had offered assistance to all those affected by the flooding.
- Undertook to consider what action could be taken in respect of those residents who did not have insurance.
- Undertook to investigate the possibility of providing dehumidifiers to assist in drying out properties.
- Acknowledged that many residents did not have insurance and undertook to consider what action could be taken in this regard.
- Confirmed that there was one case in which some confusion had arisen in relation to the Housing Executive office in Strabane however, this was swiftly dealt with.
- Advised that all Housing Executive staff should have been knowledgeable as all those dealing with the incident had been well informed regarding procedures and the issues in focus.
- Referred to the need to reconsider the issuing of a yellow warning and the need for flexibility of approach. Lessons had been learned which would ensure an improvement in response in similar situations.
- Confirmed that the issuing of a yellow warning would be included as part of the review.

Following some discussion Councillor Gardiner Moved, Councillor McKeever Seconded

**That Council write to the Secretary of State and Senior Civil Servants seeking specific financial assistance in respect of the flooding and requesting that the financial assistance scheme be extended to take account of local voluntary and community sector and small businesses.**

A Member of the DUP grouping stated that whilst supporting the above Motion she understood the Secretary of State may not be in a position to respond to this request because there was currently no government in place or direct rule in Northern Ireland. She suggested

a possible amendment to the Motion in that Council request that an exception be made for those small community businesses which required special intervention and enquired if there was some mechanism through which Council could consider special measures to provide financial assistance for the small number of community businesses contained within Glendermott Valley Business Park.

The Chief Executive stated that Council was aware that a significant of businesses had been affected but was not aware of the total number. However Council was aware that the number of businesses affected was significant. He referred to the lack of definition between small business, rural business and farming business. He suggested that if Members so wished Officers could explore options however, there was no scheme or policy currently in operation in respect of small businesses. He stated that the multi-agency group had explored at length any opportunity for Senior Civil Servants to sign off on the small businesses most severely affected. However the official response had been negative.

The Chief Executive stated that if the suggested amendment was approved Officers would examine this possibility and bring forward a report thereon. He stated however that Council had no power or authority to take any action at present. He said it would be necessary to consider the extent and cost involved and provide a figure in respect thereof.

A Member of the DUP grouping whilst appreciating the situation, expressed concern that the small community businesses affected would collapse. She requested that Officers explore any way in which assistance could be provided for these small businesses.

A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping referred to the suggested amendment by a Member of the DIP grouping and stated that whilst there was sympathy for small businesses at this time she felt it would be dangerous to refer to a specific set of businesses when businesses throughout the Council area had been affected.

An Independent Member of Council stated that any amendment should be inclusive.

A Member of the SDLP grouping referred to a request by her Party Leader that a sum of £1,000 be extended to all businesses in the aftermath of the flooding incident. She stated that this would be an

immediate interim assistance whilst additional financial assistance was sought. She urged all Party leaders to approve this request.

Alderman McClintock, Councillor Ramsey Seconded

**That in the meantime Council for look for a mechanism through which Council can help community businesses.**

A Member of the SDLP grouping sought clarification on the term 'community business'.

A Member of the DUP grouping explained that this was a social enterprise business like those in Glendermott Valley Business Park.

An Independent Member of Council reiterated the need to be inclusive of all.

The Amendment on being put to the vote was declared lost their voting:

For the Amendment – 6

Against the Amendment – 19

Abstentions – 1.

Subsequently Councillor Gardiner Moved, Councillor McKeever Seconded and the Council unanimously

**Resolved that Council write to the Secretary of State and Senior Civil Servants seeking specific financial assistance in respect of the flooding and requesting that the financial assistance scheme be extended to take account of local voluntary and community sector and small businesses.**

**The Meeting terminated at 6.20 pm**