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RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

CABINET STATEMENT

TITLE: SEVERE WEATHER ON 5th SEPTEMBER 2008

DATE: 24th September 2008

BY: Councillor Andrew Morgan, Cabinet Member for Transport and Customer Care:

I would like to make a statement and update members regarding the severe weather experienced in Rhondda Cynon Taf on Friday 5th September.

This was one of the largest emergencies the County has ever had to deal with. Over 200 front line council staff responded assisted by a multi service and multi agency response, which included the setting up of a Silver Command Room at Pontypridd police station.

Our main priority was the safety of residents and visitors to the County Borough and staff worked tirelessly and beyond the call of duty to preserve the major infrastructure in Rhondda Cynon Taf and help people to protect their properties. I have personally thanked Highways and all the other Departments that contributed. These staff worked in what were very difficult circumstances and performed extremely well under intense pressure.

Whilst there was flooding throughout the county, not all Members will be aware of some of the major incidents that staff responded to:

- In Abercynon, the main telecommunications centre for both the Cynon Valley and Merthyr was flooding and had to be protected by Council and Environment Agency staff. Had this been flooded, phone coverage would have been lost to both areas and Mobile network coverage lost in Cynon.
- The flooding caused a number of road closures on the Friday including the A472 Llantwit Road, the A4058 through Trehafod and Hopkinstown, part of the A470 (Abercynon to Pontypridd), the A4054 Cilfynydd Road, and the

Heads of the Valleys Road with dozens of minor roads also badly affected and for a time all rail travel in Rhondda Cynon Taf was suspended.

- The B4276 in Llwydcoed has had to close whilst repairs are carried out to a deep hole resulting from a collapsed drainage culvert below the road surface. This is being undertaken as soon as possible to keep inconvenience to a minimum and the road has already partly reopened with traffic travelling in single file controlled by traffic lights.
- Pupils at St Michael's Primary School in Treforest had to be led to safety to the nearby St Dyfrigs Catholic Church by school and Council staff assisted by the Fire Service. A number of other schools were badly affected by floodwater and the Council is currently organising repairs and assisting with insurance claims in respect of 9 schools.
- In Aberaman, around 150 homes were affected by flooding in streets and a major operation was launched to protect properties although around 50 properties were flooded. Staff were visiting residents during the weekend to offer advice and what help they could.
- A number of residents in Rhydyfelin and Abercynon also had to be evacuated and temporarily housed in Hawthorn Leisure Centre and Abercynon Day Centre respectively.
- In my own ward of Mountain Ash West, a pumping station failed due to the volume of water and fire tenders were sent to pump water to protect a number of houses until the Council could bring in high volume pumps from Bridgend.
- In Treforest, our staff knocked doors with the emergency services to evacuate residents after concern was raised by the Environment Agency that the footbridge over the River Taff could be lost.
- And in Pontypridd, JCBs were used to unblock a major culvert and to clear streets where boulders from the mountain had washed down; some I am told were the size of car wheels and had ended up in terraced streets.

Of course there were many more incidents that it is not possible to list.

To demonstrate the scale of the emergency, our Council Contact Centre answered almost 1800 calls for help during working hours that Friday and a further 1266 out of hours. We received 560 calls for sandbags alone. By 6pm on the Friday, over 3,000 sandbags had been issued and over 6,000 by the Saturday morning. South Wales Fire and Rescue have confirmed they took 203 emergency 999 calls for flooding or

water rescues within RCT and attended 89 flooding related incidents with over 20 appliances in use.

Clearly, Rhondda Cynon Taf experienced severe problems as a result of the adverse weather. I want to assure Members that everything possible was done by both the Council and the emergency services and I believe that without such a quick and robust response by our staff, the damage would have been far worse. I realise that may be of little consolation to those people whose homes were flooded and I sympathise deeply with them where I have seen some of the damage first hand and we have been offering as much support as possible.

Works are still ongoing throughout the county to repair the damage from the severe weather and the costs are likely to be significant, however the final cost will not be known for some time as further repairs are identified.

Finally, I would therefore like to formally place on record my thanks to our Council staff and all the staff from all the agencies involved who worked so selflessly to serve the residents of RCT and of course I welcome the Notice of Motion that comes later on in tonight's agenda.