



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL MAJOR INCIDENT RECOVERY BOARD - FEBRUARY 2020 'STORM DENNIS' FLOODING EVENT

Minutes of the meeting of the Major Incident Recovery Board - February 2020 'Storm Dennis' Flooding Event meeting held on Thursday, 20 February 2020 at 1.00 pm at the Committee Room 1, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypanyd, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Major Incident Recovery Board - February 2020 'Storm Dennis' Flooding Event Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor M Norris Councillor R Bevan

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr R Waters, Service Director – Frontline Services
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services

Others in attendance

Ms B Winter MP – MP for the Cynon Valley
Mr J Hogg – Natural Resources Wales
Mr J Payne – Pontypridd BID
Mr J Nicholas – Mileway
Mr T Graham - Pontypridd Town Council

6 Welcome and Apology

The Chair welcomed the attendees to the meeting and an apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor M. Webber.

7 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

8 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2020 as an accurate reflection.

9 Service Recovery Update

The following updates were provided by Council Officers and Key Partners in respect of the major weather incident 'Storm Dennis':

Highways and Infrastructure

- In respect of the reoccurring flooding in Pentre, it was explained that the forest cuttings had blocked the culvert and that the fire service were working with two additional pumps in an attempt to prevent further flooding to the properties in the short-term;
- Ty Glantaf Depot lost over 20 vehicles with significant flood damage to the offices and as such, staff had been moved;
- Cardiff Council were providing additional support in supplying three gully suckers and road sweepers under the Mutual Aid Agreement, which would be used in Pontypridd/Rhondda, Treforest Industrial Estate and Cynon to support the clean-up;
- The Bridge in Pontypridd and Castle Inn Bridge, Treforest were closed;
- Hopkinstown wall had suffered significant damage;
- Praise was given to the amount of hours and commitment shown by all staff and engineers who had been working tirelessly; and
- A further 460 flood related calls had been received overnight.

Housing

- There were currently 16 families in temporary accommodation (the number had reduced slightly since the last meeting due to a number of residents returning to their homes or staying with families);
- Enquiries were being received from families who were unable to stay at their homes;
- Staff were searching for accommodation in the surrounding Local Authorities and the private renting sector;
- The Council were helping with the cost of meals for families in temporary accommodation;
- Lack of insurance remained a huge issue for a number of residents;
- Many residents required practical help with the clean-up;
- Staff were working on identifying any vulnerable and disabled residents who require social care and support;
- 470 homes had been door-knocked by Council staff who were collating information into a growing database and providing advice and assistance;
- Teams were deployed in Hirwaun, Bryncynon, Treorchy, Pontypridd, Blaenllechau, Ynysybwl and Pentre;
- 420 [E-forms](#) had been submitted by residents overnight, stating that they require a hardship payment for flood damage. All homes would be checked and added to the database as part of the verification process and all residents would need to bring identification and proof of address to receive the hardship payment and prevent exploitation;
- In respect of the payment process, arrangements would be in place by the end of the week, with the payment provided the following week;
- The Council's mobile library service, in partnership with RCT Citizens Advice, would be visiting the communities most affected by the flooding in the coming days, to provide residents with advice and support with insurance claims;
- The Council continued to work in partnership with Interlink, Community Groups and Communities to coordinate a community response to flooding and ensure the right help is provided to the right locations – all information and advice is provided on the [Council website](#);
- Many businesses had come forward to offer labour;

- Go Compare would be present at Taffs Well Community Centre to support residents in challenging insurance claims;
- The Council were linking with Too Good To Waste, which offer pre-loved furniture to those in crisis,
- A number of illegal scams, unsolicited calls and rogue traders falsely offering support and claiming to be from the Council, housing associations or utility companies had arisen in the last few days. As such, guidance had been provided on the Council website for residents with clear information on [how to report a scam](#) to South Wales Police;
- Guidance had been provided on the Council website in respect of water quality, to ensure residents are provided with the correct information, which was that the tap water is safe but residents need to ensure the sinks are disinfected; and
- Welsh Water had offered to distribute water bottles to the centres and volunteers.

Businesses

- Council Staff were assisting businesses with the form filling;
- There had been a break in to Boots, Taff Street, Pontypridd, which had left businesses worried but CCTV was on high alert;
- Pentre residents were pleased with the clean-up support provided by the Local Authority but required help with the sludge in their back gardens;
- The same streets in Pentre had flooded once again, since Sunday's flood, with the addition of Treharne Street;
- There had been questions over the Welsh Water pumping station in Pentre and whether it had been working but Welsh Water had confirmed that it had been working to its maximum capacity; and
- The Development Bank of Wales were working with businesses in Treforest.

Natural Resources Wales

- The Local Authority response to the exceptional level of flooding had been immense;
- The priority for NRW was to relook at its flood defences to prepare for any future flooding;
- There was still one weather warning for Wales but the current forecast looked more positive for RCT in respect of river flooding;
- Staff were at Pentre grid with an excavator to clean any blockages;
- There were six sewer issues but all were in hand;
- In respect of the flooding of residential properties in Pentre, it was explained that NRW were compelled to cut down areas of the forest due to disease in the trees. Some of the foliage was left to encourage biodiversity but given the extreme seasonal weather experienced (hot summers resulting in grass fires and the sheer volume of water causing flooding), there was a need to relook at the process. As such a bid had been submitted to Welsh Government in partnership with the fire service for £850,000 for support;
- A meeting had been organised with a landlord from Treforest Industrial Estate to discuss the businesses; and
- The Leader advised that Chris Bryant MP was organising small, controlled meetings to take place with residents from Pentre and Mountain Ash to meet with Natural Resources Wales.

Treforest Business

- Approximately 60-70 occupiers had been in contact;
- An email had been circulated to all tenants to ask them to contact the property managers;
- A key concern of businesses was contamination and the need to know their requirements;
- Temporary accommodation was also key as there was a need to store expensive machinery and relocate in the short-term; and
- The gully suckers and road sweepers dedicated to the Estate would be key in helping with the clean-up operation although some muddy areas would be more difficult.

Pontypridd Town Council

- Much of the museum collection had been damaged in the flood, and were trying to be salvaged. Thankfully, many of the more valuable items were contained in a different part of the building;
- Taff Meadow Community Centre had suffered significant flood damage with sewage still in the building;
- Infection was a main concern due to cases of residents suffering with vomiting and diarrhoea following the flood; and
- There were cases of insurers refusing payments as buildings were not covered for flood damage, but residents and businesses were urged to state that the flood was a repercussion of the storm.

Pontypridd BID

- There was damage to the foundations of a block on Mill Street, Pontypridd and many of the occupants did not have appropriate insurance;
- One business had already made the decision to close, resulting in 2/3 job losses;
- Many of the basements in Taff Street had significant flood damage;
- 'Hope Rescue' were in urgent need of temporary accommodation for approximately 3 months; and
- The Council were asked to continue the supply of skips in the interim to help with the clean-up operation.

The MP for the Cynon Valley took the opportunity to thank the Council and key partners on behalf of residents for their continuous work at such a devastating time. The MP raised the issue of the mental impact the loss and devastation could have on the residents of RCT and advised that the mental health charity 'Mind' were available to provide support to those in need.

The Leader announced that he had contacted Welsh Government to request three months of business rate relief to the businesses affected by the flood, but had yet to receive a response.

The Leader informed the Steering Group that due to the pressure on resources, he would release of a further £500,000 of emergency funds to support the ongoing immediate works across the County.

Discussions ensued around the hardship payment offered by the Council with the Steering Group agreeing that officers would provide cheques directly to those affected, and if they wish to receive a BACS payment, they would then

need to fill out a form for processing.

The Steering Group **RESOLVED**:

- To urge all residents to inform the Council if they have been affected by flooding in the dedicated e-form on the Council's website (Residents need to be aware that if the Council only attended their homes to provide sandbags, they are not on the database for the hardship payment). This will help officers to build a comprehensive picture of the communities that have been impacted and will also enable them to provide funding to the eligible residents and businesses;
- That there was a need for any businesses that were on the verge of losing staff due to insurance issues to contact the Council for support;
- That there was a need for Mr D. Rosser, Director, Welsh Government and his team to make immediate contact with the effected businesses on Treforest Industrial Estate;
- That the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services provide the representative from Mileway with the guidance on contamination requirements;
- That the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services provide the Chief Executive of Pontypridd Town Council with any information and guidance on infections;
- That an inspection is undertaken of the bridge to Treforest Industrial Estate and train station to ensure it is safe;
- That all information on the whereabouts of the mobile libraries is advertised through social media;
- That the Council continue to provide skips to Pontypridd town centre until further notice; and
- That there was a crucial need to review the National flood warning system.

Before closing the meeting, the Leader informed the Steering Group that he and relevant officers were meeting with the UK Government the following Monday to discuss concerns in respect of the landslides throughout RCT and to push for funding.

10 Urgent Decision of the Leader of the Council

The Steering Group **RESOLVED** to note the Urgent Decision taken by the Leader of the Council.

This meeting closed at 2.50 pm

**A Morgan
Chairman.**