

**Committee: FULL COUNCIL**

**Date: 20 June 2023**

**Title: Section 19 Flood Report**

**Purpose of Report**

For members to receive the Section 19 Report relating to the flooding that took mm place on the 20 October 2023

**Recommendation:**

Members to note the report.

**Report:**

1. Following the Flooding that took place in and around Ilminster on the 20 October 2021, a Section 19 Report was commissioned to be produced by Somerset County Council.
2. At the Full Council meeting on the 16 November the Town Council were informed of the need for a plan to be created that would allow for the impact of future flooding of Ilminster to be of minimal impact as possible.
3. Members were very aware that the events such as befell the town on the 20 October were just the latest in a series of incidents. They also noted that as a result of climate change such occurrences were likely to be frequent and that whilst the council should endeavour to assist where possible home owners would need to take some responsibility for their own properties as well.
4. There was frustration expressed at the meeting that the previous Section 19 Report into the flooding in 2017 had identified a number of steps which the Lead Local Flood Authority were to monitor the delivery of. **Appendix 18A.**
5. As a result of the flooding the Environment agency (EA) set up a multi-agency working group which the town has been represented on. Primarily by the town clerk, the mayor and Cllr Osborne. Also part of the Group were representatives of from Somerset Council (SC) (previously South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council), Wessex Water, Somerset Rivers Authority, Somerset Highways. Also invited to be a part of the meeting were representatives from Berkley Homes and other relevant contributors.

6. A number of visits have been made by representatives from the EA to the areas flooded and as a result a number of initiatives have been instigated. Members have been notified in previous meetings of these visits and the progress or lack of progress at times of any meaningful efforts. A plan has been provided previously. **Appendix 18B**
7. Amongst these initiatives the Town Council looking at how it manages its resilience stores resulting in three locations being identified for “new” stores to be located in key areas of the town. Members have been provided with details previously on these.
8. Efforts have been made to put a small number of resilience groups together who would be able to access the resilience groups in times of need. However there are far more people needed and the people who have been most engaged in this are at times the people who would be least able to assist should help be required.
9. As a result of work to contact landowners with riparian rights adjoining the river Ile work has been carried out to try to alleviate flooding risks. The clearing of the Ile of a number of trees and other debris has taken place and this has been noted by residents at Home Farm Park. A major concern for them has been the wish to see a bund reinstated behind their homes.
10. Council was informed at the end of last year that the owners of the land adjoining the Park Homes site had given permission to the Town Clerk for the bund to be reinstated. At this point some residents of Green Lane had put together a tentative plan to go onto the land and put in place a bund to their own design that they felt would replicate what had been put there previously.
11. It was pointed out that before doing this they should consult with the EA over their plans and apply to them for a Flood Risk Activities Permit (FRAP). The EA was happy to expedite any application and for this work then to be done in a way to maximise any impacts. Since then nothing further has been heard regarding if or when them carrying out the work.
12. The Town Council has also made arrangements with Rotary for a number of Flood Packs to be distributed to residents who wish to receive them.
13. The Environment Agency has received £60,000 from the [Frequently Flooded Allowance](#) to undertake a study at Ilminster into river flooding along the River Ile. The project team are now established and procurement of consultant engineers is underway. The consultancy firm Atkins will be engaged to produce an Initial Assessment at Ilminster. The scope of the study is to identify properties at risk, potential options for reducing flooding, their costs and associated economic benefits. The study will be aimed at a technical audience to identify if a future scheme is economically viable and a draft

report is scheduled for Spring 2024. A non-technical briefing to stakeholders will also be provided in due course. **(Appendix 18C)**

14. It should be noted that this will be the first stage in what is hoped is a process to help alleviate Ilminster from some of the risks of flooding.
15. A draft copy of the Section 19 report was sent out to members of the council and also to members of the resilience group. As a result of this a number of representations were made to Somerset County Council for erroneous information and additional information to be included in the report.
16. The finalised Section 19 report was released on the 23 May 2023 and circulated to all members as well as the identified members of the resilience group. **(Appendix 18D)**. If members wish to receive a printed copy of the report then they should contact the office ahead of the meeting.
17. The key remit of the report was to examine how the infrastructure in the area and how the stakeholders managed with the access of surface water during the flooding and to investigate what can be done to reduce the effects of extreme rainfall events in future.

#### **Ditton Street**

18. The report identifies that a number of residents claimed drains were blocks in the area of Ditton Street and that ditches had not been cleared by land owners. It was also identified that Shudrick stream that runs along Shudrick Lane enters a culvert which then feeds into a launch drain running under the Tesco petrol station. This culvert has been identified as having been overwhelmed by the volume of water. It was felt in the report that if it had been blocked more debris would have been visible at the great at the front of the culvert. The report states the culvert is comparatively undersized for catchment from which it collects.
19. The report identifies that it is the responsibility ultimately of the riparian owner to maintain the culvert and channel. It also identifies that the EA carried out a survey in February 2017 where two service pipes posed a potential blockage risk.
20. It is noted in the report that residents had observed high volumes of water in this area and that they were not certain that even with free running drains they would have coped potentially with the volumes.

#### **Station Road, Home Farm Park, and Holway House Park**

21. Within the report it is identified that Holway House park home site was one of the worst affected areas with 19 park homes flooded internally and nine being

damaged beyond repair by flood water reaching around 1.25 meters. In addition a further 13 properties along Green Lane and three in Home Farm way were affected by water with flooding up to a depth of around a metre.

22. In addition there were three commercial properties flooded in the Rose Mill industrial estate where it was evidence that water of around 10 centimetres had been present.
23. It was believed that the flood defences upstream of Hort Bridge on the river Ile were outflanked by the volume of water at the upstream end and that this was the first time this has happened since they were built in the 1970s.
24. Residents were reported to have lifted manholes, possibly sewer covers, in an effort to get water to drain away but it was felt that this may have contributed to flooding of sewers elsewhere.
25. Attention is also drawn to water flowing from a development called Lamplighters and that this may have contributed to water flowing into town.
26. The report goes into detail about the background surrounding both the Bund and the cattle grid along Station Road and outlines the history behind the installation of both.
27. The report identifies that a survey of the Bund should be carried out as part of any reinstatement and/or improvement works. It comments that revised design parameters perhaps should be considered and then implementing this.
28. The report details that the majority of the volume of water that flooded the station road area has come from the river Isle. The river spilled over to the north of the Hort bridge and then flowed over the fields to the West of Home Farm park. This water flowed into Home Farm park and then on to Green Lane where it was joined by water that had come from the south across the fields over the cattle grid, across Station Road and into Holway House Park site. Additional water also came down Home Farm Way and this joined with water from the north in Green Lane and the Old Orchard.
29. It is identified that work has been carried out in the past but this may not be functioning as intended it may even not have been correctly specified to cope with an event of this size. Reference is made to the planned flood risk management study that is detailed earlier in this report.

**Sea**

30. Six properties in Sea were flooded internally up to a depth of around half a metre. Contributory factors were identified as being blocked drains as well as the pond along Watery Lane that appears not to have been properly maintained or managed and as a consequence poses a risk.
31. Within the report it is noted that a resident had reported that drains were and are blocked within the area. The low level of Sea is commented upon and that surface water from Hearn Hill or Pretwood Hill may have contributed to the problem.
32. The stream that flows to the north of the main road and which crosses near the dairy farm is not subject to any flow records, and more detailed data or modelling would be required to determine the origin of the water.

**Recommendations**

33. The report contains a number of recommendations, some of which are already being looked at by the Town Council, some the EA and other parties. Where ITC has a role to potentially be a part of implementing these recommendations the point has been highlighted in bold.
34. These recommendations are below:
  - i. ***Ilminster Town Council are keen to develop a resilience plan and a local resilience group – this should be progressed in concert with the SRA, and possibly the EA.***
  - ii. *Stakeholders should liaise with FWAG and local landowners to discuss the issue of maize growing in the area, ascertain if it is a problem, and see if more benign crops or growing methods can be found.*
  - iii. *The Shudrick Valley and the area around the River Isle have the potential for Natural Flood Management (NFM) schemes. These should be investigated as part of further work to model flood flows in the area and evaluate mitigation schemes.*
  - iv. *Anecdotal evidence suggests that many residents and landowners have an incomplete understanding of riparian responsibilities. Communities should be educated on riparian rights and responsibilities. SRA may be best placed to do this.*
  - v. ***There was some confusion during the incident as to communication between parties and the use of the Emergency Duty Team. In particular, this should include the Town Council and the SSDC***

- Homelessness Team, who were unaware of the problems at Station Road and the residential parks until late the following day. Emergency plans should be reviewed to ensure that all parties involved with flooding incidents to have a method statement setting out line of communication, contact details, and full information about who can be called upon to do what during an emergency.***
- vi. *Audit gully cleaning contractors to ensure the job is being done correctly, and see if improvements can be made – e.g. informing residents in advance of gully clearing so cars can be moved to facilitate access. The frequency of gully cleaning has already been increased from around every 4 years to an annual round.*
  - vii. *It took a long while to get the electricity back on at the residential parks, and this delayed people getting back into their homes and being able to start getting dried out. In future Western Power Distribution need to prioritise getting vulnerable people reconnected so they can get back into their homes.*
  - viii. ***Information needs to be distributed more widely about how to prepare yourself and your property for flooding.***
  - ix. ***Information needs to be distributed more widely about who to contact with different concerns e.g. to whom should people report a blocked culvert, or an overgrown ditch?***
  - x. *There should be a review of post incident support to residents, to ensure that it is adequate and correctly targeted. Those most at risk are mainly elderly and often uninsured. They can find it hard to access help and services, due to mobility problems or lack of internet access. People often need help 4 or 5 days after an incident when they can no longer stay with relatives or in a hotel. This package also needs to include mental health care, as many are completely shocked and bewildered by what has happened.*
  - xi. *The modelling that has been done for the integrated catchment study to be extended to include fluvial and surface water movement around Ilminster. The EA are hoping to start a flood alleviation study next year (23/24), subject to a funding bid (previously mentioned), which they hope to link to the previous integrated catchment study.*
  - xii. *As a separate piece of work on their modelling programme, they are updating the catchment fluvial model for the River Isle and adding in the Shudrick Stream for the first time. This model will be at a catchment scale (going from head of main river down to Isle Brewers near the Somerset Levels), so it will cover a much larger area than just Ilminster. A greater local focus in Ilminster will come from the flood alleviation study. The catchment fluvial model will likely not complete until 2025 at the earliest.*

- xiii. *Changes in local planning policy should be considered. Currently the standard requirement for drainage in a housing development is to cope with a 1 in 5 year event for highways drains, and to cope with greenfield runoff rates for surface water drainage. Consideration should be given to adopting a higher standard, and/or specifying a policy of betterment.*
  - xiv. *The path of the old canal in Ilminster should be investigated, and it should be ascertained which other waterbody it joins into and where. Any changes required should be communicated to the Environment Agency and Ordnance Survey as appropriate.*
  - xv. *Further work needs to be done to understand the parties responsible for ownership and improvement of the bund around the Park Homes. The condition of the bund needs to be examined and improved or repaired as required.*
  - xvi. *The culverting of Green Lane should be looked at to see if changes have been made without the proper permissions, and the arrangement should be taken into account in flood modelling and mitigation strategies.*
35. Advice is also provided in the report as to other steps that could/should be taken in order to reduce the risks in the future. It is clear that the riparian duties are clearly being referred to and owners are responsible ultimately for ensuring that they adhere to these duties.
36. As a final consideration some of the words from the report are very pertinent to consider.

*“...it is impossible to prevent absolutely all flooding – rainfall events vary widely in intensity, and whatever drainage systems or flood mitigation schemes are put in place, there is always the possibility, however remote, that an extreme rainfall event will overwhelm them. We can, however, plan for the vast majority of rainfall events, and in the course of doing so, make extreme events less bad. Even a small difference in the final height or path of flood water can be the difference for some between their homes flooding and not, so even small schemes can have value in an extreme rainfall event.”*

37. Members to note the report and to consider what action should be taken going forward.

**Mark Tredwin**  
**Town clerk**  
**June 2023**