



Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	30 th September 2021
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Interim Section 19 Flood Report (12 th July 2021)
Report of:	Raj Mistry
Cabinet Member Portfolio	City Management
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2017-2022
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1. Executive Summary

Consideration of the Interim Section 19 Flooding Report produced in the council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority for Westminster.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

This report is an interim report while we await the outcome of Thames Water's independent review which is anticipated to take over 6 months.

3. Background

Overview

As Highway Authority Westminster City Council (WCC) is responsible for highways drainage in Westminster. This includes the drain grates and pots known as 'gullies' in its streets. The gullies collect water at street level and send it into Thames Water's sewer network. Thames Water's responsibility begins, and the council's ends, at the point the gully pipe connects with the sewer pipe.

Westminster also act as Lead Local Flood Authority for the area. Section 19 (S19) of the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010 places a statutory duty on LLFA'S to investigate flooding incidents in their area. Following exceptional rainfall on 12th July 2021, multiple wards in north Westminster

suffered severe flooding which triggered a S19 Report. We were also aware of a further flood event of the 25th July and committed to investigating if there were any different contributing factors to this event.

Westminster engaged WSP to produce this report on their behalf. Terms of reference for this report can be found in Appendix A and were published online in August. The purpose of the investigation is to understand how the incident occurred and what functions were exercised by Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) in response to the flood.

Thames Water independent review

Thames Water are undertaking workshops with LLFAs in September 2021 and an independent review of the 12th July flood event; their findings and recommendations will inform the final version of this report. The date of the independent review is not known at the time of writing. However, it is anticipated the review will take over 6 months.

There is a steering group for this independent review which the GLA and London Councils have been invited to sit on. WCC have written to Thames Water to request that all the Lead Local Flood Authorities impacted by the event including Westminster are also invited to sit on this group.

Interim Report

As a key RMA the information that Thames Water supply will form an important part of the final Section 19 report. With the Thames Water timescales in mind the council has taken the decision to publish an interim report based on the information that we have been able to gather to date. This report can be found in Appendix B.

It is important to emphasise that this interim report is a live document and will be subject to further iterations as information is gathered particularly from Thames Water.

Gully Cleansing

As Highway Authority the council's responsibility is to get surface water to the sewer system as efficiently as possible. This is made possible by regular maintenance of the highway drainage network. WCC has adopted a risk-based approach to cleaning its gullies, this means silt levels in gullies are recorded before cleansing. Based on the silt level trends a cleaning regime is developed which aims to optimise the cleansing of gullies on a street. The council aim to clean gullies when the average silt levels are between 60% and 70% full. Figure 4 in the interim report shows an illustration of a gully pot with associated silt levels. This shows that anything with silt levels at 100% or under would be below the outlet and would still allow water to run away and into the Thames Water system.

The initial review found that the highway drainage network was working effectively at the time of the event with the average silt levels within the council's optimum target of 70% full in the streets affected by the flood event.

There are a number of gullies that our contractors were unable to access on their routine cleansing visit due to parked cars/ traffic management issues. These have either been revisited or have been scheduled for a revisit with car-lifter resource/ appropriate traffic management where necessary.

In January 2021 the council commenced a trial on the use of gully sensors to give us real-time information on silt levels. Further rollout of these and linking them to Met Office weather warnings will enable us to clear gullies in vulnerable areas ahead of predicted heavy rainfall events.

Initial Findings

Data from rain gauges suggest that on the 12th July around a month's worth of rain fell within a 24-hour period with much of this falling within a 3-hour period in the afternoon. Consequently, highway drains and the local sewer network were unable to cope with the intense and high volume of rainfall.

The highway drainage network was working effectively at the time of the event with the average silt levels within the target of 70% full in the streets affected by the flood event.

As part of the exercise to gather information on the 12th July event we received further information on property damage of the 25th July event. Given the timing, geography and impact of the event on the 25th July we now believe that this warrants its own separate report and that process been started.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Phil Robson
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APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Terms of Reference
Appendix B – Section 19 Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None