Overview and Scrutiny
29 September 2025
Member questions

Flood Risk Management and Prevention

Questions from Councillor Chris Day to Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer

Question 1:

What is the split of the Team's time spent on different categories of activity such as: responding as Consultee on Planning Applications, Emergency Planning, Consenting & Enforcement Activity etc? (Officers can split time between headings they believe best reflect the workload of the department)

Question 2:

What powers does CBC have to compel landowners to act to mitigate flooding risks, for example, enforcing riparian owners responsibilities?

Response

See estimate below of averaged time spent, based on a combined total of 50.5 contracted hours per week (2 officers). This is an averaged estimate as activities such as emergency response vary and will usually be zero hours when it is dry and a significant proportion of the week when flooding is forecast.

Planning, consenting and enforcement	35%
Asset management	20%
Flood alleviation schemes	15%
Public enquires, FOI and CON29 land charges	15%
Community engagement (including flood warden scheme)	5%
Emergency response	5%
Other (team meetings, training etc.)	5%

Gloucestershire County Council (the lead local flood authority) have delegated consenting and enforcement on ordinary watercourses to CBC (the latest three-year contract agreement is due to expire April 2026 and will likely be offered for renewal). CBC can therefore engage with, or enforce, private riparian landowners to undertake their duties if it is felt that a flood risk is being caused by lack of maintenance. In most cases these situations are resolved by negotiation (written and verbal) and

landowners undertake the requested maintenance work. The Environment Agency are responsible for enforcement and permits on main rivers.

Questions from Councillor Jackie Chelin to Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer

Question 1:

Considering all the different parties / organisations involved in efforts at flood risk mitigation it is not surprising that there can be some confusion/frustration about who is/are ultimately responsible for any given issue. I know of a couple of situations that have been ongoing for quite some time without being yet being fixed. I think this is partly because it is unclear who has the authority (or time/capacity/expertise) to resolve them and perhaps also because priorities change (especially owing to extreme weather incidents!). This can look, to residents, as if there is not a will to resolve their problem and that the "buck is being passed".

What systems are in place to help councillors/residents to navigate the system, e.g. what triage (and response) mechanisms are in place, how are they monitored and how are enquirers kept informed of progress?

Response

Councillors and residents should refer to our who does what leaflet in the first instance to report issues directly to the relevant authority. It is recognised there will be cases where it is still not obvious who to report to and we can assist with this step if councillors or residents are unsure flooding@cheltenham.gov.uk

At CBC if a report received is relevant to us (CBC land/asset or an issue on an ordinary watercourse) we log the issue in our enquiries spreadsheet and keep the reporter(s) updated. Where reports we receive are for the attention of another authority we will forward to them and let the reporter(s) know that we have done this so they can obtain updates from the relevant authority. In some instances, we will offer our support/local advice to the other authorities, but we do not have the resource or budget to be taking on other authorities' responsibilities, including providing updates to the public on their behalf (especially as we will not have full knowledge of the asset).

For ongoing local issues such as those mentioned we can raise these specific items at RMA meetings if requested by councillors and provide feedback on the update we receive.

Question 2:

What is the crisis command structure in the event of a 2007-style flood?

Response

Responders attend flood advisory service (FAS) meetings with the Local Resilience Forum when flooding is forecast and depending on the scale and nature of the event tactical command group (TCG) meetings will be called before, during and after events. A gold (strategic)-silver (tactical)-bronze (operational) command structure is used. The CBC emergency planning team attend FAS and TCG meetings with other category 1 responders and will attend gold strategic meetings where required.

**Questions from Harry Booty (co-optee) to Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer**

Question 1:

Re item 3.8 - is there a current gap in the voluntary flood warden network, and what, if any, risk does this pose?

Response

There are numerous gaps across the Borough where we do not have flood warden coverage. The map below shows rivers and roads covered by flood wardens (green), with rivers/streams in red not currently covered by a flood warden. We are therefore always looking to grow the network, and this year we have a specific target to onboard at least four new flood wardens.

As flood wardens are voluntary and act primarily as a communication channel (i.e. they are not operational staff who are relied on to always be available) it is not a necessity to have a flood warden everywhere, but the more coverage there is the more resilient communities will be. The description of flood warden tasks details how flood wardens make their community more resilient to flood risk.
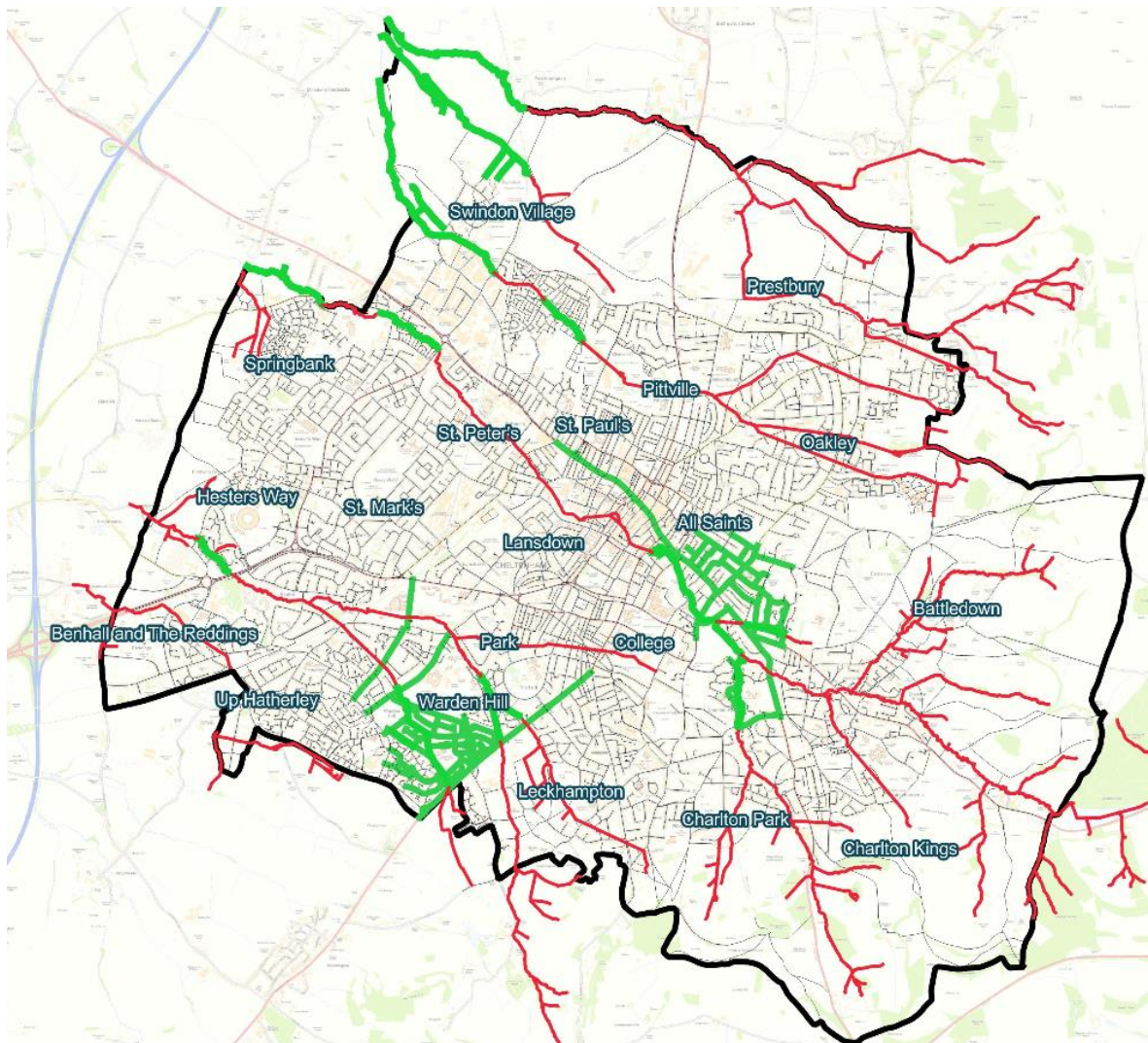
Question 2:

Noted that lots of organisations are involved here, and the reference to comms/ guidance at item 4.2 is welcome. However, can I check if any thought has been given to a "tell us once" system? i.e. instead of instructing people about which specific person/ team to contact, creating a team/ structure that facilitates anybody in the flood "group" being able to quickly share information internally, whoever is the first to receive it?

Response

I am not aware of any discussions for such a system and whilst I would love to see such a system in place I am not sure how this would actually be implemented and funded given that all the authorities operate at different geographical scales (Borough, Countywide, Severn Trent region, Nationally (Environment Agency)), are a mix of public and private entities, and are funded differently. But with advances in mapping technology and AI it feels like such a system could be implemented if there was a commitment.

Some existing systems such as fixmystreet forward reports to the relevant council and the Flood online reporting tool (non-emergency reports) is shared across all authorities.

It should be noted that if reports are made to the wrong authority they are forwarded internally, particularly during flood events when the authorities are in close verbal communication (see response to question 3), but there are less points of potential communication failure when reports are made directly to the correct authority in the first instance.