

# Appendix 4: West Berkshire Council Sandbag Policy

## 1.0 Introduction

This document details West Berkshire Council's Policy with regard to the deployment of sand bags or other flood defence equipment, in order to reduce the impact of river flooding and reduce the impact of flash flooding in the area.

## 2.0 Councils Responsibilities

The Council has no legal duty to provide sandbags to the community unless the flooding is due to flooding from the Highway or other Council owned land and is likely to affect others adversely. However the Council has consciously considered the issues in relation to flooding and the impact it can have on the communities affected. As a result sandbags may be provided on condition that the situation fits the criteria as set out below in 4.0.

## 3.0 Property Owners Responsibilities

The responsibility for flood protection of property is the sole responsibility of the property owners. As a result all such owners should assess the risk of flooding to their property and take the necessary precautions to protect their own property. Measures may include installing physical flood protection barriers and joining the FLOODLINE Direct Warning (FDW) system. Information regarding the flood risk of properties in relation to river flooding can be found on the Environment Agencies website.

### 4.0.1 Provision of Sandbags

Sandbags will **only** be deployed having regard to the following priorities:

- a) to prevent loss of life or serious injury, including vulnerable people (having regard to the Vulnerable People Plan)
- b) to maintain access for emergency services
- c) to protect vital facilities within the community, including critical infrastructure e.g. electrical sub stations, sewage works etc.
- d) to protect key transport and main access routes
- e) to reinforce flood defences preventing the flooding of multiple properties
- f) to protect WBC business property (with relevant recharges to services as deemed appropriate)
- g) if a privately owned property (not including a garage, garden shed, out building and garden etc.) is in imminent risk of flooding i.e., within the next 2hrs and that the 'fabric' of a building is at risk as a result
- h) Mutual aid to other responding agencies.

## 5. Council Actions in Readiness for Flooding Events

### 5.1 Sandbag Stocks

In order to facilitate the Council response the Council will:

- a. Maintain a stock of 500 sandbags at the depot for flooding purposes

- b. Increase the stock to 1000 sandbags at the depot with 2 pallets loaded and ready to move should prior warning be given regarding severe weather that may cause flooding and affect the West Berkshire area. The triggers for this action would normally be an extreme rainfall alert, a severe weather warning and/or a flood watch/warning notification.

## 5.2 Sandbags Numbers

Where it is decided to supply sandbags in accordance with this policy (4.0) then the number of sandbags delivered to any property will be based on the following:

- a. Domestic Properties in imminent risk of internal flooding:
  - i. 6 per door
  - ii. 3 per airbrick
  
- b. Commercial Properties protection against internal flooding:
  - i. 6 per door
  - ii. 3 per airbrick

## 5.3 Control of Sandbag Provision

The decisions to deploy sandbags in accordance with this policy will normally be made by the Highways Team in Highways and Transport.

Outside the criteria, (as in 4.0 above) then decisions will be made to deploy sandbags by the Civil Contingencies Team or Duty Emergency Manager in conjunction with Highways and Transport, or the Controller/Highways Co-ordinator if the Emergency Operations Centre is operating.

## 5.4 Delivery Timings

The Council Highways Contractor who provides this service has a 2hr response time. That is to say that it will take 2 hours from the initial call to the contractor to the delivery being made on site subject to the availability of labour and equipment.

In addition the Council has only a small stock of sandbags and staff that may be deployed to deliver them. The Council should not be relied upon to deliver sandbags. Council resources may be deployed elsewhere in a large geographical area.

## 6.0 What the Council will NOT provide:

In accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.0, West Berkshire Council **WILL NOT**:-

- a. provide sandbags for individual residential properties that do not satisfy the set criteria.
- b. provide sandbags to protect gardens.
- c. provide sandbags for protecting outbuildings (including garages, whether integral or external).
- d. provide sandbags for protecting non-habitable parts of any private dwelling.
- e. provide sandbags for protecting commercial premises unless it is deemed to be a critical infrastructure site.
- f. provide sandbags as a precautionary measure unless there is a real risk of internal flooding within the next 2hrs.

- g. guarantee the supply of sandbags to any premises. Residents are urged to make their own arrangements before flooding occurs.
- h. guarantee the effectiveness or adequacy of supply of sandbag products provided by the Authority.
- i. accept responsibility for placement of sandbags, except at location where the infirmity or disability of the sole occupant is an issue.
- j. collect sandbags free of charge. Once they are delivered they will be deemed to be the responsibility of the premises involved except for where the infirmity or disability of the sole occupant is an issue.

## **7.0 Charges and Costs**

7.1 West Berkshire Council will not normally charge for the delivery of sandbags to the priority categories as detailed in 4.0 (a-d) above.

7.2 Charges will be made for sandbag provision in the following cases:

- a) if a property has flooded within the last 6 months, where sandbags have previously been provided by the Council *and* no flood defences have been prepared or installed by the owner of the property.
- b) if in accordance with 4.1 (g) the property is found not to be in imminent risk of flooding and is a precautionary request.
- c) any business where sandbags are provided including critical infrastructure.
- d) other Council buildings, including schools.

7.3 The service charges will normally be a minimum of £118.00 (cost to attend a minor emergency in current contract – subject to annual inflation rise) and will include the cost of the bags, delivery and an admin charge.

## **8.0 Other Suppliers of Flood Protection Products**

8.1 There are other suppliers of property flood protection products which may be more appropriate for the premises. Many such products can be viewed on the National Flood Forum Website.

8.2 In addition, there are other sources of sandbags within the West Berkshire Council and surrounding areas as attached on Annex A. Other suppliers may also be able to provide sand and bags either filled or to be filled in addition prices may vary so it is recommended to shop around.

## **9.0 Building a Sandbag Defence**

9.1 Although new styles of flood protection products have been developed in recent years, sandbags can provide a temporary defence against flood water. However, it is vital they are used correctly if they are to provide full benefit. Annex B gives guidance as to using sandbags.