

## ACTON BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of the Flood Emergency Meeting held on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 2-00pm by video conferencing.

Present        R Holt – Chairman  
                  T Brocklebank  
                  C Ballantyne-Roberts  
                  R Forbes  
                  D Hall  
                  D Charlton  
                  C Fifield ABPC & CW&C  
                  Clr G Edwards CW&C  
                  Clr P Williams CW&C  
                  C Robinson – Clerk to ABPC

Apologies     None

There were no members of the public present.

### Background

On Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January the Environment Agency issued a flood warning for the River Weaver at Acton Bridge and Weaverham. 'Flooding is expected for: Areas at risk include Properties along Warrington Road at Acton Bridge and Sandy Lane in Weaverham. Immediate action required'.

In the morning, the level of water on the A49 was highlighted in several emails that were circulated around the Parish Council. The drains did get some attention from Highways. The fire service had also arrived, as well as a contractor who has been sent by the council to pump the water away, but it was making little impact and the A49 had a significant amount water flowing down it, all the drains were blocked or full.

On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January the houses next to the Riverside pub flooded and around 40 residents had to be re-housed some in a local guest house. The A49 was closed due to the flooding.

**Prior to the meeting Cllr G Edwards (in conjunction with Cllr P Williams) had circulated notes to Cllr Holt giving a comprehensive background and overview of the situation. *These notes are added as Appendix A.***

At the start of the meeting **Cllrs Edwards and Williams gave an update** on the current situation, from the scene, including:

- 2 Households intended to stay in their properties, as they weren't as badly affected. Temporary accommodation will be available if necessary.
- The clean-up is underway.
- Insurers are now sorting out longer term solutions, it will realistically be 9 – 12 months before residents can be moved back
- There are 12 residents still in temporary housing, awaiting insurers to sort a longer-term solution
- There was a meeting onsite with the Environment agency this morning about the flooding on the fields behind Acton Lane. A ditch will be dug immediately from behind the houses into the river Weaver, to drain the water from Acton Lane.
- Traffic management has been a great frustration, with little enforcement at times, creating dangerous situations. The behaviour of some drivers ignoring road closure signs and travelling at speed has been appalling.
- Whilst the A49 could open within the next couple of days, the bridge may not open as quickly depending on whether it could be unstable, yet to be confirmed.
- Some boats have also been stranded on their sides on the river.
- Drains were not responsible for the flooding of the houses – the amount of water in the river was the issue. The initial flooding on the road was from water running off the fields. The water table on the fields is exceptionally high. The section 19 report is yet to be completed (draft issued).
- The drain issue previously reported by Cllr Charlton did have the tree roots finally removed today.
- One resident does not have insurance (but thought she did), but currently has short term support.

## Parish Council Discussion

The following items and topics were raised and discussed:

- Could there have been more done knowing the amount of rain that was forecast? The Canal and Rivers Trust are the agency believed to be responsible for the level of the river Weaver, could it have been lowered?
- Frustration of the long amount of time between there being a notification of flooding, and Agencies/Officials actually being onsite to assist residents, or delivery of things such as sandbags.
- Resources seemed to be focussed in other areas such as Northwich and Winsford.
- Who is in charge? There should be someone controlling and directing actions, a single point of contact. Contacts in different Agencies changed multiple times.
- Who should any (raised) funds go to? Could a 3<sup>rd</sup> party be used to distribute funds? Northwich isolation support provided meals for the Acton Bridge residents in the Guest House. **Action - Cllr Edwards to send contact details for Northwich Isolation Support to Mrs Robinson.**
- Traffic Management needs to be properly enforced, the A49 is a busy road with many large vehicles and selfish drivers. Cllr Williams will talk to on site team to try and ensure road stays closed, particularly tomorrow (Monday). Road has been cleaned.
- Further clean-up work is ongoing, carpets are being removed, salvage is ongoing, loss adjusters are on site. Domestic items could be donated to help people re-equip homes.
- Security could be an issue as so many houses are empty, and there has been a lot of press, social media updates. Fortunately, not all houses are empty, but this probably needs to be looked into as a potential risk.
- More bad weather is forecast in the coming week. The residents and Agencies are aware but houses on a riverbank are always likely to be at risk. The residents have already cleared what they can from downstairs rooms.
- Is flooding likely to be a more regular event? What can be done to mitigate against these events? Is adjusting the water in one area going to move the flooding to a different place?
- Cllr Holt and the Parish Council expressed extreme gratitude to Cllrs Edwards & Williams who had definitely gone above and beyond the call of duty in response to the emergency in the support of local residents.

Cllrs Edwards and Williams left the meeting.

- Northwich flooding may not be due to the river as it appears the river flood defences held. An inadequate drainage system seems a more likely culprit.
- It appears only one Acton Bridge property was not covered by their own insurance but going forward this may be an issue for more properties. There is grant money available for other areas, through CWAC could pressure be put on the Govt for the £5k grant which is for providing additional defences for future flooding, not for making good.
- The role of the Parish Council. There is possibly a ChALC meeting being arranged for Tuesday to discuss this further. It was suggested that the immediate emergency should be the responsibility of the relevant agencies – but the Parish Council need to look at the results of any post-mortem to bring pressure to bear, and possible funding to stop a re-occurrence. The immediate aftermath seems to have been dealt with. An earlier response from the Parish Council to help in organising could have been useful, e.g., a helpline, or helping with food deliveries/volunteers (Covid restrictions allowing). Cllr Edwards & Williams look exhausted, they could probably have done with more support. Lines of communication are key, along with an understanding of what the official agencies are actually dealing with. Reports from those involved on the ground will help shape the way the Parish Council deal with these sorts of emergencies going forward, and what gets fed into CWAC about their response. **Action - Parish Council to develop a contingency plan.**
- Who in CWAC are the Lead Local Flood Authority? Is any status given to a group/dept?
- Should the Parish Council consider making a donation to support the Acton Bridge residents affected? Cllr Holt has looked at funds and thinks £500 - £1000 could be possible if the Parish Council would like to consider a donation. The Parish Council would like to investigate further, and also look at the crowd funding page highlighted by Cllr Edwards. **Action – Mrs Robinson to contact Northwich Isolation Support Group to understand what their costs have been for the Acton Bridge support**

Signed .....(Chairman)

Date.....

## **Appendix A – Copy of the notes from Cllr Edwards email to Cllr Holt. Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

On Wednesday 20 January 2021 Cllr Paul Williams and I spoke with highways regarding our concerns for the imminent bad weather and possible contingencies.

We monitored the situation throughout the night and attended site early on Thursday 21 January 2021 along with the North West Ambulance Service Hazardous Area Response Team who were there with their boats evacuating residents. Many residents had self-evacuated however we had 8 residents (Warrington Road and Sandy Lane) who left the boats with their suitcases and nowhere to go. Subject to their agreement, we made the decision to accommodate them at Hill Top Farm so that they would all be together, we transported them there and ensured that they were well settled.

Given that the accommodation is B&B, we arranged for sausage and chips to be donated from Theos on their first night and the Hazel Pear donated a meal on Friday night. Sandwiches and cake are being donated by the Ark Café for their lunch everyday until next Friday when we will review the situation. However we think that most will be in their long term accommodation shortly. We collect the sandwiches and leave them in the dining room at the B&B. We have now arranged a long term solution with Northwich Isolation Support to donate hot meals each evening, which we collect from Davenham.

We have been on site day and night for the last 5 days, inspecting properties and ensuring that remedial works are progressing and also that residents are ok. Over the days, the numbers have fluctuated in the B&B with some residents going back home and some deciding that they required the temporary accommodation, two households remain in their houses.

We visit Warrington Road every morning to ensure that everyone is ok and take food if necessary and we visit residents in the B&B throughout the day.

The fact that the site is contaminated with diesel and sewerage means that we cannot use volunteers to help with the clean up.

### Current Situation

- CWAC remedial works to the A49 should be completed within the next 2 days.
- CWAC have teams on site to dispose of rubbish.
- Residents anticipate 9 months to restore properties (as advised by insurance companies)
- Most residents have flood insurance and so will be moving into long term temporary accommodation shortly, arranged through their insurer.
- 1 of the of residents that has no flood insurance is being advised by CWAC and Paul and I have arranged for furniture to be donated to her by a local charity. We are working with the homeless team to find her long term temporary accommodation close to her daughter.
- CWAC have undertaken a welfare appraisal of every resident, contact details etc.
- We have given all residents at least one food parcel.
- Residents seem ok for clothing, toiletries etc as it's the bottom floor of the properties that have been affected.
- We are aware of more potential bad weather and so will monitor closely the two remaining occupied properties.

### Suggested Parish Council Action

- We are aware that an Acton Bridge resident has created a crowd funding page and whilst we appreciate the concept, it has been suggested that a donation to Northwich Isolation Support would be more appropriate as any fundraising needs to be targeted.