

Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Title	Thames Water incidents in Lewisham	
Contributor	Executive Director for Customer Services Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration	Item 4
Class	Part 1 (open)	24 January 2017

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an initial summary of the number and impact of recent Thames Water incidents in the London Borough of Lewisham and to identify how Lewisham Council might work with them, and other affected authorities and partners, to reduce the number of incidents where possible or otherwise seek to mitigate the risks. Thames Water and TFL have been invited to attend the meeting to discuss further.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the content of this report,
2. Review the current situation and investigate, with partners and other affected authorities, best practice options to address the risks and effects of Thames Water operations and infrastructure vulnerability, including capital programmes to replace aging infrastructure,
3. Request Thames Water to continue to liaise with the Council and TFL to review the ongoing management of risk resulting from Thames Water operations and infrastructure.

3. Thames Water incidents

- 3.1 This report has been prepared to help inform initial discussions between members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Thames Water and other affected partners and residents on the number and severity of recent incidents in the London Borough of Lewisham.
- 3.2 It is noted that incidents are generally related to the age and/or condition of the Thames Water infrastructure or works on, or in the vicinity of, these assets which results in a failure of the asset and regularly impacts in various ways on the local community and wider travelling public.

Across London

- 3.3 Other authorities in London have experienced similar issues. The London Boroughs of Islington and Hackney are also currently undertaking a joint scrutiny review of the impact of flooding in their boroughs, focusing on what actions Thames Water and partners can and should take to prevent and mitigate the impact of incidents.
- 3.4 Officers and members from Lewisham are working with officers and members from Islington and Hackney to share experiences, of the causes and dealing with, flooding

incidents, and to inform and develop a robust approach to tackling the problems and minimising impact on local people and services.

Across Lewisham

- 3.5 The following locations record where the more serious incidents have occurred in the London Borough of Lewisham since last summer:

Perry Vale near j/w Waldram Park Crescent	August and November
Devonshire Road	August
Baring Road opposite Grove Park Station	October
Westhorne Avenue (TfL Red Route)	October
Lee High Road j/w Belmont Park (TfL Red Route)	November
Lee Road j/w A20	December
Moorside Road outside Good Shepherd School	December
Avignon Road j/w Aspinall Road	December
Thurston Road outside the bus garage	December

- 3.6 In the wider context our Street Works data indicates that Thames Water worked on approximately 1,900 notices in 2016 to remedy what were considered to be water and potentially sewer leaks, on average approximately 37 each week. Thames Water also abandoned approximately 1,000 notices, sometimes due to a lack of resources or programming issues, and these figures do not include any incidents or leaks that haven't been identified or re-programmed. This suggests that the actual number of Thames Water incidents could, on average, be between 60 and 80 a week and this is likely to be the case across London.

Overview of Lee High Road burst water incident in November

- 3.7 At approximately 1725hrs on Saturday 26th November 2016 the emergency services were called to assist with a coach stuck in the collapsed carriageway following a burst water main in Lee High Road (A20), Lewisham. The emergency services initially rescued a number of passengers from the stranded coach and evacuated a number of properties affected by the flood water.
- 3.8 At approximately 1745hrs the London Borough of Lewisham was notified of the incident by the emergency services and elements of the Council's Emergency Plan activated. This resulted in the Out-of-hours Contact Centre informing the Council's on-call Local Authority Control Officer (a trained Senior Manager responsible for managing the Council's response to emergencies) who upon assessment activated elements of the Council's Emergency Plan.
- 3.9 A Local Authority Liaison Officer was deployed to the scene (a trained Manager whose role is to represent the Council at the incident scene), on-call Gold (on-call Chief Officer) was notified and an Emergency Rest Centre was activated to provide shelter to those affected by the incident.
- 3.10 The Council's on-call Highway's Inspector and Dangerous Structures Engineer were also notified of the incident. However, Lee High Road is classified as a Red Route under the Transport for London (TfL) Road Network which means they, as the Highway Authority, are responsible for responding to incidents such as flooding. Therefore, the Council's Highway response focused more on agreeing appropriate diversion routes for traffic and reviewing traffic management and Temporary Traffic Regulation Order requirements.

- 3.11 As the incident transitioned from response to recovery Thames Water took the lead and coordinated the on-site repairs, clear up and communications. The recovery operation included communication and engagement with residents, businesses, Councillors and Council. The Council was represented by Highways officers at local resident meetings held by Thames Water.
- 3.12 The main impacts of the incident included:
- Flooding and damage to local property and infrastructure
 - Loss of and disruption to local water supply
 - Transport disruption in the vicinity due to the closure of the A20
 - Impacts on residents, retailers and the wider community
- 3.13 Given the significance of this incident the Council requested a Multi-Agency Debrief to discuss the effectiveness of the multi-agency response which took place on 20 December 2016. The final report is awaited.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The engineering response to Thames Water incidents is generally directly managed so the cost to the Council should be limited to staff time managing the incident through to recovery and providing community assistance and accommodation etc. if required.
- 4.2 Highway costs for Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders etc. are recoverable. The number of Thames Water incidents, although the majority are small, still result in a significant workload in terms of Street Works co-ordination and noticing etc. and the cost of these works are also recoverable.
- 4.3 Individuals and the wider community may be adversely affected and incur costs as a result of more serious incidents also affecting insurers etc. Larger Thames Water incidents also impact on traffic movements leading to delays and congestion with associated lost output to individuals, the community and wider London with associated financial and economic implications.
- 4.4 These various and numerous incidents on the public highway also have a significant impact on the durability and lifecycle of both footways and carriageways. This can result in the need for earlier programmed maintenance and potentially also reactive works which have an ongoing cost to the Council in terms of both capital and revenue budgets.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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