

Council – 29 January 2025

Liberal Democrat Group Amendment to Motion 5a – New Year's Day Flooding

This Council recognises the devastating impact that the adverse weather and the subsequent flooding has had on residents and businesses in Trafford over the New Year.

It has been widely reported that a months' worth of rainfall fell across Greater Manchester within 48 hours, causing the River Mersey and River Bollin to burst their banks. The weather also caused the Bridgewater Canal to collapse at the Cheshire border for the first time in over 50 years.

This Council recognises, and thanks, Trafford Council officers, Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service, One Trafford and other agencies for their initial response to the flooding. We also commend the resilience and community spirit demonstrated by residents and businesses who provided vital support to those in need.

Agencies responsible for flooding resilience have failed to heed warnings and missed opportunities to intervene with targeted investments. The flood risk posed to some communities in Trafford is not accurately monitored and is therefore poorly understood by the Trafford Council, the Environment Agency and emergency responders.

Flooding is much more than just an inconvenience. It disrupts lives and damages property, creating distress, upheaval and danger and, most critically, it poses risk to life and health. A robust and collaborative multi-agency response is not only essential in the immediate aftermath of such events but also in ensuring we learn lessons and implement effective measures for the future.

This Council notes:

1. The recent decision taken by the Environment Agency, citing a lack of data, to withdraw funding for major flooding resilience measures in the vicinity of Fairywell Brook.
2. The inadequate leaf clearance and drainage maintenance works, evident across Trafford Borough this winter.

The Council therefore resolves:

1. To arrange an all-member briefing on the Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management Plan. This is a partnership between Greater Manchester Combined Authority, United Utilities and the Environment Agency that aims to:
 - Accelerate the implementation of natural flood management interventions in key locations identified in the Integrated Water Management Plan. This

will help to reduce carbon emissions, improve our resilience to climate change, benefit nature, and improve the conditions and quality of life for people in towns and cities;

- Reduce the operation of storm overflows so that we can prevent rainwater from entering and polluting the combined sewage system and so improve water quality;
- Create new jobs, developing skills and apprenticeship roles associated with urban drainage that benefit residents in Greater Manchester;
- Ensure new GMCA or TfGM developments are delivered in partnership with United Utilities so that water management measures can be factored in. For example, road or cycle schemes can include solutions to address surface water runoff.

2. To request the Leader follows up letters he wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency regarding water level gauges at Fairywell Brook, with further correspondence regarding the impact of the recent flooding across the Borough on the effectiveness of existing flood management infrastructure.
3. To promote the importance of Blue Spaces (for example, wetlands, culverts and waterways) and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, - while recognising that any Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS) constructed as part of the new housing developments which are merely designed to maintain current levels of surface water run-off will not address the fact that water run-off already causes flooding
 - provide information on existing schemes in Trafford, and provide information to residents keen to play their part to help slow surface water run-off.
4. To welcome the recent launch of the Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan (2025-30), recognise the number of times flooding risk features in the plan, and work with GMCA to achieve the plan's objectives.
5. To reaffirm that extreme weather events are a consequence of the climate crisis and that Addressing the Climate Crisis is one of our five Corporate Priorities. Therefore council officers and One Trafford Partnership colleagues will continue to work together to prepare for and address the issues that arise from extreme weather events.
6. To ensure that new development comes forward in Trafford in line with planning policy, so that it is designed to promote and address sustainable urban drainage solutions and not exacerbate existing pressures.
7. Remind significant landowners/stakeholders in the Borough of their responsibilities regarding urban drainage and flood management.
8. Reassess the performance of our contractors against KPIs for drain maintenance and leaf clearance; and issue penalties for poor performance.

9. Use this set of penalties to pay for a Fixed-Term of extended operating hours at weekends to clear the back-log of blocked drains in Trafford.
10. Lobby the government and the Environment Agency to get a flooding resilience projects for areas of Trafford that are impacted – including Timperley - back on the table.