

SANDBAG PROTOCOL

Purpose of the report

Proposal for discussion of a Town Council sandbag protocol for Cranbrook

Introduction

Town Council officers were approached recently by a resident requesting a small quantity of sandbags to stem potential water ingress from her sloping garden through her kitchen door. This raises the issue of how the Council should respond to any future requests.

Expectations of the Town Council

Visitors to Devon County Council's website¹ can access a 'list of the Town and Parish Councils by District area with further information on sandbag policies'. For the East Devon area, there is a table of information listing town and parish councils and giving the contact details for sandbag requests. Cranbrook is currently not included in that list.

Visitors to East Devon District Council's website² are also advised to contact their town or parish council if they think their property could be at risk from flooding and may need sand bags. Sand bags are delivered as empty bags and it is the householder's responsibility to fill them. Cranbrook does appear on the map provided with the Clerk's contact details.

Proposal

Considering that both the District and the County Councils advise residents at risk of or affected by flooding should contact the Town Council, Councillors might wish to discuss the development of a protocol to be followed in the event of flooding or at times when residents might be at risk of flooding.

Practicalities

Establishing a sandbag protocol would involve obtaining a supply of sandbags and developing a policy on how and when they are used, and also on disposal after use. Each autumn Clerks receive an email from East Devon District Council requesting an order for sand bags which they then collect towards the end of October.

Having taken advice from the Town Clerk at Broadclyst, they have some unfilled bags they have offered to share if needed but have also advised to be aware of the following when devising the Council's own approach:

¹ <https://new.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/who-to-contact-if-you-experience-flooding>

² <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/emergency-planning/flooding/how-do-i-get-sandbags>

- Sandbags cause the flow of water to divert and if this causes more damage than it would otherwise have done, the person(s) or organisation(s) who laid the bags could be held liable.
- Sandbags are very heavy to lift once wet.
- The person(s) or organisation(s) would need to source suitable sand to fill them and arrange clear up afterwards.
- Once wet, the sand within the bags is classed as contaminated waste with an associated cost at the point of disposal.

Recommendations

- a) to inform Devon County Council of the Town Council's contact details to update their records relating to who to contact in the event of flooding.
- b) to ensure East Devon District Council continued to include the Town Council in future distribution requests for sand bags.
- c) to devise a declaration which each end user signs at the point of collecting sandbags, stating that it is their responsibility to source suitable sand to fill the bags, to manually handle the bags safely when filled and potentially wet, to lay any sand bags in a way which does not cause more damage than it would otherwise have done, and to dispose of any wet sand bags in the appropriate manner, i.e. as contaminated waste.
- d) to develop a storage solution for empty sand bags and an approach to determine the number of sandbags distributed to end users.
- e) to keep a log of all sandbags distributions to end users.

N.B. The above recommendations were approved by Cranbrook Town Council on 18 January 2016 and implemented.

Cranbrook Town Council

Date of Approval: 18 January 2016
Date of Review: May 2023