

Report to Town Council 25th March 2014

Report No.1

Malmesbury Town Council Flood Wardens Scheme

1. Purpose of Report

To seek Committee's approval to recommend that a Malmesbury Town Council Flood Wardens scheme be created.

2. Background

2.1 At the end of the previous Council, in April 2012, a draft Emergency Plan was written which identified a number of people as Community Emergency Coordinators and Local Flood Wardens.

2.2 Cllr Gundry worked on this draft Plan over the summer, with the assistance of Cllrs Exton and Poole. This plan is however not approved or executable by the Town Council for a number of reasons, one of which is that no Flood Wardens are in place.

2.3 Flood Wardens are members of the community, preferably living near risk areas, who principally provide education and assistance before a flood, as well as monitoring potential flood situations, provide early warning of flooding, and giving feedback on flood events. Importantly they never place themselves at risk or undertake any dangerous activity.

2.4 Relevant actions with respect to flooding in the past two years are:

- (a) In November 2012, flooded householders at St John's Street and the Lower High Street were aided by personnel from the Warden and Freeman who then and later acted as informal flood wardens.
- (b) In December 2013 and January 2014 they were joined by Councillors and other residents in an informal flood warden scheme which emerged as necessary.
- (c) In the autumn this Committee produced a Malmesbury Local Flood Information Leaflet which was circulated alongside an Environment Agency leaflet to at-risk properties.
- (d) Gel sacs purchased by MTC were distributed in December and January to at-risk properties.

All this adds up to much of a Flood Warden scheme and satisfies immediate needs, but it is not fully coordinated nor replicable nor are the necessary links to the local authority and the Environment Agency in place.

2.4 Cllrs Exton, Gundry and Poole have attended briefings from and meetings with Wiltshire Council and the Environment Agency and consider that if the Town Council wishes to have an official scheme of Flood Wardens these volunteers have to be trained, equipped and most importantly insured.

2.5 The Environment Agency (EA) would be pleased to assist in the necessary training for Flood Wardens as follows:

- (a) MTC would invite members of the public to a briefing delivered by the EA which would outline roles, expectations and dos and don'ts.

- (b) Those that were interested would be invited to sign up to be Flood Wardens give personal details that may be CBR checked. We need seven or eight people.
- (c) Selected candidates would attend another meeting to be given a formal induction to the role, principally delivered by the EA.
- (d) Flood wardens would be insured (see 2.6 below) and equipped by the Town Council. Once these and other steps had been completed, they would be registered Flood Wardens. They would start studying their area, identifying vulnerable people and learning to work in the Flood Warden organisation.
- (e) In parallel, the Town Flood Plan would be completed (currently an Appendix to the draft Emergency Plan).

- 2.6 The Town Council's insurers would be able to insure Flood Wardens given sight of the Flood Plan, the training materials and a risk assessment.
- 2.7 Such a scheme would be consistent with the resolution by the Policy and Resources Committee on 8-Oct-13 that a working party be formed to make recommendations for an Emergency Planning Policy. It could be a model for a later and wider Community Emergency Plan.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 That Malmesbury Town Council establishes an official scheme of Flood Wardens assisted by the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Council, as outlined in 2.5 above.
- 3.2 This scheme would be independent from the scheme of volunteers to operate the sluice gates at Cowbridge which is being progressed by Cllr Sanderson and the Malmesbury Flood Working Group with the assistance of the Rotary Club. The roles, risks and insurance implications are quite different.
- 3.3 The Malmesbury Town Council scheme would be initiated later in the year when
 - (a) the Town Hall Administrator, is in place because he would be an integral part of the operation of the scheme;
 - (b) The Environment Agency personnel are likely to be available as they are now fully engaged with the current flooding emergency.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There would be currently-unquantified financial implications arising from (a) insurance for Flood Wardens (b) equipping them with photo IDs etc (c) possibly some travel for EA and Wiltshire Council briefings.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The Town Council agrees that a Council Flood Wardens scheme be created.

Cllr John Gundry, Chair, P&E
Cllr Julie Exton, P&E
Cllr Sue Poole, Deputy Mayor
11th February 2014