

## WSCC Responsibilities as Lead Local Flood Authority

Following the severe flooding in 2007 of Tewksbury, Gloucester and Hull, Government set up the Pitt review into the management of drainage and flood risks in the UK. This identified that responsibilities for flood risk management fell between many bodies including the Environment Agency, Water Authorities, Internal Drainage Boards, District and Borough Councils, County Councils, as well as private landowners.

As a consequence legislation was introduced in the form of the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act. This essentially made upper tier authorities (County Councils and Unitary Authorities) the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and gave them responsibility for the strategic coordination of flood risk management in their areas. The other bodies still retain the majority of their powers and duties.

The Act, and also the Flood Risk Regulations 2009, place a number of statutory duties on the County Council as LLFA, including:-

- Production of preliminary flood risk reports (*completed July 2011*)
- Production of local flood risk management strategies for surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses (*estimated completion Spring 2013*)
- **Investigation of flooding incidents**
- Produce a Register of structures likely to significantly affect flooding (*ongoing*)
- Improve and contribute towards sustainability of flood defences
- Approval of sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) (*yet to be implemented*)

It would be impossible for any one authority to manage this on their own without the cooperation of partner authorities. To this end in 2010 we brought together the relevant bodies within two groups, a Strategic Board made up of Senior Officers and a Flood Risk Group made up of operational staff.

In so far as the duty to investigate flooding incidents, this is not a duty to resolve and fix problems..... those powers still rest with the responsible body. The duty is to ensure that, where we consider it necessary, incidents are investigated and the responsible bodies to take appropriate action; and this may or may not include corrective action. It must be noted that all of the actions which may be carried out by the responsible bodies are permissive powers **not** duties. When the investigation is complete, WSCC is required to publish a report on the findings and notify the authorities in question.

Following the recent events a multi-agency investigation team has been set up. The first stage is still underway which is establishing the extent of the flooding, and a summary of the actions taken during the floods. WSCC has contacted all Parish Councils for feedback, whilst Southern Water and the Environment Agency are undertaking door to door surveys of the worst impacted areas around Felpham, Elmer, Middleton, Bracklesham and Earnley. The National Flood Forum, an independent charity, has also been assisting with this process, as well as providing support and advice. Once this information has been collated the investigation into the causes of the floods will begin, this will also identify any potential solutions and lessons learned. The EA are also in the process of engaging an independent Consultant to review what happened in the area near the Medmerry Realignment Flood Defence Scheme. The aim is to encompass all the conclusions within one joint report.