



# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Sandbag Policy

This document details Wokingham Borough Council's Policy with regards to the deployment of sandbags to prevent or contain primarily fluvial flooding, but also to reduce the impact of pluvial flooding. WBC recognises that the primary responsibility for protecting property from the risk of flooding rests with the property owner. It is aware of the considerable efforts the Environment Agency makes to notify property owners in flood risk areas of the risks they face and encourages property owners to plan their own arrangements to protect themselves and their properties. There is no statutory requirement for the council to provide sandbags although there is a broad expectation in the mind of the general public that, in a period of likely flooding, the local council will make sandbags available. This Policy identifies that the council is not able to act to all requests for sandbags during a flood event but does identify its priorities.

### 1. Deployment of sandbags

1.1. The deployment of sandbags will be decided with the following priorities in mind:

- a. maintaining access for the emergency services,
- b. protecting vital facilities and assets within the community,
- c. protecting the most vulnerable,
- d. protection of WBC business property where deemed appropriate,
- e. protection of residential property.

1.2. The decision to deploy sandbags will be made by:

- a) Highways Teams in their normal course of duties will deploy them as they see a need within the priorities above or at the request of the emergency services.
- b) Emergency Response Team Duty Officers or the Emergency Planning Officers in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) will authorise work orders for the deployments as they risk assess to be appropriate within the priorities above.

1.3. Where sandbags are provided the following conditions apply:

- No guarantee can be given that sandbags will be delivered within a specific timescale.
- The council will not accept responsibility for the quality or effectiveness of sandbags provided by the council.
- All requests for sandbags will be assessed in terms of the health and safety of the crews making deliveries and the availability of personnel to produce and deliver sandbags.

- Members of the public will not be allowed to collect sandbags from the council's depot.
- WBC will supply sandbags free of charge on a needs basis. However, once issued the sandbags are deemed to become the property and responsibility of the householder or receiving organisation. WBC will not accept responsibility for the collection and disposal of sandbags after an event although exceptions will be considered where householders are disabled.
- Where sandbags are provided, WBC will not accept liability for the positioning of them or any subsequent repositioning.
- Sandbags will not be provided to protect any buildings or land other than residential properties.

1.4. The council will encourage people to make their own enquiries for sandbags in advance of a flood event by contacting local suppliers such as builders' merchants where they can purchase them and/or possibly have them delivered. The council will continue to support and encourage householders and businesses to develop flood action plans to prepare in advance of flood emergencies and flood warnings.

## **2. WBC Sandbag Storage Locations**

2.1. WBC will maintain a stock of sandbags which will be stored by its Highways contractor. The contract between Wokingham Borough Council and its Highways contractor states that:

The following materials will be available for emergency use within the required response time 24 hours per day, 7 days per week:

- (a) 400 No. Rotproof Sandbags (full of building sand)
- (b) 1000 No. Rotproof Sandbags (empty)

## **3. Contact details**

Calls for sandbags should be made to Customer Services on 0118 974 6000 in day time hours or 0800 212 111 out of hours, who will then pass the request to the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

## **4. Definitions**

Fluvial flooding occurs when the capacity of a river (designated as Main River) is exceeded or the channel becomes blocked, causing water to spill onto the floodplain.

Pluvial flooding occurs when high intensity rainfalls cause runoff which flows over the surface of the ground and accumulates in low lying area.