



Stella Creasy MP

Working For Walthamstow



Martin Esom
Chief Executive
Chief Executive of Waltham Forest Council
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Dear Martin

Thank you for your letter regarding the flooding in Walthamstow on Sunday 25th July. I would like to thank council officers for their work to support residents, alongside London Fire Brigade and Thames Water. I also want to praise the way that residents came together to help each other throughout the flooding, and hope the Council can find a way to recognise the important work that the people of Walthamstow played and continue to play supporting each other to address the impact of the floods.

Thank you for your answers to my questions about the Council's approach to managing flooding events which are extremely helpful. As you will understand, residents have continued to raise significant concerns following the flooding, and there are further issues on which they have asked for clarification.

Firstly, could you clarify precisely when was the Council first notified that there was a potential flooding risk in Walthamstow around the 25th of July- I note that the Environment Agency issued flood warnings on Tuesday 20th July and so there is some concern as to whether the Council was aware of this event in advance or not. As responding to flooding requires a multi-agency approach, could you also set out why Thames Water were not involved in the Gold Group meeting at 6.30pm that evening and how you intend to work with Thames Water, the Environment Agency and others to ensure that all information on flood risks is shared across all agencies who may need to be informed in future.

Secondly, your response sets out 22 sites where the Council had identified flooding. My office identified further sites where flooding had occurred and passed this information to the Council, so can you confirm that Council officers have now visited all of these sites to assess them for damage or other action. If so, please can you confirm whether any of these sites will require further actions, including repairing flood damage.

Thirdly, the flood preparedness document presents several concerns directly affecting residents, including the decision that due to their ineffectiveness in addressing water flows that the council will not provide sandbags and instead recommends residents purchase alternative solutions themselves. Can you set out what the Council will be doing to ensure all residents and businesses are aware of the contents of this plan, including steps the Council is recommending to residents they take as a result of the risk of flooding. In particular, it would also be helpful to have details of what steps are you taking to ensure all residents and businesses are aware of how to access support in the event of flooding.

Your letter confirms your intention to update the flood preparedness document - please can you confirm when you expect this revised plan to be put in place, and set out what changes you expect to be made as a direct result of the learning from the events of the 25 July 2021. Furthermore, given the important role that local communities, including formal community groups, played in responding to the flooding, can you also set out how you will be engaging with local residents as you update the flood preparedness to ensure that their experiences are included.

In your response to me, you say that '[gullies on] main roads are cleared once every year and high-risk areas twice per year and the majority of side roads once every two years'. Can you confirm how the 'high-risk' sites for this additional gutter clearing were first identified, and how this list is kept up to date as circumstances change. Given changes in land use across Walthamstow, please can you also confirm when this list was most recently updated.

Finally, the flooding on the 25th now risks putting residents in a situation where they are charged higher insurance premiums due to the apparent increase in flooding risk in Walthamstow. The Government has signalled that the Council's preparedness for future flooding will be a significant factor in determining how much Walthamstow residents are now charged for insurance, so can you set out what representations you have made and will be making to insurance providers to assure them of the steps the Council is taking to reduce the risk to properties of flooding.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Yours sincerely



Stella Creasy
Labour and Co-operative MP for Walthamstow