

WATER PROBLEMS PUT A DAMP SQUIB ON FESTIVE CELEBRATIONS



■ Flooded – Michael Holyoak

Picture: PAUL WATSON BA89059_05

Couple's Christmas is ruined as dyke floods

A COUPLE in their sixties have had a festive season to forget after they had to pump water from their home when a blocked dyke caused flooding in Hadleigh.

Michael and Carole Holyoak of The Crescent, Hadleigh, had swaiths of water rush into their home following heavy rain.

The couple, aged 66 and 64, had to dredge the water from the ground floor of their property after a nearby dyke, clogged with rubbish, overflowed, sending water gushing from the drains and rushing down neighbouring streets into their garden.

It is the second time their home has been waterlogged since August.

Mr Holyoak said: "The water was just spewing into the road and came running down into our garden. Before long it was coming into the house over the floorboards and we had to get pumps to try and drain it all away.

"We still haven't returned to normal after our home was flooded in

August. Every time it rains I am worried our home will be flooded again. I cannot see how we can live here much longer. It always smells damp."

The latest flooding hit on Christmas Eve and the couple were up at 3am on Christmas Day trying to clean up the mess.

The flooding comes just weeks after the pair raised their concerns at a meeting between Essex County Council, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, Castle Point Council and the fire service to address flooding issues in the borough.

County Hall officials said their road was missed off of a list of streets where the drains are supposed to be cleared.

Mr Holyoak said: "We have no idea what to do. We rang every agency we knew for help, but were just told to ring back after the holidays. It is disgusting that in almost 2014 this can happen. How can we continue to live like this?"

Flood victims' anger at council bigwigs

ANGRY residents still dealing with the aftermath of floods in the summer want to know why Rochford District Council failed to spend £10,000 clearing blocked ditches and drains which led to the flooding.

A report reveals how Rochford District Council budgeted £10,000 to clear the ditches and drains in this financial year, but didn't spend a penny of it and has now removed the fund altogether.

Many residents in Rayleigh, Hockley and Rochford suffered flood damage, with some made homeless, after heavy rain hit in August.

Hawkwell independent councillors John and Christine Mason joined residents at the beginning of December

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to help clear debris from a brook that runs through fields in the town and have questioned why the money wasn't used, even to buy residents sandbags.

Mr Mason said: "We're confused. You would think if money is available it could have been used before and during the event. The budget was clearly there.

"A council officer could have picked up the phone and got a supply of sandbags out to people."

Graham Phillips and his family have been living in rented accommodation since their house in Fairmead, Rayleigh, was flooded.

Mr Phillips said: "We and other neighbours who were affected have

had a separate report done, and it's said that the extreme flooding was down to the blocked drains and sewers."

At the time of the flooding, council leader Terry Cutmore stunned residents during a TV interview when he said it wasn't down to the council to provide flood protection.

He said it was up to the householders to supply sandbags to provide their own protection adding even if the council had the budget to issue them, they wouldn't have been able to get them out quickly enough due to how quickly the rain fell.

Mr Cutmore said: "The budget for sewers and ditch clearance was specifically set aside for those on Rochford District Council land that we have responsibility for."

Leader praises his evacuation team

COUNCIL leader Terry Cutmore has praised the council for their work in evacuating residents during the flood alert in December.

Alerts were raised around the coast of Essex, including the rivers Crouch and Roach.

Residents were evacuated in the district to two rest centres late at night, including Clements Hall in Hawkwell.

Mr Cutmore said: "We had floods in

August and were on flood alert more recently, when it was necessary for us to open two rest centres in the district. In August, in response to public need – we cleared flood damaged items for free and also gave concessions on council tax.

"As a local authority, we are also looking ahead to see what else we can do in the future to help residents in situations like this and we are cur-

rently working on an improved flood plan."

Independent councillor John Mason was pleased with the evacuation process, but questioned the choice of Clements Hall. He said: "The council did a great job with the flood alerts a couple of weeks ago, but they made Clements Hall as the place of safety, but it's in flood zone three. Was that really the best place for it?"

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