



**Melton
Borough
Council**

Sandbag Provision and Deployment Policy

Key policy details

Item	Details
Author:	Director for Housing and Communities
Owner:	Director for Housing and Communities
Version No:	1.0
Date:	August 2025

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Sandbag effectiveness and limitations
3. Priorities and guidelines for sandbag allocation and deployment
4. Local community sandbag stores
5. Disposal of sandbags
6. Community preparedness

1 Introduction

This document details Melton Borough Council's position with regards to the deployment of sandbags to prevent or contain flooding.

The responsibility for flood protection of property is the responsibility of the property owners/occupiers. There is no statutory duty or obligation for the council to provide sandbags. However, the council has considered the issues in relation to flooding and the impact it can have on the communities affected.

Households should assess the risk of flooding to their property and take the necessary precautions to protect their own property. You can learn about flood product and services or how to create a flood place on the Leicester shire Resilience Forum website [Flooding | Leicestershire Resilience Forum](#). Measures may include installing physical flood protection barriers and [signing up to receive flood warnings](#). Information regarding the long-term flood risk for an area can be found on the [gov.uk website](#).

The Council maintains a limited supply of sandbags for deployment in some circumstances, and this policy has been created to set clear priorities for the deployment of sandbags.

While the council is not able to respond to all requests for sandbags for all properties we remain committed to supporting our communities during flood events through clear communication, prioritised assistance and collaboration with our local partners.

2 Sandbag effectiveness and limitations

Sandbags provide limited protection against flooding and are relatively ineffective when compared with purpose designed flood protection products. Further information on alternative flood protection products can be found on the [Blue Pages website](#).

Sand can escape from within the sandbag during a flood event, which can collect and build up in the local drains surrounding a property; or alternatively can build up and block existing flood mitigation measures already in place. This may impact the ability of drains to alleviate floodwater in future events.

Sandbags are single-use only and can be extremely difficult to remove and dispose of following a flood event. They are highly likely to be contaminated from the flood water and can harbour bacteria.

It can sometimes be difficult to transport them when floods occur as it is likely that roads will be closed and we only have limited resources and vehicles to transport them.

Where sandbags are used, it is vital they are used correctly if they are to provide full benefit. [This YouTube video provides a summary on the effectiveness of sandbags for flood protection.](#)

There are other suppliers of property flood protection products which may be more appropriate for the premises and more effective. Many such products can be viewed on the [National Flood Forum Website](#).

Local DIY suppliers may also be able to provide sand and bags either filled or to be filled. Prices may vary so it is recommended to shop around.

3 Priorities and guidelines for sandbag allocation

The Council maintains a limited supply of sandbags for deployment in some circumstances. However, the council should not be relied upon to deliver sandbags. In an emergency, the council may be able to redeploy key staff members to deliver sandbags depending upon the individual circumstances and subject to available resources, but this cannot be guaranteed.

The deployment of sandbags will therefore be decided with regards to the following priorities:

- 1. Preventing loss of life or serious injury**
- 2. To protect critical infrastructure and buildings, for example, hospitals and substations**
- 3. Maintaining access for emergency services**
- 4. Protecting residential property occupied by vulnerable people within the borough who are physically unable to protect property themselves**
- 5. Mutual aid to other responding agencies**

Melton Borough Council are unable to:

- Provide sandbags for individual residential properties that do not satisfy the set criteria
- Provide sandbags to protect gardens
- Provide sandbags for protecting outbuildings (including garages, whether integral or external)
- Provide sandbags for protecting non-habitable parts of any private dwelling
- Provide sandbags for protecting commercial premises unless it is deemed to be a critical infrastructure site
- Provide sandbags as a precautionary measure

- Guarantee the supply of sandbags to any premises - residents are urged to make their own arrangements before flooding occurs
- Guarantee the effectiveness or adequacy of supply of sandbag products provided by the authority
- Accept responsibility for placement of sandbags, except at locations where the infirmity or disability of the sole occupant is an issue

If you believe your property is at imminent risk of being flooded, have no other way to protect your property and you meet the priorities outlined above, please call 01664 502 502.

If your call is an emergency, outside of our office hours, please call 01664 502 502 but select option 1 to speak to our emergency contact centre. If lines are busy there will be an option to leave a message, which will be followed up. There are arrangements in place for calls requiring escalation or urgent attention.

Please note the Council does not have an out of hours provision for sandbag supply and delivery.

Where sandbags are supplied by the Council in accordance with this policy, the maximum number of sandbags delivered to any domestic property at imminent risk of flooding will be 6 per external door.

Where sandbags are supplied by the Council, this will be subject to accessibility of roads, and availability of vehicles, labour and equipment. Council resources may be deployed elsewhere during a flooding incident including to support other flood prevention or operational activities.

The decision to deploy sandbags in accordance with this policy will be made by the Waste and Environmental Services Manager (or their Deputy), in conjunction with the Director for Housing and Communities (or a member of the Extended Senior Leadership Team designated as 'on call' at the time of the flooding incident).

Any decisions to increase the Council's stock and provision of sandbags during a flooding incident will be made by the on-call Senior Manager.

Melton Borough Council will not normally charge for the delivery of sandbags to the priority categories outlined above. However, the Council reserves the right to charge for the provision of sandbags and cost of deployment in the following circumstances:

- If a property or premises has flooded within the last 6 months, where sandbags have previously been provided by the council and no flood defences have been prepared or installed by the owner / occupier
- If a property is found not to be in imminent risk of flooding and is a precautionary request

More flood advice is available on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Resilience Forum website: [Flooding | Leicestershire Resilience Forum](#)

4 Local community sandbag stores

We encourage areas that have experienced repeated flooding (or, where there is a high risk of flooding), to set up local sandbag stores to support the community in response to a flooding event.

Local sandbag stores should be maintained and monitored by the relevant parish council or community volunteers. Parish Councils may precept to enable the provision of local sandbag stores. Minimum stock requirements and the process of replenishment of sandbags following use should be determined locally.

Details of local community sandbag stores will be added to the Melton Borough Council website as they become available.

5 Disposal of sandbags

Melton Borough Council does not collect used or unused sandbags, and responsibility for removal and disposal remains with the households / premises. The guidance below is intended to guide households on the disposal of sandbags:

- **Unused sandbags that have not come into contact with flood water**
If the sandbags **haven't** been contaminated by floodwater, they may be stored for reuse. Sandbags can disintegrate with exposure to light or weather, so they are not recommended for use after a long period of time. If you are unable to store full sandbags, please empty the dry bags and store the sand in a dry place or dig into your garden, keeping the bags so that they can be re-filled.
- **Used sandbags that have been exposed to flood water**
When exposed to flood water, sandbags will have likely absorb not only water but also contaminants such as sewage and oils. Wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly after handling used sandbags. Attempt to dry out sandbags as much as possible to reduce the weight and make them easier to handle. You should double wrap (e.g. with bin bags) exposed sandbags and dispose of them at your local Household Waste and Recycling Centre. Please inform staff that they have been contaminated with flood water.
- **You should not place full sandbags or the contaminated sand in the household waste bin. Do not allow children to play with the contaminated sand and do not dig it into your garden as this could present a health hazard.**

In exceptional circumstances where the infirmity or disability of the sole occupant is an issue in which case an assessment of the specific circumstances will be carried out. In such cases contact should be made with the Council via the Customer Services Team and a decision will be made by the relevant service manager.

6 Community Preparedness

To enhance community resilience, residents are encouraged to proactively assess their flood risk and be prepared for flooding. The council will host local events in partnership with the lead flood authority to support those communities who are most at risk of flooding. Residents and business are actively encouraged to sign up for free flood alerts and prepare emergency kits with essential supplies.

Communities are also encouraged to develop tailored flood plans and explore protective products and services via resources like the Flood Hub and Blue Pages.

By fostering awareness and preparedness, we can reduce the impact of flooding and support a coordinated response that protects lives, property, and wellbeing.