



Title:	Information Paper on Buckinghamshire County Council's Flood Strategy
Committee date:	6 th December 2013
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Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Ruth Vigor-Hedderly
Electoral divisions affected:	All

Relevant Legislation: Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and the Flood & Water Management Act 2010

The Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 established Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Buckinghamshire, with responsibility for managing local flood risk. Local flooding is defined as flood risk from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. The legislation also established the following organisations as Partners having specific roles and responsibilities: the Environment Agency (EA), district councils (Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe), internal drainage boards (Buckingham & Ouzel IDB), water companies (Anglian and Thames Water) and the highway authority (BCC).

BCC's Statutory Roles

As LLFA for Buckinghamshire, BCC must do the following:

- a) Prepare a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment on a 6-year cycle and then Hazard and Risk maps and Flood Risk Management Plans as necessary. The primary driver for fulfilling these regulations is for reporting of major flooding at a national level.
- b) Develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management. This is a key tool for improving coordination of local flood risk management.



- c) Exercise flood or coastal erosion risk management functions in a manner consistent with the national and local strategies. This works towards consistent approaches to different sources of flood risk management across Partner organisations.
- d) Cooperate with other Risk Management Authorities. This aims to avoid victims of flooding being passed between different organisations.
- e) Investigate and publish reports on flooding incidents. The key aim is to identify which organisation has responsibilities and what action they should take.
- f) Establish and maintain a register of structures or features which have a significant effect on flood risk. Designating features should make it more difficult for them to be removed or their operation otherwise impeded and worsen flood risk in an area.
- g) Aim to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development.
- h) Be a Sustainable Drainage System Approval Body (SAB), including adoption of constructed systems which fulfil the criteria. This is central to the promotion of SuDS as the primary approach to surface water drainage.
- i) Comply with a request made by an overview and scrutiny committee. To ensure accountability in undertaking its responsibilities.

Management of Local Flood Risk within BCC

The Flood Risk Management Team sits within the Planning Advisory & Compliance Business Unit of the Place Service and currently employs two full time junior officers and is actively recruiting a Lead Officer and Senior Flood Management Officer. To resource the SuDS Approval Body function (see later), BCC is actively recruiting 3 further officers.

To coordinate work amongst the various Partners, the Buckinghamshire Strategic Flood Management Committee (BSFMC) was formed in 2009. Meetings are held every three months with flexibility for more or less meetings according to workload. The group is chaired by a County Councillor and comprises the BCC Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport, Thames and Anglian Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Members for Buckinghamshire as well as District Councils and senior officer membership from Partner organisations.



Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

In May 2013, BCC's Strategy for Management of Local Flood Risk was adopted. The Strategy represents a coordination of existing and new activities across the area. The Strategy sets out:

- Local flood risk across the county
- Who the key Partner organisations are and their roles and responsibilities
- What the public can do to protect themselves and get involved in managing flood risk
- How information will be communicated to Partners and the public
- What actions BCC and other Partners will take to manage local flood risk
- An action plan for funding and delivering improvement works

Progress on the Action Plan accompanying the Strategy is monitored in the BSFMC meetings and will be fully reviewed annually. Review of the Strategy itself is planned for April 2018 to follow the same six year cycle as required to update the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment.

Funding Flood Risk Management Activities

Defra provides BCC with an annual grant of £342k per annum to help it undertake its core LLFA responsibilities. This sum has been committed to the end of the current spending review period (FY2014/15). However, the annual government grant is not sufficient to undertake the many actions which have been identified as necessary. Therefore, the BSFMC seek additional funding from national, regional and local sources to implement location-specific actions identified in the Action Plan.

Over £750k of external funding (from the EA, Defra and the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee local levy) has been secured in the last 2 years to design/construct schemes and undertake cutting-edge studies.

BCC is required by legislation to pay an annual Levy to the EA for flood risk management works to be undertaken in both Anglian and Thames Regions. This Levy provides important leverage to attract future national funds into the areas. BCC contributed £422,906 to the Thames Region levy and £32,749 to the



Anglian (Central) Region in FY2013/14. To maximise the value from investing in Levy, BCC will continue to propose high quality schemes which, with possible support of levy, will attract central government funding.

Investigating Incidents of Flooding

BCC must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate flooding incidents which occur. BCC will consider whether an investigation should be carried out based on the severity of the incident, the number of properties affected and the frequency of such an occurrence. The Strategy sets out the criteria to be used when considering undertaking an investigation. Where investigations are undertaken, the results will be published. Furthermore, BCC will notify Partners of the results of the investigations, particularly where they make recommendations for action to be taken.

Ordinary Watercourse Regulation

Ordinary watercourses are every river, stream, ditch etc through which water flows which is not designated as an Environment Agency Main River or public sewer. BCC has responsibilities for regulating activities on ordinary watercourses that might have an adverse impact on flood risk.

Riparian owners must apply for consent from BCC (or Buckingham and Ouzel Internal Drainage Board in certain areas of Aylesbury Vale District) before any works can be carried out that will alter the flow of an ordinary watercourse. If works are undertaken without the consent of BCC, remedial action can be taken and the costs of undertaking these works recharged to the perpetrator.

BCC and the IDB also have permissive powers to require works to be undertaken to ensure free flow in ordinary watercourses.

SuDS Approval Body (SAB) Approval and Adoption

As a LLFA, BCC has been appointed as the Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB). Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) aim to mimic natural drainage as far as is practicable. The anticipated date for the commencement of the SAB duties is April 2014. During the first three years (2014-2017), Defra has proposed a phased introduction, with SuDS applications only required for major developments. From 2017 onwards, applications will be required for all new developments and redevelopments, subject to exemptions and thresholds.



SAB applications will often accompany planning applications. Therefore, based on the planning application figures from 2010-2013, a minimum average of approximately 112 SAB applications may be expected each year (or an average of 9.3 applications per month) during the introduction phase 2013-17. From 2017, approximately 6,765 SAB applications may be expected each year (an average of 565 applications per month). These figures do not take account of SAB applications made for developments which do not need planning permission.

Whilst the SAB has the potential to be the single biggest call on flood risk management staff resources, there are revenue streams which it will introduce; namely income from SAB application fees, and sums collected for the maintenance of SuDS. These fees for review and approval give the potential for this element of flood risk management work to be self-funding.