



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee

Report to the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee

Title:	Information Paper on Buckinghamshire County Council's Flood Strategy
Committee date:	18 th October 2014
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Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Lesley Clarke OBE, Environment and Planning
Electoral divisions affected:	All

Purpose of Agenda Item

The paper is for information on the ongoing work in Strategic Flood Management during the past nine months especially in the context of the flooding of late 2013 and early 2014. The paper will give an update on strategic activities, the response and follow up work after the flooding in 2013/2014 and the ongoing challenges and opportunities.

Background

The issue of flooding was previously brought to the committee in December 2013 prior to the floods of late 2013 and early 2014.

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 Statutory duties for Buckinghamshire County Council as a LLFA are:

- 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. **Completed**
- b) Develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management. **Completed**
- c) Exercise flood or coastal erosion risk management functions in a manner consistent with the national and local strategies. **Ongoing see below**
- d) Cooperate with other Risk Management Authorities. This aims to avoid victims of flooding being passed between different organisations. **Ongoing see below**
- e) Investigate and publish reports on flooding incidents. The key aim is to identify which organisation has responsibilities and what action they should take. **Ongoing see below**
- f) Establish and maintain a register of structures or features which have a significant effect on flood risk. **Ongoing see below**
- g) Consenting and enforcement on ordinary watercourses for structures which have been built in or near to an ordinary water course which would have an impact on flooding and designating features should it make it more difficult for them to be removed or their operation otherwise impeded and worsen flood risk in an area. **Ongoing see below**
- 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. **Ongoing see below**

The paper will cover progress on these different statutory duties

Report

Team and Resources

The Flood Risk Management Team sits within the Planning Advisory & Compliance Business Unit of the Place Service and currently employs three full time officers and a Lead Officer and Senior Flood Management Officer. All of the current team are relatively new with two joining in Autumn 2013 and two in Spring 2014. Resourcing of a new Sustainable Drainage Systems Approval Body (see later) will require recruitment of 3 further officers which is being actively pursued.

To coordinate work amongst the various Partners, the Buckinghamshire Strategic Flood Management Committee (BSFMC) was formed in 2009. Meetings are held every three months and the group is chaired by a County Councillor and comprises the BCC Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, District Councils and senior officer membership



from Partner organisations such as EA and water companies. A Technical Group of officers from the partner organisations supports the strategic group and also meets three times a year.

The cabinet member sits on the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) where decisions on funding for flood management capital project are made using monies from DEFRA and local levy monies contributed by all Local Authorities. BCC contributed £422,906 to the Thames Region levy and £32,749 to the Anglian (Central) Region in FY2014/15. Buckinghamshire County Council represents Slough BC, Luton BC and Central Bedfordshire Council on this Committee.

Winter Flooding 2013/2014

The flooding during December 13 and more seriously in February 2014 had a severe impact on the Buckinghamshire area with serious flooding in a number of locations where houses were flooded internally, roads closed and widespread disruption. The areas which experienced significant flooding included: Willows Aylesbury; Bourne End; Marlow; Medmenham; Amersham; Chalfont St Peter; Chalfont St Giles; Denham; The Orchards Iver. This is not an exhaustive list of all areas affected and other areas also experienced challenges. In total across the County there were over 200 properties which experienced internal flooding with the single largest event being in the Willows Aylesbury where 80 properties were flooded internally

This was the most prolonged and protracted “emergency” situation to challenge the county council and partners in recent years. The Flood Management team of 2 officers, at the time were stretched but performed exceptionally well under pressure and provided valuable support of fielding phone calls from residents, providing information on flooded areas, liaising with the resilience team, TfB, District Emergency officers, external partners and the Senior Management team and Members. An in depth operational review of the emergency response has been undertaken by Buckinghamshire County Council and the Flood management team is working with the resilience team at Bucks CC to take forward strategic actions from this. An example of this is a recent paper to the Strategic Group for a policy on mutual aid for Parish councils to ensure a more co-ordinated response to requests for assistance from individuals through the parishes, District and County Councils.

Ongoing and Work since Winter Flooding

Flood Investigations – Statutory responsibility

Following on from the winter flooding the Flood Team committed to preparing 18 flood investigation reports on locations of the flooding which were most severely impacted. The locations were chosen, according to a previously determined criteria, and have included areas where more than 5 properties were flooded internally and where roads were closed. The team have collated the information from other Risk Management Authorities, TfB,



member of the public to produce reports on what happened and why and to recommend actions for all partners including public and landowners going forward. Three of the 18 reports have been formally produced and are in the public domain. The intention is to publish all 18 before the year end 2014.

A good example of follow up work from the flood investigations is on the Willows Estate in Aylesbury where AVDC, BCC, EA and local members are working to look at options going forward, in the short and medium term, for making the community more resilient and better protected in the future.

Working with other internal/external partners - Statutory responsibility

The working with internal partners especially during and after the flooding was strengthened and enhanced and there is a much greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities and links across TfB, Resilience team, Environment and Planning teams and how we can work together more effectively to give a good service to the public. An example of this internal working is our response to planning applications from County and District where the team is committed to delivering a timely and quality service.

Memorandums of Understanding with the Districts, water companies and Environment Agency to undertake the flood risk management functions are being developed through the BSFMC. These may reflect the slightly different approaches taken by each District to fulfil the ongoing tasks, which are as a result of variations in available resources.

There are multiple examples of working with external partners on bids for capital funding and on projects in Aylesbury, Chesham, High Wycombe and Marlow.

Working with local communities is very important part of our work and is covered below.

Asset Register - Statutory responsibility

The development of register of all assets (bridges, structures, banks...) which impact on flooding has been a focus of the work of the flood Management team for the last 6 months. The team is using mobile GIS on a tablet for gathering asset data in the field and a form for asset details and ratings for criticality and condition being developed in partnership with other LLFAs. Priority has been given to recording assets in flood affected areas. The process of collecting asset data for the County will continue for a number of years.

Consenting and enforcement on ordinary watercourses – Statutory responsibility

A consent is required by riparian owners wishing to block, change the course of, or place a structure within or over an ordinary watercourse. There are very few consents coming through to the Flood management team but these are dealt with in an efficient and timely manner and always before the 8 week deadline. Enforcement on ordinary watercourse for

those who have blocked or altered the course of the river without permission is part of the Flood Management team responsibility and site visits and a series of letters are the process which is followed prior to legal action.

Groundwater Flooding - Statutory responsibility

A number of locations in Buckinghamshire suffered from groundwater flooding during the winter of 2013/14 with exceptionally high groundwater levels continuing through the Spring and into the summer of 2014. Hughenden valley was the single worst affected area with infiltration of groundwater into the foul sewer and subsequent foul water flooding causing flooding distress and environmental damage. The other areas impacted were down through the Hambleton valley, dry valleys through Saunderton and Bradenham, and isolated incidents in Marlow and Medemenham area.

Buckinghamshire County Council in their capacity for managing local flood risk including groundwater in the county have worked with partners including the Districts, Thames and Affinity Water, EA and local communities to advise and understand the nature of the problem. A project funded by the RFCC has used consultants Jacobs, who have taken great strides forward in modelling and verifying, using collected data, from the flood events in the Hambleton and West Wycombe valleys, to produce detailed maps of extents, depths and velocities from groundwater flooding in those areas. This project is now going to be funded across other catchments in Buckinghamshire and extended to look at the feasibility of a predictive tool for groundwater flooding based on likely rainfall and known borehole levels.

A groundwater forum brought all the technical partners together to look at the issues in groundwater over the winter which has and will result in: better understanding of different roles required to be undertaken by partners; data sharing between partners to better inform; input into the groundwater project to improve outputs; first look at the options for managing groundwater in the future.

Working with communities

The Flood Management team have developed their contact with community by: individual visits on specific issues to householders and parishes for example to address issues in Hughenden Valley; attendance at LAFs and parish council meetings to explain the Flood Management team role and to address particular concerns; helping to establish flood groups.

The work through the DEFRA funded Pathfinder project on Flood Resilience has helped us to develop links with the community in Chesham and as a result a Flood Action Group has been established in Chesham. This group is working well in partnership with the National Flood Forum, County and District Council, Environment Agency and Thames Water. A



flood visualisation tool has been developed under the Pathfinder project to demonstrate flood risk in an accessible way to residents in Chesham.

Sustainable drainage systems – may become a Statutory responsibility in the future?

The final part of the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA 2010) is still to be enacted. The intention in the FWMA (2010) was to promote of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) on development as the primary approach to surface water drainage with the aim of mimicking natural drainage as far as is practicable. The responsibility as laid out in the Act would have involved Buckinghamshire County Council setting up a Sustainable Drainage System Approval Body (SAB), with responsibility for approving SUDS in a process alongside the planning process and then inspecting, adopting and maintaining the constructed systems. Some work has been undertaken by Buckinghamshire County Council and Jacobs to set up the processes required to establish the SAB and it has been anticipated that the legislation would have come into force in April 2015. In the past week a new consultation has been released by DEFRA which seems to substantially change the process for two tier authorities by placing the approval process with the planning process and the LPA and responsibility for the inspection, adoption and maintenance process is unclear.

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. The sections below cover the ongoing work being funded as part of revenue and capital projects which have been funded and may be funded in the future.

Ongoing work being funded

From the revenue budget Buckinghamshire County Council are funding a number of studies. This includes phase 2 of the Marlow Surface Water Management Plan where the Flood Management Team are working alongside TfB and consultants Jacobs to identify and clarify the layout and extent of the surface water system in Marlow. This will then lead to more modelling of the system to identify options for managing surface water flooding going forward.

In addition the Flood Management Team has commissioned Jacobs to look at up to five locations around the County where temporary or demountable defences could be employed during a flood. The five locations are yet to be decided but once this is done then the



project will deliver some initial ideas about what could be done before the end of the calendar year 2014. If temporary or demountable defences seem possible at these sites further, more detailed investigations including detailed topographic surveys, types of defences and logistics can be undertaken.

The Groundwater Project detailed above has been and will continue to be funded using Local Levy funding from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC).

Capital Projects

Two capital projects were completed in 2013/2014: Fullers Hill and Spinney in Chesham which involved some highways drainage works and some individual property level protection. These projects were funded through Flood Defence Grant in Aid and Levy monies.

Bids for capital funding through the DEFRA Flood Defence Grant in Aid budget were made for areas in High Wycombe, Chesham and Marlow. These projects were mainly for feasibility studies for management of surface water flooding. In addition the EA have also bid for monies for feasibility projects on management of flooding on the River Misbourne and some further work on culverts in Chesham. The decision on funding for all these projects will be made by the RFCC in November.

Marlow Flood Alleviation Scheme continues to have a deficit in funding of £3 Million but the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee is continuing to explore ways of taking this project forward before the planning permission runs out in June 2015 whilst continuing to seek and secure the funds to make this project a reality in the future.

Challenges and Opportunities

Although we have taken great steps forward in working with external and internal partners, in a flood event there may continue to be confusion over provision of sand bags and who takes responsibility for actions. For example if the flooding comes from an ordinary water course or surface or groundwater flooding that responsibility lies with Buckinghamshire County Council, not the Environment Agency. If the incident is not related to a highway, which would be the responsibility of TfB, then Buckinghamshire County Council have no resource to be able to respond on the ground. Some steps have been made towards developing a "mutual aid proposal" as explained in the earlier paragraphs on Winter Flooding 2013/2014.

The Flood investigations reports following on from the flooding in Winter 13/14 have given a list of recommendations/actions which would be excellent to achieve but with 18 investigations the list of actions/recommendations is very extensive. The expectation from



the public, parish, town and district councils in some areas has been that the Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) will act on these recommendations. There is no statutory responsibility for any RMA to follow up on these actions. There is no immediate resource in terms of money or time for the recommendations/actions from all the investigations to be taken forward.

The resource within the team is limited and we have to respond to statutory requirements as a priority. There are opportunities to be involved in and suggest capital projects for flooding but the routes for funding and resourcing are not clear.

The uncertainty surrounding the new consultation from DEFRA and enactment of the Sustainable Drainage Systems part of the FWMA (2010) mean that plans for recruitment of Sustainable Drainage Officers may be reviewed. There is an opportunity to shape the way forward on this and the Flood Management are working closely with the District councils.