



Report to the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

Title:	Update to Information Paper on Buckinghamshire County Council's Flood Strategy (first delivered in October 2014)
Committee date:	21 st July 2015
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Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Planning and Environment
Electoral divisions affected:	All

Context

The flooding in the winter of 2013/2014 caused widespread damage and disruption across many parts of the UK. The Thames Valley was badly hit and parts of the South West of England with Somerset gaining national media attention. Within Buckinghamshire there were over 200 homes which were flooded internally spread across a number of communities, especially in the south of the County. In addition there was significant disruption to roads and transport links. The flooding came from main rivers such as the River Thames and impacted communities in Medmenham, Marlow and Bourne End and from surface water and groundwater. The groundwater flooding continued in locations such as Hughenden Valley for more than 4 months and infiltrated into foul sewers causing additional problems. The impact of surface water runoff with the heavy rain and saturated conditions impacted many communities across the County.

Background

The Statutory duties for Buckinghamshire County Council as a Lead Local Flood Authority (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 but this is being reviewed in 15/16 and a new draft strategy will be available for the Bucks Strategic Flood Management Group to approve in Spring 2016**
- 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. **These have been largely completed – see below**
- f) Establish and maintain a register of structures or features which have a significant effect on flood risk. **Ongoing with most of the target areas at risk from flooding now covered – 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 Sustainable Drainage Systems as the primary approach to surface water drainage. **This has now been scrapped by DEFRA and a new statutory responsibility given to LLFAs including Buckinghamshire County Council to comment on drainage aspects of planning applications as part of planning applications for major development coming through the Local Planning Authority (LPA)**

The paper will cover progress on these different statutory duties since the October 2014 report.

Team and Resources

The Strategic Flood Risk Management Team sits within Environment Services in the new Transport, Environment and Economy (TEE) Business Unit and currently employs three full time officers and a Team Leader. Two new Sustainable Drainage Officers will join the team in July 2015 to cover new statutory consultation requirements, through planning, on drainage aspects of major planning applications since April 2015. These drainage responsibilities have been covered since April 2015 by consultants.

Ongoing and Work since Winter Flooding

Flood Investigations – Statutory responsibility

Following on from the winter flooding in 2013/14 the Flood Team committed to preparing 17 flood investigation reports on locations of the flooding which were most severely impacted. The locations were chosen, according to previously determined criteria, and have included areas where more than 5 properties were flooded internally and where roads were closed.

The team have published 15 of the reports with a further 2 which are still waiting to be completed. This has been a commendable effort by the team and is already providing a wealth of valuable information on flooding and the areas for focus going forward.

A good example of follow up work from the flood investigations is on the Willows Estate in Aylesbury where AVDC, BCC, EA, Aylesbury Town Council, Thames Water and local residents and members have worked together to deliver a trash screen on the river, some flap valves on outlet pipes and some temporary defences and pumps to be deployed in a flood situation. This initiative has been funded using money from the Government Repair and Renew Grant made available after the 13/14 flooding for individuals or communities to make them 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 are the monthly meetings established with TfB to discuss flood and drainage issues and agree a way forward with a more strategic view of works undertaken.

Memorandums of Understanding with the Districts, water companies and Environment Agency to undertake the flood risk management functions have been developed through the BSFMC and are waiting for signatures from the different parties.

The DEFRA Funded Pathfinder project in Chesham called Flood Smart has now been completed with raised flood awareness, works on the ground, excellent partnership working, established a Chesham Flood Action Group and some innovative advice for planners from Chiltern District Council on how to consider flood/drainage issues during the planning process.

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

Asset Register - Statutory responsibility



The asset register has been completed with all the flood risk areas identified and will move to collecting data for the remainder of the rivers in the County. Discussions on how and where the asset register will be published so that it can be viewed and used by other parties are ongoing.

Consenting and enforcement on ordinary watercourses – Statutory responsibility

Consent applications continue to be small in number.

Enforcement action is ongoing and a couple of enforcement situations are being taken forward to legal action where we have not been able to resolve the situation with the land owner through negotiation.

Groundwater Flooding - Statutory responsibility

Groundwater maps have been produced for all the chalk valleys in the County and are being used to help during flood situations and when looking at planning applications.

Working with communities

Flood Action Groups have been established in Chesham, Hughenden Valley, Marlow and Willows in Aylesbury with a number of other areas: Stocklake in Aylesbury; Medmenham and Amersham considering the option of establishing groups.

Sustainable drainage systems

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) has, since April 2015, become a statutory consultee on drainage aspects of planning applications for major developments of 10 or more houses or greater than 1 hectare. BCC has employed two new staff to cover this new responsibility and has been covering this with consultants in the interim period. In the 10 week period to the end of June from mid-April, the team has received 28 full applications, 4 outline applications and 6 pre-applications and has responded to 100% within the time-frame required.

Funding Flood Risk Management Activities

Defra provided BCC with an annual grant of £290k in 15/16, down from £340k in previous years, to help it undertake its core LLFA responsibilities. DEFRA will provide through burden's assessment a sum of £13k to deal with new statutory responsibilities for Sustainable Drainage.

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.

The Project on investigating suitable locations of temporary defences has been completed and the report is being finalised.

The Groundwater Project detailed above has been completed and all the maps are available to use and will be on the website for public view during the summer.

Capital Projects

Capital funding has been awarded through DEFRA Flood Defence Grant in Aid and Environment Agency Local Levy budgets for projects areas in High Wycombe, Chesham and Marlow areas. These projects are mainly for feasibility studies and some work on the ground for management of surface water flooding and the funding totals £1.3Million.

Marlow Flood Alleviation Scheme is now fully funded with a £1.25M contribution from BCC and the planning conditions have been discharged and some work began on the ground at the beginning of June 2015. Further archaeology and ecology studies will be done during 15/16 in addition to refining of the design and collaboration with land owners by the EA. A steering group with all the partners will be established and regular communications made to residents and stakeholders.

Challenges and Opportunities

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 17 investigations the list of actions/recommendations is very extensive. Although there is no statutory responsibility for any RMA to follow up on these actions, the Strategic Flood Management team are addressing the recommendations and the attached spreadsheet shows the actions, progress made and a way forward. This list will form part of the action plan going forward for the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. There are challenges here in terms of resource, money and 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 can be complex, with different pots of funding and the need for partnering which requires time to establish.

The Sustainable Drainage part of the team will need to become established during the next 6 months and to deal with increasing number of planning applications to comment upon. There will be opportunities to look at charging for aspects of the work: pre-application

discussions and advice and challenges around the inspection, enforcement and adoption of sustainable drainage systems.

In a flood situation things are more established with good communication between the Strategic Flood Management team, Resilience team and Partners. The appendices 1 and 2 below gives information on what the Strategic Flood Management Team will cover and what other will/should do in the event of a flood.

Appendix 1

What Strategic Flood Management will be doing during flood events

The role of the team which relate to a flood event are to:

- Manage local flood risk through implementing a Bucks-wide Strategy and by leading the flood-related work of local risk management authorities.
- Investigate and publish reports on flooding incidents, if they meet the thresholds set out in the Strategy.

Prior to a flood event if the weather looks severe and extended or heavy rainfall is expected the flood management team will be keeping in touch with the partners and looking at any information on flood levels in rivers, rainfall, groundwater levels, and reports of flooding coming in. This information will be shared with partners and the flood management team will be expecting other partners to share information in the same way.

In the event of a flood and the resilience team having an Emergency Operational Centre open one of the members of the Flood Management team will be assigned to link with the resilience hub and provide information, a link and support as required. Other roles which the team will provide if the team is fully staffed are:

- A team member to provide internal communication and be the point of contact for information to other teams including EOC as stated above
- A team member to be available on the phone/email to receive queries and reports of flooding and pass these on to the correct people
- Two team members will be available to go out to flood event (see their roles below) or accompany LATs to flood event.

NB to ensure Health and Safety of team, team members should not go out alone to flood events

The Flood Management Team will be able to provide information on flood maps (river, surface and groundwater) and previous flood events/incidents in the area to the operational teams

The Flood Management team will not respond operationally to flood events, but they will go out to events to record what happened and to collect information for a flood investigation if one is required. This will be dependent on team capacity and an evaluation of the health and safety risks of the situation.

During working hours the method of communication with the Flood Management team will be via email on Floodmanagement@buckscc.gov.uk or via a single number for internal and

partner use 01296 382951. The public should be directed through the customer contact centre and the customer centre will be given the single contact number above.

During non-working hours or weekends or if the Flood Management Team number is busy the contact centre will be given instructions on directing people to the email or collect information from the caller using a pro-forma which the Flood Management Team will provide.

The four member of the Flood Management Team will each take a District to communicate with directly via the Strategic Flood Management contact subject to staff members being available. (ACL – CDC/SB; AB – AVDC; JD – WDC)

In the event of the flood management team not having all members available (due to leave or illness) or the flood event extends for a long period of time, the Strategic Flood Management Team will require cover on manning phones or going out to visit flood sites (with other team members or LATs). This can be covered from other members of TEE who would not need to have specialist Flood Management Skills, but could take messages on the phone and record information on site.

Appendix 2

What others will be doing during a flood event

The roles and responsibilities for all parties are given below and are part of the internal and public flow charts. The Risk Management Authorities will be working together but they each have specific responsibilities

Individual responsibility

The responsibility for the protection of property lies with the property owner. Useful information on how to protect property can be found in the following leaflet:

<http://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Ready-for-flooding.pdf>

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is responsible for managing flooding from reservoirs and 'Main Rivers'. To find where main rivers are in Bucks, go to the following page and select "main river" on the map: <http://www.transportforbucks.net/Flooding/Ordinary-Watercourse-Land-Drainage-Consent.aspx>

Buckinghamshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority

Responsible for managing local sources of flood risk, i.e. flood risk from groundwater, surface runoff and ordinary watercourses (watercourses that are not classified as "main river").

Buckinghamshire County Council – Transport for Buckinghamshire

- Routine highway gully emptying and emergency clearance of highway gullies and drainage when flooding occurs.
- Emergency road closures and diversions.
- Provision of sandbags and pumping facilities for highway purposes.

Buckinghamshire County Council – Resilience team

- Coordinating BCC's response in the event of a major flood incident, in partnership with other agencies. The aim is to create a resilient Buckinghamshire by ensuring that BCC is able to respond swiftly and proportionately to an emergency in the community as part of an integrated emergency response, whilst continuing to deliver key services and developing a more resilient community.
- Maintaining a duty Resilience Officer to act as a single point of contact for professional partners in
- Representing BCC at multi-agency command, control and communication centres (if activated) in the event of an emergency.

District Councils

- Support communities by helping displaced people to find emergency accommodation.
- Provide warning information locally and liaison to identify ongoing threats to public health.
- Contact details and the services available from District Council are available through their individual websites. Alternatively, public can also contact your Town or Parish Council who have a role to provide support to residents.
- All services are limited during a widespread emergency and it is responsibility of individuals to protect their property by checking that they have access to flood defences – including sandbags – in advance of any incident.