

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

25 October 2016

Subject: Wiltshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Cabinet Member: Councillor Jonathon Seed – Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

Wiltshire has experienced severe flooding in recent years, especially in 2014 when over 500 properties were flooded and a number of roads had to be closed to traffic. There were 72% of town and parish councils affected by flooding. Many communities in Wiltshire have experienced at first hand the damage, distress and disruption that flooding can cause.

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires Wiltshire Council to act as Lead Local Flood Authority, and to develop a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS).

The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Management Group is chaired by a Cabinet Member, Councillor Seed, who works closely with the three Operational Flood Working Groups (OFWGs), currently chaired by Councillors Hewitt, Jacobs and Clewer.

The OFWGs cover the north and south of the county, based broadly on river catchment areas, with a separate group for Salisbury, and usually meet every two months. The meetings are well attended, often with representatives from the Environment Agency (EA), Wessex Water, Thames Water, Highways England, Network Rail, Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, Country Land and Business Association, Canal and Waterways Trust and other organisations having an interest in flooding and drainage matters, including town and parish councils.

The groups work with local communities on initiatives to reduce flood risk, and encourage the development of local Flood Plans and the appointment of Flood Wardens. There are now 82 communities with flood plans and 177 Flood Wardens across the county (see **Appendix 1**).

The Council's Parish Emergency Assistance Scheme (PEAS) continues to provide sand bags and equipment to local town and parish councils so that they can store these locally, and deploy them as necessary, making them less reliant on this Council during flooding. There are 97 communities taking part in the scheme.

Those communities currently without Flood Plans are being encouraged to prepare them, as a number are known to be at risk from flooding.

The Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (WRFCC) is a committee established by the Environment Agency to manage flood risk in the region and target investment. The Wiltshire Council representative on the WRFCC is Cllr Hewitt, supported by officers from the drainage team. It is important that the Council is represented on this regional committee, especially in view of the funding opportunities that may arise and the potential for influencing local policies and strategies on drainage and flooding.

The Council has an ongoing programme of work to improve drainage and protect properties from flooding. A substantial amount of work to improve drainage and protect communities has been completed in the past year (see **Appendix 2**). The new highways contract was awarded to Ringway Infrastructure Services, and they are using the same sub-contractors and staff and work is continuing to the same high standard.

Proposal

The Committee is requested to note that:

- (i) The Operational Flood Working Groups have proved to be a successful way of managing flood risk. They are particularly effective at working with local communities, the Environment Agency and other organisations to manage flood risk in Wiltshire.
- (ii) Local communities are encouraged to prepare Flood Plans and appoint Flood Wardens, and there are currently 82 communities with Flood Plans and 177 Flood Wardens.
- (iii) The Council's Parish Emergency Assistance Scheme (PEAS) continues to provide sand bags and equipment to local town and parish councils so that they can store these locally, and deploy them as necessary. There are 97 communities taking part in the scheme.
- (iv) The Council carries out a large programme of flood alleviation and drainage projects which are managed and co-ordinated through the Operational Flood Working Groups.

Reason for Proposal

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires the Council act as Lead Local Flood Authority, and to prepare a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Council has a duty to investigate flooding.

The Council takes its responsibilities seriously with regard to flood risk management, and has a significant programme of drainage improvement and flood alleviation schemes to help to manage flood risk in Wiltshire and the reduce risks for our communities.

Dr Carlton Brand
Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

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Cabinet Member: Councillor Jonathon Seed – Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding

Key Decision: No

Purpose of Report

1. To update members on progress made with regard to flooding since the last report to this Committee on 27 October 2015.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The overall aim of the flood risk management strategy is to support the Wiltshire Council Business Plan vision to create stronger and more resilient communities. The suggested improvements meet the Business Plan outcomes of:
 - People work together, solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them, and
 - People feel safe and are as protected as possible from harm.

Background

3. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires Wiltshire Council to act as Lead Local Flood Authority. It is also required to develop a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS), which it is responsible for maintaining, applying and monitoring, and ensuring that it is consistent with the National Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy. The Wiltshire LFRMS was considered by this Committee at its meeting on 27 October 2015.
4. Wiltshire experienced severe flooding between December 2013 and March 2014, with over 500 properties flooded and a number of roads having to be closed to traffic. Flooding in September 2014 affected over 100 properties, and in September 2015 there were 20 properties flooded in Salisbury and the south of the county. Many communities in Wiltshire were also seriously affected by flooding in 2007 and in 2008. Communities in Wiltshire have experienced at first hand the damage, distress and disruption that flooding can cause.
5. Flood risk within Wiltshire is often a complex interaction between river, surface, ground water and sewer flooding, and the local geology is a significant factor. The northern part of the county is predominately underlain by clay, with flooding generally caused by river or excessive surface water runoff. The south of the

county is characterised by underlying chalk deposits, with potential risk of ground water flooding in many areas.

6. The risk of flooding is considered to be increasing due to pressures in urban environments, and with climate change more severe rainfall events are predicted. These will create additional challenges for communities and have implications on the developed environment.

Main Considerations for the Council

Local Flood Risk Management Groups

7. The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Management Group is chaired by a Cabinet Member portfolio holder, Councillor Seed, who works closely with the three Operational Flood Working Groups, currently chaired by Councillors Hewitt, Jacobs and Clewer. The Operational Flood Working Groups (OFWGs) cover the north and south of the county, based broadly on river catchment areas, with a separate group for Salisbury, and usually meet every two months.
8. The OFWGs have continued to meet in the past year, with meetings being well attended, including attendance by representatives from the Environment Agency (EA), Wessex Water, Thames Water, Highways England, Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, Canal and Waterways Trust and other organisations having an interest in flooding and drainage matters, including town and parish councils.
9. The close liaison with the EA has continued, and there has been a significant improvement in liaison with Highways England and Network Rail which is welcomed, and is already delivering benefits.
10. The priorities for addressing flood risk were originally set out in 2009 with the formation of Wiltshire Council, and remain as:
 - (i) High speed road standing water
 - (ii) Internal property flooding
 - (iii) Highway flooding
 - (iv) Residential land flooding
 - (v) Agricultural land flooding
11. The Council has a significant budget for drainage improvement and flood alleviation works, and bids for additional funding as opportunities arise to help in implementing its strategy. The priorities are set by the OFWGs who co-ordinate the work with other organisations.
12. The OFWGs have continued to operate successfully and are often held up as an example of good practice by the EA and other organisations with an interest in flood risk management. Members of this Committee are welcome to attend the meetings, especially if they are aware of particular flood risks in their area.

Regional Flood and Coastal Committees

13. The Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (WRFCC) is a committee established by the EA under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 that

brings together members appointed by Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) and independent members with relevant experience for three purposes:

- (i) to ensure there are coherent plans for identifying, communicating and managing flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines;
 - (ii) to encourage efficient, targeted and risk-based investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management that represents value for money and benefits local communities;
 - (iii) to provide a link between the EA, LLFAs, other risk management authorities, and other relevant bodies to build understanding of flood and coastal erosion risks in its area.
14. The Wiltshire Council representative on the WRFCC is Cllr Hewitt, supported by officers from the drainage team. It is important that the Council is represented on this regional committee, especially in view of the funding opportunities that may arise and the potential for influencing local policies and strategies on drainage and flooding. A small part of Wiltshire is also in the Thames area and the Council is represented on that committee by Oxfordshire County Council.
15. The WRFCC hold their meetings at various locations in the region, and met in Salisbury on 19 October 2015. The meeting provided the opportunity to describe the proactive approach taken by Wiltshire Council with regard to flood risk management. Following the meeting invitations were received to give presentations on Wiltshire Council's approach to managing flood risk to a number of other authorities and organisations.

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

16. The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) was reviewed by this Committee at its meeting on 28 October 2014, and was subsequently adopted by Cabinet in December 2015. The LFRMS is available on the Council's website and explains how the Council works with stakeholders, local communities and organisations responsible for managing flood risk to enable a better understanding of flood risk and thereby reduce the risk of flooding within the county where it is technically, environmentally, socially and cost-effective to do so.
17. The LFRMS describes responsibilities with regard to flood risk, the types of flood risk and how flood risk is managed in Wiltshire. Self help by affected residents and communities is a major thrust of the strategy. Local communities are encouraged to prepare Flood Plans and appoint Flood Wardens, and residents are encouraged to take measures to protect their property and reduce the potential effects of flooding.
18. The LFRMS remains relevant and it is not currently proposed to revise the document or strategy at this stage; however, its effectiveness will continue to be monitored and it will be updated in the future when required.

Working with Communities

19. There was significant flooding across the county in 2014, and although there has not been flooding on that scale since then, there have been a number of localised flooding incidents as a result of high intensity short duration storms. The nature of these events makes them very difficult to predict and plan for. The flood risk in Wiltshire continues to be significant, and it is important that local communities make appropriate preparations.
20. There are now 82 communities in Wiltshire with Flood Plans, which is almost half of the communities, and there are 177 Flood Wardens (see **Appendix 1**). This represents significant support from the local communities to reduce their flood risk. The value of these arrangements was demonstrated in the flash floods in August when a number of communities were able to take immediate action to protect properties from flooding without calling on further Council resources.
21. The Parish Emergency Assistance Scheme (PEAS) is funded by this Council and continues to provide sand bags and equipment to local town and parish councils so that they can store these locally, and deploy them as necessary. At present there are 97 communities involved in the scheme. Last year the scheme issued 1,690 sandbags, 2,760 gel-sacs and 119 flood signs. The take up this year has been less as more communities now have adequate supplies in place to help them deal with flooding incidents.
22. The preparation of Flood Plans and the appointment of Flood Wardens are important in helping communities to prepare themselves, and they are encouraged to make use of the resources available. Work is continuing to encourage a further 47 communities to prepare plans or develop existing arrangements in more detail where they are known to be at risk.
23. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funded Repair and Renewal Grant scheme provided funding to build in resilience measures to reduce the impact of flooding for property owners affected by the flooding in early 2014, and in Wiltshire, 114 grants were approved with a total value of £483,536.27. It was unfortunate that the scheme was not continued. However, the Council continues to encourage homeowners and businesses to install property protection measures and improve the resilience of their properties.

Salisbury

24. Salisbury is an area with an appreciable flood risk because of its location, the converging rivers, watercourses and the ground water risks. The local OFWG has made good progress in helping the local community to prepare, including the development of a Flood Plan and the training of Flood Wardens. A walk round some of the key areas at risk of flooding and key flood defences is being held next month in conjunction with the EA to ensure that the Flood Wardens and others are aware of the flood risk in the area.
25. The Council is also working with local businesses to help them prepare flood plans and reduce flood risk, including working with the EA and Salisbury Chamber of Commerce, BID, and Federation of Small Businesses. Training for flood wardens is being arranged, and a series of catchment based groups are being established.

Flood Alleviation and Drainage Schemes

26. The Council has a major programme of flood alleviation and drainage schemes with an annual budget of £1,000,000 which is significantly more than most local authorities spend on this type of work. A substantial number of schemes have been completed in the past year (see **Appendix 2**). In addition, the Council has been successful in bidding for funds from Defra and the Environment Agency, with funding being obtained for work at Aldbourne and Great Bedwyn, which have both been badly affected by the flooding in the past.
27. In order to develop future alleviation schemes a high level scheme identification study is being undertaken in order to prioritise flood risk schemes in the county, and to identify future bidding opportunities. This assessment is being jointly funded by WRFCC Local Levy, Defra and the Council, and will help develop a prioritised programme for future schemes for consideration by the Flood Working Groups.
28. The Council works closely with the Environment Agency on managing flood risk, and is involved in a number of studies currently being undertaken. Detailed modelling of flood risk in Salisbury, Corsham and Whitley are being undertaken, and it is hoped that these will lead to successful bids for flood protection measures for these areas which have previously been affected by flooding.

Development

29. The Council's drainage team continues to review and comment on planning applications, providing technical advice to other Council departments and teams, and deals with general enquiries from the public regarding drainage matters. The team also reviews and approves Land Drainage Consent applications for ordinary watercourses.
30. Wiltshire Council's approach is to ensure that there is effective management of surface water on all sites, but particularly on those where proposed redevelopment is likely to present significant opportunities for improvement and the achievement of sustainable development. This approach will reduce pressures on the existing drainage infrastructure and reduce the risk of surface water flooding and pollution.

New Highways Contract

31. The previous highway contract ended early in March, and a procurement exercise was undertaken to appoint a new contractor. Ringway Infrastructure Services were awarded the new contract which started in April and is for five years, with a possible extension of up to two years subject to performance.
32. At the meeting of this Committee in October last year there was concern that the change in contractors could affect the various teams who had successfully delivered the programme of drainage works in recent years. The arrangements made by Ringway have included the use of the same sub-contractors and staff, and delivery has continued to the same high standard.

Safeguarding Implications

33. Does not apply.

Public Health Implications

34. Flooding can have serious health implications, not only from the risk of injury and drowning, but also from pollution when sewers and industrial sites are affected. Having a strategy to reduce the impact of flooding is important to help protect our communities. The stress caused to those affected by flooding, and the disturbance and disruption should not be underestimated.
35. There are particular problems with sewers overflowing, especially as a result of groundwater inundation. The Council's staff work closely with the water companies and holds regular co-ordination meetings with the water companies regarding this issue. Rural septic tanks are particularly susceptible to groundwater flooding and can be flooded for long periods if there is groundwater flooding, with consequent public health implications.
36. Flooding also has implications for road safety, especially with regard to standing water on high speed roads.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

37. The projections for future climate change indicate that it is likely that winters will become significantly wetter and extreme winter precipitation may increase. In summer there is likely to be less overall rainfall, but intense heavy downpours are anticipated. The main cause of surface water flooding is from storm rainfall, but there is also likely to be an increased risk of river and groundwater flooding in Wiltshire.
38. The Council's flood risk management helps reduce the risks associated with flooding, but residents and businesses also need to take action to protect their properties from flood risk and reduce the potential impact. Short duration high intensity storms appear to be an increasing problem.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

39. No significant factors have been identified.

Risk Assessment

40. Since flooding is a serious issue for Wiltshire there are safety and reputational risks associated with it. It is important to have a clear approach to how we tackle the issues and that the Council is pro-active in its flood management across the county, recognising the increasing risk posed by predicted wetter weather, and emphasising the need for communities and businesses to take their own measures to reduce the potential impact of flooding.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

41. There are no decisions required at this time, and this report is for information only.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

42. There are no decisions required at this time, and this report is for information only.

Financial Implications

43. There are no direct financial implications currently. However, it is important that opportunities are taken to bid for Defra/ local levy funding and other funding sources as opportunities arise in the future.

Legal Implications

44. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires the Council to prepare a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, and carry out the duties of Lead Local Flood Risk Authority in Wiltshire. The Council has a duty under the act to investigate flooding incidents. The Council is also a landowner with extensive ownership, including car parks, public open spaces, buildings and other areas which can be at risk of flooding.
45. Legal support is required in connection with carrying out flood management duties, especially with regard to the Byelaws and land ownership issues. Ensuring land owners carry out their responsibilities with regard to reducing flood risk for others remains a challenge.

Options Considered

46. This report is for information only, and no decisions need to be made at this time.

Conclusions

47. The work carried out by the Council in connection with flood alleviation and drainage improvements helps the Council meet its duties as Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
48. The work of the OFWGs and the prioritised programme of schemes help to manage flood risk in Wiltshire and reduce the risk for our communities.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Flood Plans
Appendix 2 – Scheme list 2015 - 16