

# **GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2011**

## **Draft paper on the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1. This report summarises the Oxfordshire Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) which following consideration by the Growth and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee will be submitted to the Environment Agency in order to comply with the Flood Risk Regulations (2009).

### **2. Lead Local Flood Authority responsibilities**

2.1. The Pitt Review into the 2007 flooding and the EU Floods Directive (2007), have led to the introduction of new legislation on flooding in the UK, notably the Flood Risk Regulations (December 2009) and the Flood and Water Management Act (April 2010).

2.2. Under the new legislation Oxfordshire County Council is now a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and this has significant implications for the County Council in terms of liability, resources, skills and capacity for flood risk management. Flood risk management is a cross-cutting activity that sits across a range of functions, and across both County and District Councils.

### **3. Flood Risk Regulations (2009)**

3.1. The Regulations require LLFAs to complete a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) by June 2011. The PFRA is made up of two actions.

3.2. The County Council must produce a Preliminary Assessment Report investigating past and possible future flood risk from local sources of flooding, namely Ordinary Watercourses, surface water (overland runoff) and groundwater. It does not consider directly flooding from Main Rivers, such as the River Thames and Cherwell.

3.3. The County Council must use the evidence in the report to identify if there are any Flood Risk Area(s) where flooding from local sources is deemed significant (in a national context for reporting to Europe). If there is a Flood Risk Area, there are future requirements under the Regulations to carry out Flood Risk and Hazard Mapping and a Flood Risk Management Plan.

3.4. The PFRA has been carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in the Environment Agency's Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Final Guidance (December 2010). The County Council has engaged JBA Consulting, Flood Risk Management specialists, to provide support for the preparation of the PFRA.

#### **4. Consultation**

4.1. The County Council has liaised closely with local communities and partner organisations, including the District Councils and Parishes to inform the PFRA. A flooding survey has been carried out with Parish Councils. Data has been requested from a number of sources, including the Environment Agency, District Councils, British Waterways, the Fire Service and Thames Water. Unfortunately Thames Water were unable to supply data for the PFRA.

#### **5. Are there any 'significant' Flood Risk Areas in Oxfordshire?**

5.1. No. It should be noted that the completion of the PFRA is to meet the EU Regulations and its purpose is to identify areas nationally at 'significant' risk from local sources of flooding (within the whole of England there are only 10 locations where the local flood risk has been identified as being 'nationally' significant). The government (the Minister) has defined the criteria for 'significant' which in England has been set at a relatively high level (30,000 people within a cluster where flood risk is most concentrated).

5.2. The Environment Agency has supplied LLFAs with indicative Flood Risk Areas for review to make the PFRA process easier. There are no indicative Flood Risk Areas in Oxfordshire. The analysis of available data on past and predicted future flood risk undertaken for the PFRA suggests that the level of risk from local sources in Oxfordshire is not significant enough to propose a new Flood Risk Area of national significance. However, the evidence collected demonstrates that there are flooding issues that must be addressed by Oxfordshire County Council in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy as defined in the Flood and Water Management Act (2010).

#### **6. Taking local flood risk management forward in Oxfordshire**

6.1. Flooding in Oxfordshire is not insignificant, which was highlighted by the major damage, disruption and distress caused by the floods of July 2007. As a LLFA, the County has new roles and responsibilities, duties and powers to help manage local flood risk to meet obligations described in the Flood and Water Management Act. The County will continue to work with partner organisations, including the District

Councils to manage all sources of flooding effectively in an integrated way through the existing structure of the Strategic Flooding Group, Flooding Sub-Group and District Operational Groups, with links to community flood groups.

6.2. The Flood Risk Regulations (2009) are not the only route for managing local flood risk and in this first round of assessment the Government has focussed on those areas at the highest risk of flooding from local sources nationally. The County Council are required to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for the County and this is likely to be the most appropriate, flexible and adaptable approach for managing local flood risk. The PFRA will be a key piece of evidence to inform this work. The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy will cover:

- Risk Management Authorities in the LLFA area (Districts, LLFA, Environment Agency, IDBs, Water Companies, Highways Authorities)
- Flood risk and coastal erosion risk management functions that Risk Management Authorities may exercise
- Objectives for managing flood risk
- Measures proposed to meet the objectives
- How and when measures are expected to be implemented
- Costs and benefits and how measures will be paid for
- Assessment of local flood risk for the purpose of the strategy
- How and when the strategy will be reviewed
- How the strategy contributes to wider environmental objectives

6.3. It is anticipated that a Flooding Sub-Group of the County Councils, Districts, Environment Agency and Thames Water will steer the development of the strategy. It will be critical to engage local communities as the County Council develops the strategy.

## **7. Building capacity for Local Flood Risk Management**

7.1. Since the flooding of 2003 and July 2007 Oxfordshire County Council has developed a team based on the existing County Drainage Engineer role. The PFRA has been prepared at a time of transition for Oxfordshire County Council, but the process has been assisted by the communications and engagement links with partners (primarily the Oxfordshire Strategic Flooding Group) already forged since 2007.

7.2. JBA Consulting has been providing support to Oxfordshire County Council to assist in the identification of actions to be performed as part of a plan to assume their roles and responsibilities as Lead Local Flood Authority. In the first instance this has involved a review of the

existing capacity, identification of the drivers for change, a summary of the new responsibilities, gap analysis and conclusions and recommendations. A key issue is the formulation of a working structure that engages the District councils.

## **8. Scrutiny for flood risk management**

8.1. The Flood and Water Management Act has amended the Local Government Act (2000) to provide for LLFA scrutiny of Risk Management Authorities. Regulations have been brought into place known as The Flood Risk Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee (England) Regulations 2011.

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**Annex 1** Oxfordshire County Council – Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment  
Draft Report April 2011.