

CABINET – 16 DECEMBER 2014

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Report by Director of Environment & Economy

Introduction

1. In May 2014, Cabinet gave approval for a draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which had been developed in conjunction with other local flood authorities (i.e. City Council, Districts Councils, Environment Agency and Thames Water) to receive broader feedback through public consultation. The detailed responses document which was made available on deposit to members identifies where amendments to the strategy document in response to the views expressed are proposed.

Background

2. Following the nationwide flooding events of 2007, the Pitt Review recommended that a single authority should be responsible for managing flood risk in local areas. This was endorsed by subsequent legislation, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, under which Oxfordshire County Council became the Lead Local Flood Authority for the County.
3. In accordance with the statutory duties of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Oxfordshire County Council as the lead local flood authority, is required to develop and consult with other flood risk management authorities and the public on its Draft Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS).
4. The purpose of the strategy is to state how the county council, in conjunction with other flood and water management authorities intend to work together effectively in order to manage areas identified as being at risk of flooding within the county.
5. Whilst the county council is the Lead Local Flood Authority, other authorities continue to retain their previous responsibilities (i.e. county council –highway drainage, Highways Agency – highway drainage for A34 and M40, City/ District Councils – planning and land drainage, Environment Agency – main rivers, national strategic overview and flood warning service, Thames Water - main sewage system).
6. An Oxfordshire Strategic Flooding Group and Operational Sub Group have been established comprised of relevant partners, to ensure that there is a synergy between each authority's approach to flooding and that there is joint ownership of a strategy.

7. Central government have written to all Lead Local Flood Authorities encouraging them to have a strategy in place by the end of 2015. There are still a number of areas where government's decision on how areas of work should be managed and funded are still unclear, such as the treatment of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, and so consideration of the need to change the strategy has been taken in light of this uncertainty.
8. Nevertheless, given the significant work that the Lead Local Flood Authority and its partners have undertaken over the last few years in relation to flood risk it is appropriate that the strategy should be considered for adoption at this time and that changes should be made as guidance becomes clearer.

Consultation

9. Consultation on the Oxfordshire draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy ran from 27 June to 19 September 2014. The draft strategy was published on the county council's website, using the eConsult portal and the supporting draft strategic environmental assessment and habits regulations assessment documents were also made available on request.
10. Feedback was invited via a structured online feedback form or by means of a letter or written document that could be uploaded onto the portal. The exercise was publicised via the county council website and through a direct email to key stakeholders including all county councillors, district councillors and, parish and town councils.
11. In total 29 responses were submitted, including three responses from members of the public. Response documents were uploaded via the eConsult portal or sent directly to the county council by email and post.
12. Typically, the consultation responses were very technical and detailed. Over two hundred points were raised and each point has been considered on a case by case basis.
13. A high level of summary of the consultation is set out in Annex 1 to this report. A log of all the points raised and the Council's response to these is a background document to this report and has been put on deposit to inform the Cabinet decision.
14. Overall, most respondents who submitted a consultation feedback form agreed with the proposed flood risk management strategy objectives and the proposals for managing this and only one respondent actively disagreed. Opinion was more split about the proposed action plan, although only three people actively disagreed with the plan.
16. Detailed comments on the strategy can broadly be clustered under the following eleven key themes that relate to the strategy objectives. The themes with the greatest number of comments related to understanding flood risk, preventing an increase in flood risk, roles and responsibilities and riparian land ownership. .

Objective 1: Improving Understanding

- Understanding flood risk
- Investigating flood risk
- Roles and responsibilities

Objective 2: Taking a Collaborative Approach

- Collaborative working
- Governance
- Schemes

Objective 3: Prevent and Increase in Flood Risk

- New Developments
- Prevent an increase in flood risk
- Riparian land ownership

Objective 4: Take a Sustainable and Holistic Approach

- Community resilience
- Funding
- Communications

17. As well as comments on the detail of the strategy itself a number of respondents asked for greater clarity on the criteria when an investigation of a flooding event would take place. A broad explanation is contained within the Flood and Water Management Act, but individual Local Flood Authorities need to determine when it would consider it necessary or appropriate to investigate. Oxfordshire County Council is currently developing these criteria in discussion with City & District colleagues, the Environment Agency and Thames Water. The criteria will be developed as part of the implementation of the policy and then made available to the public.
18. Having considered the responses to the consultation and the uncertainty around guidance, it is considered that there are no substantive changes required to the main strategy document however, changes have been made to the associated Action Plan and these changes are identified in Annex 2.

Financial and Staff Implications

19. Delivery of the County Council elements of the strategy will be funded through existing operational budgets and any specific capital projects that support the overall delivery of the strategy will be subject to the normal member approval process. The strategy does not place additional financial burden on any other organisation. Therefore there are no financial implications from the approval of the strategy.
20. Prioritisation of the action plan will be agreed at the Flood Strategy Group.

RECOMMENDATION

21. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**

- (a) note the feedback from the consultation contained in the consultation Annex 1 and the background document**
- (b) approve the changes to the Strategy Action Plan identified in Annex 2; and**
- (c) adopt the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy with revisions to the action plan.**

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