

CABINET
21st January 2025

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy update

Report by Director of Environment & Highways

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy contained in Annex 2**

Executive Summary

1. The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) is the overarching framework developed by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as the Lead Local Flood Authority. This strategy is a statutory document as required by the Floods and Water Management Act 2010 and serves to address flood risk within the county.
2. The LFRMS aims to develop, maintain, apply, and monitor effective flood risk management practices across Oxfordshire. It encompasses flood risk from surface runoff, groundwater, and ordinary watercourses. The strategy outlines the roles and responsibilities of risk management authorities including statutory and non-statutory elements.
3. The current LFRMS was published in 2015 and required a review and update to ensure the strategy is current with the latest challenges and risks.
4. The LFRMS provides an overview of flood risk management across the county.
5. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of Risk Management Authorities and other stakeholders. The strategy has been developed by setting out five objectives to guide flood risk management efforts, with each objective being supported by a set of specific measures. The objectives relate to five key

areas: improving understanding, greater collaboration, ensuring holistic & sustainable approaches are used, preventing increases in flood risk and improved communication.

Background to Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)

6. The County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) is required to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in its area (a “local flood risk management strategy”), as required by the Floods and Water Management Act 2010.

Local flood risk means flood risk from—

- surface runoff,
- groundwater, and
- ordinary watercourses.

7. It sets the framework and includes who the risk management authorities are and what they do, the objectives and measures for Oxfordshire and includes statutory and non-statutory elements of our work. It does not allocate land for development or develop its own policies.
8. The current Strategy was published in 2015, and it is required to be reviewed and updated around every 5 years. DEFRA were supposed to issue guidance in 2020 but did not. This delay meant the council was unable to prepare its strategy until after DEFRA confirmed it was not issuing guidance.
9. Wallingford Hydro Solutions were commissioned to update the strategy. They provide a range of environmental consultancy services focusing on the water environment. They have also undertaken Strategic Flood Risk Assessments for Oxford City Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Cherwell District Council so they have a detailed understanding of current and future flood risk across the county.

Purpose of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

10. The purpose of the strategy is to provide an overview of flood risk management across the county and identify the roles and responsibilities of Risk Management Authorities and other key stakeholders. The strategy aims to meet the requirements of the LLFAs role as set out under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 by developing objectives and measures to manage local sources of flooding.

11. The strategy does not replicate or replace the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy as prepared by the Environment Agency and which is available here for reference [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424242/national_flood_and_coastal_erosion_risk_management_strategy_for_england.pdf).
12. The strategy does not cover how authorities should respond in an emergency event, or an incident response situation related to flooding. These are still covered by the Local Resilience Forums and multi-agency approaches under the Civil Contingencies Act.
13. The strategy does not allocate land for new developments or develop Local Planning policies, the evidence base for planning decisions in relation to flood risk sits within the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) prepared by the Local Planning Authority within the area.

Summary of Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2015-2021

14. The current published strategy had an action plan, and as part of the review and update, a review of this previously agreed actions was undertaken. This review and progress update on all actions is provided in Annex 1.
15. The majority of the actions were completed within the strategy period including the development of the Oxfordshire Flood toolkit to support engagement, establishment of the flood asset register, development of the flood warden pilot. Those that were not completed are considered to be ongoing actions or areas of work and will be continued within the updated strategy or incorporated items into business as usual.

What the 2025 strategy includes

16. The strategy provides an overview of flood risk management across the county and the roles and responsibilities of Risk Management Authorities and other key stakeholders. The strategy also provides information for residents, businesses, and developers to help understand and manage flood risk.
17. Underpinning the strategy are a series of objectives and measures that will be followed to manage and where possible reduce flood risk within Oxfordshire. There are 5 objectives, and each objective has a set of measures that support achieving the objective. The objectives were based on the following:
 - Existing Strategy Objectives
 - Our statutory and non-statutory roles within flood risk management
 - Corporate Objectives
18. The objectives relate to five key areas: improving understanding, greater collaboration, ensuring holistic & sustainable approaches are used, preventing increases in flood risk and improved communication.

19. The updated strategy will cover a 5-year period but will also look at the longer-term consequences that need to be taken into account, particularly in relation to climate change.
20. The LFRMS is a statutory document and is required to be produced by OCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority. Other strategies such as the Highway Asset management Plan, emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Climate Adaptation Strategy are likely to help support the objectives of the LFRMS.
21. As part of the LFRMS a screening process must be completed to decide if either a Habitats Regulations Assessment or a Strategic Environmental Assessment is needed. The screening process indicated that neither were required, and this screening has been submitted to the Environment Agency and Natural England for them to confirm the council's approach and conclusions. Natural England and the Environment Agency have confirmed the approach and agree with the conclusions.

Public Consultation

22. The consultation for the LFRMS was conducted over the summer 2024. This involved the following:
 - Prior notification to the parish/ town councils that the consultation was due to be published in advance of the start date.
 - Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit updated to provide links to the Let's Talk page.
 - Draft Local Strategy sent to other Risk Management Authorities in advance (District and City Council, Environment Agency, Thames Water).
 - News item on the main OCC website with relevant links.
 - County Councillors were provided with advance warning of the consultation.
23. The consultation ran from 28 June 2024 to 23 August 2024 and included the Draft Local FRM Strategy document, the Draft Action plan and summary of previous strategy action plan.
24. A survey was prepared inviting responders to say if they agree or disagree with the objectives and measures, whether they had any specific comments on those or whether they thought anything was missing from the strategy.
25. The responses from the survey were very positive with over 70% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with all the objectives set out in the draft strategy. More information on the results of the consultation can be found in Annex 4.

26. Minor changes to the draft report were made following the consultation. This mostly involved clarifying some of the measures within the strategy and did not require any significant changes.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

27. The Corporate Plan 2023-25 provides nine priorities and the LFRMS and the Action plan will contribute to a number of these priorities:
- Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
 - Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces.
 - Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.
28. The LFRMS will cover the LLFAs remit and responsibilities which are wide ranging including improving flood resilience through small scale works, undertaking regulatory activities, working with communities and partners to manage flood risk and inputting into the planning process.

Financial Implications

29. The LFRMS sets out what Oxfordshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority will undertake as part of its statutory role under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
30. It also provides objectives and measures including any actions that the county will take as part of wider flood risk management. These actions will be resourced through the current LLFA team and from existing revenue budget.

Comments checked by: Filipp Skiffins Assistant Finance Business Partner
(filipp.skiffins:Oxfordshire.gov.uk) on 15/11/2024.

Legal Implications

31. Under Section 9(1) of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 'A *lead local flood authority for an area in England must develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in its area*'. The LFRMS must also be consistent with the national flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy

for England and have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State about producing a local flood risk management strategy.

32. The LFRMS proposed in this report meets the statutory requirements

Comments checked by: Jennifer Crouch, Head of Law and LBP Environmental Legal Services Jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk on 11/11/2024

Staff Implications

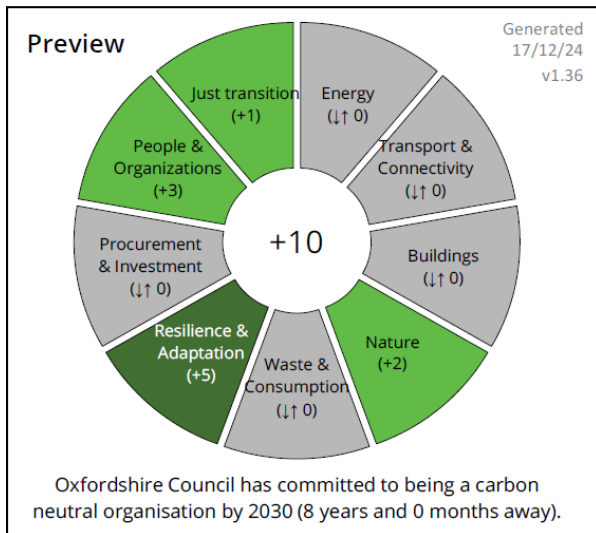
33. The Strategy will guide our LLFA role and staff resources currently in place within the Flood Risk Management Team as part of our business as usual.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

34. The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and identifies no impacts in relation to this assessment, the strategy is county wide and covers local sources of flooding which is a risk-based assessment of flood risk location.
35. A positive benefit has been identified through the overlap and joining up of other council services through measures that improve biodiversity and adaptations to climate change impacts.

Sustainability Implications

36. The Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) has been completed and concludes that the LFRMS although covering statutory roles also promotes the improvement of flood resilience and adaptation in and by communities, with other authorities and through regulatory roles. The LFRMS objectives and measures support actions to address climate change and promote partnership and community involvement.



Risk Management

37. A risk register has been developed for the implementation of the LFRMS and the main risk relates to staff resources in delivering the LFRMS.
38. The first risk, concerning insufficient staff resources, poses a medium threat to delivery and will be managed through regular resource reviews. Lastly, changes in legislation represent a low delivery risk and will be mitigated by monitoring legal updates and adjusting the action plan as needed.

Engagement & Public Consultation

39. As well as the public consultation which was discussed in the above section called 'public consultation', other engagement took place internally at OCC and externally as part of the development of the strategy.
40. Engagement span from September 2023 to December 2024 and included both informal and formal meetings with internal OCC teams, external stakeholders and the public.
41. Key Milestones include:
 - Initial feedback and draft reviews with internal teams and Risk Management Authorities
 - Formal responses regarding SEA/HRA screening from the Environment Agency and Natural England.
 - Regular updates and strategy drafts presented to senior officers, relevant Portfolio Holders, Risk Management Authorities (The Environment Agency, District Councils, Thames Water), and other key groups such as the LLFA steering group. The steering group is made up of relevant officers within OCC who have a flood risk role. The steering group oversees several groups acting at a district level to manage flood risk.
 - Public consultation which ran from 28th June 2024 to 23rd August 2024

- Final strategy approval planned for January 2025 by Cabinet.

Paul Fermer - Director of Environment and Highways

Annex 1: Previous LFRMS 2015-21 action plan review

Annex 2: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Annex 3: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Action Plan

Annex 4: Public consultation and responses

Background papers: Nil

Other Documents: Nil

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