

Report To: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 25th November 2013

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Public Realm/
Corporate Director: Economic and Community
Ambition

Report Author: Senior Engineer, Flood Risk Management

Title: Denbighshire's Local Flood Risk Management
Strategy & Actions from the November 2012 Floods

1. What is the report about?

The Council deferred the planned public consultation on the Denbighshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in order to be able to reflect on the findings of the investigation into the November 2012 Floods. The draft Strategy is now complete. In addition, many of the recommendations set out in the flood investigation reports have been implemented or are ongoing.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To present the Draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to the Committee for consideration prior to public consultation and to provide the Committee with an update on the response by the Council and others to the recommendations of the investigation reports into the November 2012 floods.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee:

- Considers and provides comments on the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and supports the proposal to proceed with the public consultation (Appendix 1 provides a list of targeted consultees).
- Notes and comments on the actions taken by the Council and others in response to the recommendations of the investigation reports into the November 2012 floods.

4. Report details.

4.1 Draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

The Flood and Water Management Act places a requirement on the Council, as a Lead Local Flood Authority, to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. In November 2011, the Welsh Government issued guidance to Welsh authorities which suggested that Local Flood Risk Management Strategies should be in place by 31st March 2013. The Council was on course to

meet this target until the widespread flooding that affected the county in November 2012. A proposal to defer the finalisation of the Strategy until the flood investigation has reached its conclusion has been reported to the Welsh Government, which is supportive of the Council's approach. It was reported to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 25th April 2013 that the necessary public consultation on the Strategy would commence in September 2013. The extended period of time necessary to complete the investigation into the flooding at Glasdir, Ruthin has resulted in the consultation being set back.

In light of the findings of the flood investigation, the Objectives set out in the draft Strategy have been reviewed and can be summarised as follows:

1) Improve the Council's understanding of local flood risk.

While the greatest impact of the November 2012 floods was due to main river flooding, the event served as a timely reminder of the importance that the Council improves its understanding of flood risk.

2) Ensure that local communities understand their responsibilities in relation to local flood risk management.

The November 2012 floods brought into focus the important role that riparian landowners, as well as flood risk management authorities, have to play in maintaining watercourses to reduce flood risk. The importance of Community Flood Plans in helping communities to prepare for the eventuality of a flood is clearly apparent.

3) Work in partnership with other Risk Management Authorities and stakeholders.

Since the floods, the Council has worked in close partnership with Natural Resources Wales, building on existing working relationships to investigate the causes of the flooding and develop a joint approach to reduce future flood risk.

4) Actively manage flood risk associated with new development proposals.

The findings of the independent report into the flooding at Glasdir are a reminder of the importance of clear policies and processes with respect to the management of flood risk for new development.

5) Encourage proactive, responsible maintenance of privately-owned flood defence and drainage assets.

Flooding occurred at several locations across Denbighshire in November 2012 as a direct consequence of blocked, privately owned culverts.

6) Investigate opportunities to reduce surface water run-off from the upper catchments and for flood storage in flood plain areas.

In response to the recommendations made regarding flooding at St Asaph and Gellifor, Natural Resources Wales and the Council will be exploring methods to reduce the impacts of surface water run-off by attenuating flows in the upper catchments.

7) Identify affordable, sustainable flood risk management projects.

With additional pressure on public funds, there will be an increased demand for community and private contributions towards the cost of flood risk management schemes. The recommended improvements to the Glasdir flood defence bund are likely to be part private funded.

8) Ensure local Flood Risk Management knowledge is aligned with the Council's emergency planning procedures.

The Council's Emergency Planning Unit is making a direct contribution to the collaborative work the Council and Natural Resources Wales is carrying out to develop and improve flood response and recovery plans across the county.

4.2 Update on the Recommendations of the Investigations Reports into the November 2012 Floods

Please refer to Appendix 2.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Flooding has the potential to cause severe and prolonged disruption to the communities it affects. Understanding and managing local flood risk supports the Council's priority to develop the local economy.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The cost of carrying out the objectives and measures identified in the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is difficult to determine. There will inevitably be a requirement to invest in human resources to ensure that the Strategy is properly implemented. However, the Council is likely to see savings as a consequence of the reduced impact of flooding through more effective flood risk management.

The cost of implementing the recommendation to increase the height of the existing flood defence bund at the Glasdir estate is expected to be between £250k and £350k. It is anticipated that the cost will be shared equally by the Council, the Welsh Government and Taylor Wimpey.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

By improving its understanding of local flood risk, the Council will be better prepared to manage the risk of flooding and reduce the impact on vulnerable groups.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The Council has consulted with Natural Resources Wales (formerly the Environment Agency and Countryside Council for Wales) as well as internal departments, and will carry out a public consultation on the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The financial implications of the report can be accommodated within the Council's existing budget.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

As a Lead Local Flood Authority, the Council has statutory duties and responsibilities under the Flood Risk Regulations and Flood and Water Management Act. Failure to carry these out will damage the Council's reputation and could result in the withdrawal of future Welsh Government grant funding for flood and coastal defence schemes.

11. Power to make the Decision

Flood Risk Regulations (1999), Flood and Water Management Act (2010).

Article 6.3.3 of the Council's Constitution sets out Scrutiny's powers with respect to policy development and review.

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