

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

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| TO: | STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT | | |
| DATE: | 30th JUNE 2021 | | |
| TITLE: | NATIONAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (FRMP) 2021-2027 | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR PAGE | PORTFOLIO: | STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT |
| SERVICE: | TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE | WARDS: | BOROUGHWIDE |
| LEAD OFFICER: | SAM SHEAN | TEL: | 0118 9372138 |
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Committee of the National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 (2nd Cycle), which will set the specific flood reduction measures and priorities for the period 2021 to 2027.
- 1.2 To update and inform the Committee of Reading Borough Council's contribution towards the updated National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 and to obtain delegated authority to submit the final draft to the Environment Agency.
- 1.3 To update and inform the Committee of Reading Borough Council's successful Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid Allocation from the Environment Agency to deliver a flood reduction scheme in Stone Street Reading and to obtain spend authority.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That authority is given to the Executive Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance to agree and accept Reading Borough Council's final contribution towards the National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 to 2027.
- 2.2 That the Committee grants spend approval for the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid Allocation for Stone Street.

2.3 That the Committee gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment Planning and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance to enter into relevant contracts required to undertake the proposed Flood Reduction Programme.

APPENDICES:

- Appendix 1: Environment Agency Flood Risk Management Plan Question & Answer brochure
- Appendix 2: Reading Borough Council Submission National 2nd cycle Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 to 2027
- Appendix 3: Stone Street Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid Allocation (FDGiA) from the Environment Agency

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 To reduce the risk of flooding within the Borough and public highway to ensure that we have a secure, safe and sustainable environment.
- 3.2 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 3.3 To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.
- 3.4 Reading Borough Council's contribution to the National Flood Risk Management Plan gives consideration to the existing Local Plan, Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Borough along with other local policy and guidance.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Reading Borough Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority for Reading, as designated under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010. This places the responsibility on Reading Borough Council to lead in managing local flood risks from surface water, groundwater and ordinary (smaller) watercourses. It also requires us to meet the requirements of the National Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy, as developed and led by the Environment Agency.
- 4.2 It is recognised that there are three main watercourses running through Reading including the River Thames, the Kennet and the Holy Brook, all of which fall within the Environment Agency responsibility, but which pose a severe flood risk to Reading during extreme flood conditions.

- 4.3 To fulfil our flood risk management duties the Council has been working in partnership with the Environment Agency to develop the 2nd cycle Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 to 2027. The updated Plan is a requirement of the Flood Risk Regulations (2009).
- 4.4 The first phase of the Flood Risk Management Plan covered years 2015 to 2021. The Plan is now being updated and Reading Borough Council have been asked to submit measures that address local flood risk which will be included within the new National Flood Risk Management Plan covering 2021 to 2027.
- 4.5 The Environment Agency have provided a Flood Risk Management Plan Question & Answer brochure detailing the scheme, attached as Appendix 1.

THE PROPOSAL

- 4.6 The Council has been working in partnership with the Environment Agency to develop Reading's submission to include within the National 2nd cycle Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 to 2027, see attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.7 Reading Borough Council has been actively reducing the risk of flooding in Reading since the extreme rainfall flood event of July 2007 with successful schemes delivered including the following:
- Kingsley Close / Vernon Crescent underground surface water holding tank
 - Harness Close Flood Alleviation overflow system
 - Stockton Road / The Cowsey holding pond installation
 - Lousehill Copse / Tay Road holding pond enhancement works
 - Numerous minor works including ordinary watercourse reprofiling and installation of features to divert excess flood water.
 - Property Level Protection measures in Kingsley Close and Circuit Lane
- 4.8 The Council has successfully Secured £150k Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid Allocation (FDGiA) from the Environment Agency to deliver a flood reduction scheme in Stone Street Reading, (Appendix 3 refers). The Stone Street scheme will alleviate and reduce flood risk during extreme rainfall events by providing an overflow and surcharge facility in the wide verge area adjacent to Portman Road through the use of swales and shallow ponds to store water and improve biodiversity.
- 4.9 The Council will continue to explore options to further reduce the risk of flooding in Reading taking into consideration climate change and continue to seek funding opportunities and bring appropriate schemes forward.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022 objectives of:
- Securing the economic success of Reading
 - Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe

- Ensuring the Council is fit for the future

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The approved National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 and the Council's Committee report will be released into the public domain in the lead up to the Committee meeting and outcomes published.
- 6.2 Public consultation on the National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 and publication of the plan will be managed by the Environment Agency on our behalf.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 The Council has reviewed the scope of the service as outlined within this report and considers that the proposals have an equal impact on all members of the general public.
- 7.3 There is no overall change to service delivery at this time. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Reading Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 (Section 41) to maintain public highway at public expense.
- 8.2 Reading Borough Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority and Highway Authority, has a duty under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 to manage and reduce the risk of flooding.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The cost of producing Reading Borough Council's submission to the National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 will be met from the existing Streetcare Revenue Surface Water Management Budget.
- 9.2 The cost of the Stone Street Flood Alleviation scheme will be covered by the Environment Agency Flood Grant in Aid allocation, as well a contribution of

up to £50k from the existing Streetcare Revenue Surface Water Management budget in line with Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

- 9.2 The Council will continue to actively seek appropriate external funding opportunities for any schemes identified by the National Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 that helps reduce the flood risk to Reading.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019 and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions. To this end, Council on 15th October 2019 formally adopted of the 'Unite Construction Charter' where the Authority supports the 'Get Britain Building' campaign, which is aimed at supporting and sustaining the British construction industry. All relevant construction contracts will be required to comply with the Authority's Sustainable Buying Standard for Highways and Construction Materials, which requires structural steel and other relevant materials to be covered by BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing of Construction Product certification, or equivalent.
- 10.2 Tenders for any subsequent contracts that may become necessary will be invited to submit Environmental Implications proposals.
- 10.3 Tenders will also need to include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability within tender returns.
- 10.4 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change. An increase in flood risk as a result of wetter winters and/or increased intensity and frequency of extreme rainfall events is one of the anticipated impacts of climate change. The recommendations in this report seek to improve Reading's resilience to such events by improving the town's flood risk management infrastructure.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee Report 9th July 2013; Flood & Water Management Act 2010 Lead Local Flood Authority Duties.
- 11.2 Unite Construction Charter
- 11.3 Detailed information on Flood Risk Management Plans: <https://www.gov.uk/search/all?keywords=flood+risk+management+plans&order=relevance> refer to 'Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs): Responsibilities and 'Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs): how to prepare them

