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Shropshire Council’s Response to Flooding and Flooding Incidents and its Approach to the Management of Local Flood Risk

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1 Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines Shropshire Council’s general response to flooding. This is broken down into two sections; firstly, how the council, alongside partner agencies, works when river levels are expected to rise to where they will impact people, property and transport infrastructure. Secondly the work the council does in protecting people, property and communities as a Lead Local Flood Authority.
- 1.2 Shropshire Council has a number of statutory duties and powers with regard to the management of flood risk. As the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 the Council must take the lead in the management of local flood risk. As a unitary authority, Shropshire Council is also the Land Drainage Authority, with certain permissive powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to explain how local flood risk is managed for the benefit of the people of Shropshire, and how it will be managed in the future.

2 Recommendations

- a) That members scrutinise the current approach in response to flooding and flood management;
- b) To note the support that is given to the continuing allocation of the element of Defra’s revenue support grant that is allocated for local flood risk management activities.

REPORT

3 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

Shropshire Council has a general duty to ensure the safety of the public on land and highways that are in its ownership. As the Lead Local Flood Authority the council must have a strategy for managing and reducing local flood risk.

4 Financial Implications

The approach to responding to flooding incidents as they happen forms part of the core role of the Highways department

Local Flood Risk Management, including the LLFAs role as a statutory consultee to the LPA, is funded via Defra's revenue support grant. Flood alleviation schemes, in a variety of forms, are funded by additional external capital funds which are secured as part of the Flood and Water Manager's role.

5. Introduction

5.1 This report is presented in two parts. The first is how Shropshire Council responds to emergency flooding events, such as the recent "Storm Desmond" that had devastating impacts in Cumbria and Lancashire recently. The second part looks at how Shropshire Council manages flood risk generally as a Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and as Land Drainage Authority under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

6 Emergency Flood Response

6.1 Shropshire Council responds routinely to incidents of flooding alongside its partners. The main partners are:

- The Environment Agency (EA). The EA is the principle responder to incidents of main river flooding and it deploys the flood barriers in both Shrewsbury and Ironbridge;
- Severn Trent Water (STW). STW deals with pumping and deploys the pumps at Coleham Head to ensure the public sewers in the area remain operational during times of high water; and
- Shropshire Council. The council manages road closures and car parks and diverts traffic to keep the town moving. This helps to ensure the town remains open for business as much as possible during floods.

- 6.2 Current river levels are available for a number of strategic locations online from the EA. These are monitored. Flood alerts and warnings are also issued by the EA via email, SMS and phone to give advance warning of expected high water levels. An arrangement has also been made with local company Shoothill whereby lower level alerts are issued when Shrewsbury's towpath might flood in certain locations, as the EA was unable to do this. At times of increased risk the EA maintains a 24 hour incident centre and Shropshire Council technicians liaise closely with it to get the latest information and predictions. This is done on a 24 hour basis if necessary.
- 6.3 So far this "flood season" the EA has deployed the flood barriers at Frankwell four times, once at Coleham Head and once in Ironbridge. The total cost of these deployments to the EA has been £45,000.00. However these deployments have saved dozens of properties from being flooded. The average insurance claim in Cumbria, Lancashire and Yorkshire is
- 6.4 £50,000.00, so the barriers, now they are built represent very good value for money, let alone avoiding the incalculable misery for households that experience the devastation of a flood.
- 6.5 Shropshire Council has with partners developed a multi-phased Joint Flood Action Plan. There are now seven phases to the plan. The first deals with closing off the towpath in times of flood at 1.6m on the Welsh Bridge River Level Gauge. The phases of the plan cover various river levels to over 5.6m on the gauge, which is when the barriers at Frankwell will be overtopped. For each phase there is a series of road closures and actions identified. As the levels rise to between 4.5 and 5m access into town become difficult and most routes are closed off and temporary bus termini are set up in Frankwell, New Park Road and Abbey Foregate. A copy of the Welsh Bridge Gaugeboard information sheet is included in Appendix A.
- 6.6 Phase 7 considers the over topping of the barriers in Frankwell. By that time the only routes into and out of the town centre will be Kingsland Bridge for light vehicles and cars, possibly Castle Foregate, in and out for single HGVs, depending on water levels and the DANA Walk for pedestrians. It is also at this time that we would be implementing our other emergency plans and opening up rest centres to accept people from properties in Frankwell, Coleham and other areas that would be affected by flooding.

7 Local Flood Risk Management

7.1 As a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Shropshire Council has a number of statutory duties to address local flood risk under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Land Drainage Act 1991. The production of a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is one of these duties. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 encourages collaborative working between Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) and, accordingly, Shropshire Council and Staffordshire County Council have agreed to work together to deliver the LLFA responsibilities for both counties. The Strategy is a suite of documents and assessments that provide the overall strategic direction for the management of local flood risk in both counties. Part 1 of the Strategy sets out the combined approach to managing flood risk from local sources whereas Part 2 of the document details the policies and action plan, specific to Shropshire, that outline how Shropshire Council intends to fulfil its responsibilities under this legislation.

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy identified seven key objectives which are aligned with the Environment Agency's National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) together with our corporate priorities. They are summarised below.

- Develop a strategic understanding of flood risk from all sources;
- Promote effective management of drainage and flood defence systems;
- Support communities to understand flood risk and become more resilient to flooding;
- Manage local flood risk and new development in a sustainable manner;
- Achieve results through partnership and collaboration;
- Be better prepared for flood events, and;
- Secure and manage funding for flood risk management in a challenging financial climate.

- 7.2 The objectives helped us to develop an action plan detailing how the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy will be delivered. The plan brings together the actions and priorities set out in the Strategy and plans for investment in flood alleviation from flood risk management partners such as the Environment Agency, water companies and Internal Drainage Boards. Progress will be monitored by the Shropshire and Staffordshire Flood Risk Management Service Delivery Group which includes representatives from these organisations.
- 7.3 It is not possible to deliver all potential flood risk management measures in the short term. We therefore take a proportionate and risk based approach to focus resources where they will be most effective. Activities are prioritised based on the following criteria:
- where there is risk to life e.g. in rapidly reacting catchments;
 - historic and predicted flood risk (using flood mapping) to properties, communities, businesses and/or infrastructure. Where flooding is known to have happened before then priority will be increased;
 - where there are frequent flooding issues affecting a small number of properties or cutting off access to rural settlements;
 - availability of funding and external contributions, including local funding which could 'unlock' a project's potential for moving forward by enabling national Flood and Coastal Risk Management Grant in Aid and / or regional Local Levy funding to be secured;
 - where there are known failing assets or health and safety concerns (either through an asset failing or difficulties involved in its operation);
 - where there is strong community engagement;
 - where there are opportunities to support economic growth;
 - where there are opportunities to work collaboratively with other Risk Management Authorities, and;
 - the delivery of multiple benefits, including wider environmental benefits.

- 7.4 Under the Land Drainage Act 1991 Shropshire Council is the Land Drainage Authority and has permissive powers. These are used to ‘police’ the maintenance of ordinary watercourses where there is a risk of flooding due to the actions or inactions of landowners. The responsibility for the maintenance of a watercourse, whether open or culverted, rests with the owner of the land through which it passes. Shropshire Council is also the consenting body for works affecting ordinary watercourses, and has consenting powers in this regard. The risk based approach that the council takes in using its permissive powers is covered in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- 7.5 Under Schedule 4 of the Development Management Procedure Order, the LLFA is designated as a statutory consultee for major planning applications. This means that the LLFA checks planning applications and provides relevant advice to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) as to whether development proposals accord with local and national policies on flood risk and sustainable drainage.

7.6 Ongoing work to support Strategy Objectives

- 7.6.1 Develop a strategic understanding of flood risk from all sources
- Using GIS data we have identified communities at risk of flooding to assist in the prioritisation of our approach to the protection of properties across Shropshire.
- 7.6.2 Promote effective management of drainage and flood defence systems
- Taking a risk based approach to the management of over 5,000Km of ordinary watercourse across Shropshire means that land drainage systems are fit for purpose and flood risk is managed appropriately.
 - The council’s GIS based asset register holds information on watercourses and drainage systems across the county. It is used and updated on a daily basis and assists with management of these assets whether they are council or third party owned. Our knowledge of assets in different areas is shared where appropriate so that communities can have a better understanding of drainage systems which serve them.
- 7.6.3 Support communities to understand flood risk and become more resilient to flooding
- The joint Shropshire & Staffordshire Community Flood Resilience project is using the National Flood Forum to raise awareness across a number of communities. The project aims to help communities be better prepared and more resilient to flooding in the future.
 - The Shropshire Slow the Flow project involves working with landowners and communities across a number of smaller catchments. Taking a catchment based approach will enable water to be held back upstream, where it is safe to do so, and so reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

- The ability to give free property flood protection assessments procure funding to implement property level protection measures means that flood risk to residential properties can be reduced.

7.6.4 Manage local flood risk and new development in a sustainable manner

- A well-established system of consultation exists with the LPA. With recent changes in legislation, work is currently underway to produce a Local SuDS Handbook with eight other neighbouring authorities. This will produce consistent local requirements for developers across the region and, in Shropshire, will sit beneath relevant planning policy.

7.6.5 Achieve results through partnership and collaboration

- A collaborative working agreement is in place with Staffordshire County Council and focuses on improved service delivery across both areas. The partnership delivers resilience during times of flood since officers can move between authorities if required. It has also brought modest savings through joint procurement of certain commissions. A copy of the agreement forms Appendix B
- Through the Shropshire and Staffordshire Service Delivery Group formal partnerships are maintained with the following organisations:
 - Environment Agency
 - Severn Trent Water
 - Welsh Water Dwr Cymru
 - United Utilities
 - Rea Internal Drainage Board
 - Meverley Internal Drainage Board

One of the focus points of the group is to look partnership working opportunities. A number of successful joint funding opportunities have been identified as a result.

7.6.6 Be better prepared for flood events

- The Flood and Water Management Team works closely with both the Emergency Planning and local Highways Teams. Data is shared to ensure that all parties have the latest risk information, and this is fed into the councils Multi Agency Flood Action Plan.

7.6.7 Secure and manage funding for flood risk management in a challenging financial climate

- Through dialogue with Senior Managers and the Portfolio Holder, the element of Defra's revenue support grant earmarked for LLFA duties has, so far, been fully allocated to the service area it is intended for. It is important for this to continue in order to achieve the actions outlined in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy's action plan.

- Through the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee access is given to both Local Levy and Flood Defence Grant in Aid funding. The Flood and Water Manager makes decisions based on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and applies for external funding to protect residential properties accordingly.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/environmental-maintenance-and-enforcement/drainage-and-flooding/local-flood-risk-management-strategy/>

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Simon Jones, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation

Cllr Malcolm Price, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing, Regulatory Services and Environment

Local Member

For flood response in Shrewsbury:

Andrew Bannerman, Alan Mosely, Miles Kenny and Anne Chebsy

For Local Flood Risk Management:

Not applicable

Appendices

A – Welsh Bridge Gauge Board Data

B – Collaborative Working Agreement with Staffordshire County Council