

**TO: ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**FLOODING, MANAGING THE RISK – A PRACTICAL OVERVIEW  
Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 As reported to this Panel at its meeting of the 22 January the Council is now the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). As such it must seek to manage present and future flood risk in a holistic manner. We have defined our needs and approach to flood risk management within the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS). (Annex 1)
- 1.2 This paper seeks to appraise the Panel of what is done locally and by whom. The Panel is also to hear from two key partners. The Environment Agency and Thames Water as to their role and responsibilities.
- 1.3 To aid officers in the presentation and give Members a feel for the sort of issues that are typically faced in dealing with current needs reference will be made to part of the Bullbrook. (Annex 2)

**2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 2.1 As the LLFA the Council has three key roles.

(1) Looking forward we will soon have powers in respect of the approval of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). These are systems that are to be used on new development to help relieve the pressure on watercourses at the time of heavy rainfall. They do it by slowing the rate of release or the total additional quantity of water gaining access to the watercourse and encourage local dispersal. The idea of SUDS is not new in this Borough.

(2) Fortunately the number of incidences of flooding of residential properties in this Borough over the last 20 years has been extremely low and the Borough has been identified as not at risk of significant flooding. The last reported flooding incident due to rainfall (rather than a burst water main or fluvial flooding for example) was in July 2007 when less than 10 properties experienced internal flooding. During that same period widespread parts of the county suffered significant flooding with thousands of properties affected. This flooding event led to the Pitt Review and implementation of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (of which the development of the LFRMS is a requirement amongst other duties). Although the experiences within the Borough are minor in comparison to others that does not mean we don't have cause for concern. We have a number of low lying areas which are prone to pluvial (rainfall) flooding and affect both rural and urban areas and the highway network. Our experiences suggest that our flood incidences are relative to flash flooding which is very difficult to deal with. The challenge in this our second role, is how to improve such situations and prevent them getting any worse.

(3) As a land owner we have substantial land assets and liability and legal powers and duties. That liability is discharged in the main by three service areas, Highways Asset, Parks and Countryside and Landscape Services. The Regulatory Services team deal with the main enforcement duties in respect of private land if required.

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- 2.2 Practically, there is little to be done to prevent local incidents of flash flooding due to surface water run off. Some years ago we experienced a 'freak' hail/rain storm over the South Hill Park area. That storm resulted in a massive overload of the drainage system and the flooding of homes downhill of the flow of water. The weather was so intense that it brought down leaves and branches which blocked drainage ditches, channels and road grills. A number of homes flooded. At such times there is little we can do other than to co-ordinate what resource is available as part of our emergency planning response.
- 2.3 For the rest of the time as a Council we have duties as land managers. Those duties tend to fall to Highways, Parks, and Countryside and Landscape. All three service areas should tend their land in a way to mitigate against flood risk. They do this by the maintenance of any drainage systems and streams adjoining the land being managed where there are riparian responsibilities.
- 2.4 The Council has powers to require other land owners to fulfil their obligations in respect of land drainage. We can also control any works they might propose to undertake on ordinary watercourses. Unfortunately many land owners appear to have little understanding of their responsibilities and getting their compliance can be confrontational and very time consuming. In addition watercourses seem to attract rubbish which can increase the risk of flooding. The role of the community is critical to firstly help prevent such incidents but also to report problems. Resources are such that the role of community stewardship is becoming ever more important.
- 2.5 The resources committed by the Council to helping address the new duties has been increased recently. In the context of the current needs and new duties we created a post in the Highways Asset team and appointed an engineer to take the lead on flood risk management. Regulatory Services Officers already had powers to enforce the Land Drainage provisions and can be called upon to help as required. The only capacity for any pro-active work is from this new post. Priority of his time is given to addressing flooding issues affecting the highway and/or where there is a risk of flooding to residential property.
- 2.6 Where a problem is found requiring improvements on Council land bids are made for capital funding. A bid has been made for £86k in the next financial year. Work over the last 12 months has identified the following areas where there is the greatest need/benefit to be derived from investment funding in order to effect improvements:
- (1) Dukes Ride, Crowthorne – improvements to main carrier pipe and connections (estimate £56k)
  - (2) Warfield Street, Newell Green – new system required (estimated £28k)
  - (3) A330 Maidens Green – investigation works and scheme design (estimate £8k)
  - (4) Holly Spring Lane (from Field Park to Jigs Lane South) – investigation works and scheme design (estimate £3k)
- 2.7 Where a problem is found on private land the Council has a power to prosecute and/or carry out the work in default and recover the funds from the land owner. As mentioned above this can be very time consuming often not helped by the difficulties in establishing ownership.
- 2.8 Annex 1 to this report shows part of the Bullbrook. This is an area of the Borough where local concerns have been highlighted although no residential properties are believed ever to have flooded. According to the Environment Agency flood publically available risk maps it's an area at risk of flooding. To put this into context this same information also indicates that many other areas and properties within the Borough

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are at risk if there were to be no proper ongoing measures in place to manage risk. The published risk mapping data give an overview and intended for guidance only. It does not provide details for individual properties and if this point is not understood then it can lead to needless public concern. The area shown in the annex is being put forward to help illustrate to the Panel some of the issues raised in this report. However, the land is mainly Council owned and the nature of the ownership make this site relatively easy to deal with compared to others. As an area its history of flooding is such that it is a 'low priority' area as far as flood management resource needs are concerned.

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### Background Papers

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Panel 22 January 2013