

## Lead Local Flood Authority Update

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Cabinet Member: David Hall

Division and Local Member: All

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. Somerset County Council is designated a Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Under the Act the county council has a number of duties and powers that are undertaken by the Flood and Water Management Team. In October 2017, the Scrutiny committee received an update on the work of the Flood and Water Management Team. This report updates the Committee on the continued progress by the service in 2018/19 and sets out key activities for 2019/20.
- 1.2. The work of the team links to the 2016-2020 Somerset County Plan visions for economy, infrastructure and partnership working.

### 2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. The County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Somerset and manages flooding from local sources (surface-water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses). It also has powers to undertake flood risk management work in relation to surface water and groundwater. The work of the LLFA and its partners is guided by the county's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- 3.2. The previous flood and water management update to the committee in October 2017 set out plans for service development in the following areas:
  - Scheme identification
  - Funding opportunities
  - Sustainable drainage
  - Policy documents
- 3.3. The following section sets out key activities and work undertaken in 2018/19 linked to these duties and discusses our plans for 2019/20.
- 3.4. **Scheme Identification** – At the committee meeting in October 2017, a more robust approach to scheme and funding identification was proposed. Members were supportive of our intention to maximise the flood and water management budget by being strategic about how the funding is used, including how we draw upon other money available for flood risk management work. This broadly entailed a) investigating flood events and

areas of flood risk, b) conducting a study into how best to address the problems and c) seeking appropriate funding to deliver alleviation schemes using this evidence to support the necessary business cases. As a result, a large proportion of the 2018/19 programme was allocated to undertake studies in high risk areas. Due to the need to find in-year savings as part of the financial imperative the studies proposed were deferred and have not been taken forward in 2018/19.

- 3.5. In 2018/19 there have been no significant instances of flooding that have resulted in the need for a formal flood investigation by the team, as per Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act.
- 3.6. Complementary to the duty to investigate is a further duty to keep a record of flooding that occurs in our county. The information provides the evidence needed to prioritise our work and support bid applications to secure funding and deliver a range of flood mitigation measures to reduce flood risk. To make it easier for those affected by flooding to report information to the authorities a new online system is being made available to LLFAs in the south west. The Severe Weather Information Management (SWIM) website has been specifically developed to make it easier for anyone to report past and current flooding incidents relating to properties. The current website can be viewed at: <https://swim.geowessex.com/somerset>. We are working with the website owner on some upgrades and with Communications to promote its launch in Somerset ready for this winter.
- 3.7. Despite funding pressures in 2018/19, we have completed a number of minor surface water management schemes. This includes a small programme of Property Level Flood Resilience works across the county. These measures seek to increase a property's resilience and resistance to flooding by employing products such as temporary barriers, air brick covers, sumps and pumps. These types of products can limit the impact and duration of flooding on properties and are particularly used where larger flood alleviation measures are unachievable or to mitigate residual flood risks. This specialist work was procured through a bespoke contract and the whole process will be reviewed to inform future programmes of work. Early feedback from those involved has been very positive.
- 3.8. In 2019/20 we will not have sufficient funding in the flood and water management budget to undertake a large programme of studies or schemes. What funding is available will be targeted to maximising income from other funding sources as part of our service improvement process for scheme identification and delivery.
- 3.9. **Funding opportunities** – While the pressure on SCC's budgets has limited our ability to prepare business cases for national sources of funding, we have identified areas where funding from the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) can provide additional value to our service.
- 3.10. In 2018/19 funding from the SRA was secured for the following schemes which are underway:
  - **Sustainable Drainage Guidance document** – create a Somerset specific guidance document for developers (2 year project)
  - **CCTV surveys** – Undertake CCTV surveys of culverts to identify problems that can be taken forward by riparian owners or flood risk

management authorities and/or gather information to supplement flood investigations and asset data collection.

- **East Stoke, Stoke sub Hamdon** – implementation of a flood alleviation scheme linked to a culverted watercourse.

- 3.11.** In 2019/20 a number of innovative proposals that could be funded by SRA have been put forward: a study for surface water management at Cheddar, an enhanced database of flood risk assets, the continuation of the Riparian Responsibilities Officer to support landowner engagement, funding to allow the CCTV surveying of riparian owned culverts, a partnership scheme to address surface water flooding in Moorland, a flood alleviation scheme at Curry Rivel, and an initiative to promote sustainable drainage for highway purposes. The outcome of these applications will be known in the New Year.
- 3.12. Sustainable Drainage (SuDS)** – Our role in the planning process as a statutory consultee for Major planning applications has been enhanced following a challenging period earlier in the year. A key challenge was a lack of resource in this specialised role which necessitated the use of consultants to undertake the duty. The recruitment of a new SuDS officer and graduate has provided an opportunity to refocus our approach to applications. We are also enhancing our working relationship with other planning consultees, notably the District Councils, Environment Agency, Drainage Boards and Water company.
- 3.13.** The demand on this service has steadily increased since the duty was created in April 2015. At the time of writing, in 2018 we have already been consulted on over 450 applications compared with 430 in 2017. This role includes providing technical input on the drainage aspects for regional significant infrastructure projects such as Hinkley, and the Highways England proposals for the A303 and Junction 25.
- 3.14.** We are now looking at how we can take the service further to secure better outcomes for drainage in the planning process. This is for flood risk management purposes, but also looking at how well-designed SuDS can achieve multiple benefits for the environment and add aesthetic and amenity value within developments. Key to this is engaging with developers and other consultees earlier in the planning process, if possible at the pre-application stage. An example of this is how we have supported West Somerset Council in their master planning of key sites in Minehead given the challenges they will present for drainage and flood risk management.
- 3.15.** To further promote the use of sustainable drainage the council is currently participating in an EU funded project, named Sponge, that will allow us to create demonstration sites in Taunton. Match funding for Sponge has been sought to maximise the potential benefits and limit SCC's financial liabilities, with the Somerset Rivers Authority being a key contributor. Links between Sponge and other locally important projects such as the Taunton Garden Town have been established.
- 3.16.** Following the completion of the work to identify target areas that was presented to Scrutiny in October 2017, the project team has been engaging in these communities through Westcountry Rivers Trust to identify investment opportunities. Several small SuDS projects have been delivered working with Taunton communities, the Westcountry Rivers Trust and other partners.

Larger investments are planned in conjunction with Taunton Deane Borough Council with feasibility work completing before Christmas to support these discussions.

- 3.17. 2019/20 will be a particularly challenging year for Sponge as we work with Taunton Deane Borough Council to implement some more significant sustainable drainage schemes as the project reaches its conclusion.
- 3.18. **Policy documents** – The team has been preparing a document to support the use of the county council's powers under the Land Drainage Act. These powers can be used to regulate activities affecting the flow of water in ordinary watercourses and to ensure riparian owners undertake common law maintenance duties. The intention is that the document will set out a framework for how the county council is applying these powers.
- 3.19. In 2019/20 there is a need to update the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. This will require significant input from other risk management authorities as they should also work in accordance with the strategy. A plan for this task is in preparation that includes how partners and members will be involved in the process. The intention is that the actions within the updated local strategy will eventually form the basis for the monitoring and reporting of our LLFA function.

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1. None

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1. None

#### **6. Background papers**

- 6.1. None

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author