



ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

Draft Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 8 November 2012

Purpose of the report: Policy development and review

The Environment and Transport Select Committee has an overview and scrutiny role on strategic flood risk management activity in Surrey. This item provides information for scrutiny on partnership arrangements and publication of the draft Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Introduction:

1. Recent Government legislation has provided local authorities with a number of new responsibilities in relation to flood risk management. It has also provided a timely opportunity to review the activities that we already carry out. The Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy marks the start of a new, more coordinated approach to the work that we all carry out in this important area.
2. Surrey is a county with a high risk of flooding. It has experienced major flood incidents, including several in the last 10 years. Evidence indicates that in future damage caused by flood incidents could increase, due to the impact of climate change and further pressure for development in areas at risk of flooding.
3. Surrey County Council has been designated lead local flood authority and consequently has a number of specific new responsibilities that relate primarily to 'local flood risk', namely from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses (smaller rivers, streams and ditches). Flood risk from all other rivers (known as main rivers) remains the responsibility of the Environment Agency.
4. In April 2012 the way that the Government funds flood risk management projects changed. We are developing an understanding of areas in Surrey that have the highest eligibility for national funding to ensure that Surrey receives its fair share. Changes in national funding mean we also need to consider what local funding may be allocated to local flood risk priorities.

Partnership arrangements:

5. The Surrey Flood Risk Partnership Board (hereafter the Partnership Board) was set up to ensure there is a strategic approach to flood risk management within Surrey. Under it, partners will work towards a joint understanding of local flood risk and an alignment of priorities and investment.
6. The Partnership Board's core membership includes Surrey district and borough council representatives – Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Guildford Borough Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council and Woking Borough Council (Surrey Chief Executives' champion). However, the inclusion and participation of all Surrey district and borough councils is sought through collaborative working arrangements and the requirement to share information.
7. The Partnership Board has commissioned the Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (hereafter the strategy). The strategy will take account of all types of flooding, which reflects the partnership approach. It also recognises that residents and businesses do not always distinguish between different types of flood risk; the impact is their key concern.

Strategy summary:

8. The strategy clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the different organisations involved in flood risk management in the county, including how they work together. It sets out ambitions, objectives and priority actions. It also provides a list of projects. These will be submitted to the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee with the intention of leveraging funding.
9. Our ambitions include developing a long term drainage asset management strategy. We will work together with the Environment Agency to ensure the development and implementation of flood risk management strategies including the Lower Thames and Wey. We will promote flood resilience and resistance measures to 'at risk' households and businesses in Surrey. We will urge the Government to work with the insurance industry to guarantee the availability and affordability of flood insurance. The full set of eight ambitions is in the foreword on page 3 of the strategy.
10. Our objectives, as stated in the strategy, are as follows:
 - We will make it easier for risk management authorities to work together.
 - We will clarify the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.
 - We will provide a clear overview of levels of flood risk throughout the county, to enable wider understanding of those risks.
 - We will consider flooding issues at a catchment level.

- We will reflect and action the concerns of residents and businesses.
 - We will provide a robust approach to the prioritisation of spending on schemes intended to reduce flood risk.
 - We will highlight how residents and businesses can help manage risk.
 - We will develop an annual action plan of priority actions based on the principles set out within the strategy.
 - We will ensure environmental consequences are taken into account in the design and implementation of any proposed flood risk management measures.
11. In addition to identifying capital schemes, we will develop actions to reduce local flood risk. The early focus for our work can be grouped into a number of broad themes:
- maintenance
 - sustainable drainage
 - communication
 - improving knowledge and skills
 - developing a holistic response to flood risk.

This list includes work that partners are required to undertake to adhere to our new responsibilities. It also responds to public feedback from our survey to inform the strategy. The full action plan is provided at annex 3 on page 69 in the strategy.

Consultation:

12. We sent out a public survey in January 2012 to capture feedback on flooding issues from residents and businesses. Business networks, residents associations, community flood groups and the parish councils network received it. Over half of the 257 respondents had personally experienced flooding in the last 10 years. Some of them had experienced problems obtaining building insurance. They voiced concerns relating to both surface water flooding and fluvial flooding. We have taken these responses into account in the strategy. For more detail on the responses please see annex 5 on page 78 of the strategy.
13. Since then, we have worked with a sub-group of the Partnership Board, and liaised with all Surrey district and borough councils, to develop the full strategy.
14. Section 9 of the Flood and Water Management Act requires us to consult on the strategy with risk management authorities that may be affected by the strategy; and the public. Public consultation on the draft Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy runs from September to 30 November 2012. It can be found at www.surreycc.gov.uk/floodriskstrategy or call 03456 009 009. A strategy summary leaflet is also available in hard copy.
15. In this phase of consultation we have consulted with eight Surrey local committees to date. They broadly welcomed the partnership approach

and our ambitions. Some committees asked for their district or borough council to be included in Partnership Board. Members noted local flood risk issues and assets.

16. We held a member seminar on 10 September. It was attended by 24 county, district and borough council members. Members wanted to see outcomes that make a difference to their residents. They also wanted clarity on responsibilities. Section 3 on page 27 of the strategy covers roles and responsibilities in detail.
17. We have circulated the strategy widely to risk management authorities, residents associations and parish councils. In addition we have contacted known local flood groups, individuals and organisations with an interest in flood risk management and business networks.

Conclusions:

18. There is a role for everyone to play in the management of flood risk. We can coordinate our services better so that the risk of flooding is reduced and the aftermath of flooding is minimised.
19. Surrey County Council is the lead local flood authority and has a statutory duty to produce a strategy. However, the county council and partners also view the strategy as a real opportunity to work together to reduce risk to residents and businesses and prepare for the future.

Financial and value for money implications

20. We want to win more funding to improve Surrey's infrastructure. Surrey County Council has made a number of bids for funding from the Thames Local Levy and Defra's Flood Defence Grant in Aid. All of our bids have been accepted. Some of them are awaiting approval. One has been approved for £595,000 to deliver the Rive Ditch Flood Alleviation Scheme in Woking over three years. Other amounts are to be confirmed.
21. The council is backing the Environment Agency's Lower Thames and River Wey schemes; and district and borough council bids such as for schemes in Lightwater and the Chobham South Feasibility Study.

Equalities Implications:

22. We have considered equalities implications in a full equality impact assessment of the strategy.
23. In terms of prioritising locally important schemes, we will consider areas of the county where there are concentrations of vulnerable residents, who could be particularly at risk in the event of flooding (for example elderly, disabled or less mobile residents).
24. Members can report flood incidents and encourage people in known high-risk flood areas to be prepared for flood incidents. To report any

problems related to floods, see <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-and-cleaning/drainage-and-flooding>.

Risk Management Implications

25. Extreme weather, existing buildings in floodplains and limited funding mean we cannot stop flood incidents in Surrey. The strategy provides a real opportunity for us to work together with residents and businesses to reduce risk and prepare for the future.
26. The Environment Agency defines flood 'risk' as a combination of the likelihood of floods occurring and the consequences that can happen when they do occur. To manage the risks, we are improving our understanding of them. This will reduce the likelihood of incidents happening. It will help us to manage the potential consequences to people, businesses, infrastructure and services.
27. Our partnership approach to all types of flooding will help us to manage risks. Our studies, such as surface water management plans in Epsom & Ewell and Woking, consider the interaction between surface water and sewage flooding. Joint work on strategic flood risk assessments and developing joint funding bids across neighbouring authorities will ensure that all flood risks within a catchment (a broader area than a district or a borough) are taken into account.

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy

28. The lead local flood authority is a new responsibility the council has to meet. The Partnership Board, and our approach to integrating flood risk management, follows the council's one team culture.
29. We will continue to develop effective partnerships to reduce costs and improve flood risk management services. For example, we are working on a consortium of Surrey local authorities that will deliver the future drainage approving body. We are uncertain about the date of commencement of this part of the legislation and what it will entail. We prefer a phased approach with drainage approving initially required for larger sites only.
30. We will involve more and more service users in designing and delivering effective services. This includes working on community-based surface water management plans, and setting up and contributing to local flood groups, where resources allow.

Recommendations:

31. The Environment and Transport Select Committee is asked to:
- a) Support the publication of the draft Surrey Flood Risk Management Strategy.
 - b) Scrutinise the partnership approach and provide comment as necessary on the strategy.

Next steps:

The 12-week public consultation ends on 30 November 2012. We will use the information provided to ensure that key concerns are reflected in the final document.

The strategy will become a statutory document, which Surrey's local authorities, water companies and internal drainage board must have regard to.

The Partnership Board will provide an annual progress report to the Environment and Transport Select Committee and Directorate Leadership Team for Environment and Infrastructure. The outcomes and decisions of the Partnership Board will feed into the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (TRFCC). The Partnership Board will receive quarterly reports from each of the Lead Local Flood Authority's operational groups that provide:

- updates on the groups' work programmes and key issues for review and endorsement
- assurance that liaison is working and that partners are fulfilling their commitments
- recommendations for actions which the senior officers need to focus further attention on.

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Sources/background papers: Draft Surrey Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and strategy summary leaflet.