

CABINET RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE**Item under consideration: REPORT OF THE FLOODING TASK GROUP****(considered by E&T Select Committee on 27 October 2014)**

5

FLOODING TASK GROUPS RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) Surrey County Council should lobby Central Government to change the powers of the Water Company regulators, such that proper investment in the drainage networks of the water companies can be directed, until such time as the Secretary of State is satisfied that those drainage networks fully comply with current standards.
- b) The Environment Agency should be pressed to give strong consideration to a programme of selective, tactical dredging of specified areas of the Thames.
- c) Surrey County Council should work with partner organisations to make significant improvements to the arrangements for communications in emergencies, and in particular to provide for communication structures between residents and the relevant authorities. Particular attention should be made for special arrangements in holiday periods.
- d) Surrey County Council should work with all the Boroughs and Districts and with residents in the relevant areas to establish flood fora.
- e) That flood alleviation schemes which require a planning application should be submitted as soon as possible for planning consent to the relevant boroughs or district councils or, in the case of the River Thames Scheme, if so agreed by the Environment Agency, to the appropriate National planning authority, or both.

RESPONSE:

Paragraph 26 of the Task Group report includes a table setting out outline capital costs of flood alleviation schemes in Surrey. The table implies that the county council is expected to fund £222m towards the costs of the schemes. Annexe 1 of the Task Group report lists the schemes and identifies the county council of the "bearer" of these costs. There is a foot note to the table stating that "Boroughs and Districts may contribute to the SCC element". Paragraph 26 is misleading. The county council is not responsible for meeting the cost of these schemes or the cost shortfall. The Government's funding formula for the schemes and that of the Regional Flood and Coastal Defence Committee assumes and requires contributions from partners. These may come from a variety of private and public sources and will vary from one scheme to another depending on the beneficiaries.

On the specific Select committee recommendations:

- a) Cabinet recognises that the current regulatory arrangements for water companies may restrict their investment in the necessary measures to prevent some of the harmful impacts of flooding that arise from infrastructure under their ownership. Cabinet agrees that the Council should write to the Secretary of State asking her to address this concern.
- b) Cabinet agrees that it is essential that the maintenance of the Thames secures optimum river flow and agrees to write to the Environment Agency making this point and seeking information on their maintenance programme.
- c) Cabinet recognises the need to work with partner organisations to make improvements to

the arrangements for communications in emergencies, and in particular to provide for communication structures between residents and the relevant authorities. Cabinet also recognises that learning points relating to communications following the 2013/14 floods have been captured by Surrey County Council and its partners and are being acted upon, including the establishment of flood forums. Cabinet agrees that particular attention should be made for special arrangements in holiday periods.

d) Cabinet agrees that the Council will work with all Districts and Boroughs, Town Councils, Parish Councils and residents in the relevant areas to establish Flood Forums.

e) Cabinet agrees that it is important to develop a programme of flood alleviation schemes.

John Furey
Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding
25 November 2014