

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy  
and Performance Board

**DATE:** 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Policy and Resources

**SUBJECT:** Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 As part of its new duties as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Halton Council must undertake a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA). This is a high level screening exercise, to determine whether there is a local flood risk within the LLFA boundary based on historic and potential future flood risk data. This screening and any identified risk is contained within a Preliminary Assessment Report (PAR) which is attached to the report as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The PAR requires approval from the LLFA and review by the Environment Agency within a specified timeframe. The Environment Agency have requested PAR documents to be submitted to them by the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011. This report presents the findings of the PFRA and seeks endorsement of the draft PAR and of it being submitted to the Executive Board for approval and to the Environment Agency for review .
- 1.3 It is proposed to deliver a short presentation to Members on the key findings of the Assessment and the salient issues in the Report.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) The Board notes the findings of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment for Halton and recommends the draft Preliminary Assessment Report to the Executive Board for Approval; and
- (2) The Board supports the submission of the draft Preliminary Assessment Report to the Environment Agency by 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011, in order to comply with Defra's timetable for review and approval.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 set out a range of new duties and responsibilities for local authorities in planning for, and delivering local flood risk management. All unitary authorities, for the purposes of flood risk management, are designated as Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA).

- 3.2 Each LLFA is required to undertake a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) under the Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and map any proposed Flood Risk Areas (FRAs), submitting these (initially in draft form) to the Environment Agency by 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011, as part of The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) national review process. These processes form the first two stages of the flood risk management strategy set out in the Regulations. The PFRA is a high level screening exercise to determine whether there is a local flood risk within the LLFA area, based upon historic and potential future flood risk.
- 3.3 Local flood risk includes that arising from surface water, groundwater, ordinary watercourses and canals and any interaction these have with drainage systems including sewers. Whilst the Environment Agency are responsible for flood risk in relation to main rivers, the sea and reservoirs, the assessment will also take into account any local impact of flooding from these sources, for example where an ordinary watercourse floods when a main river backs up. The PFRA provides the baseline for the development of a local flood risk management strategy.
- 3.4 Members will recall the recent progress reports presented to the Board, which described the background and process for undertaking the Assessment, and the fact that the Environment Agency have already produced indicative Flood Risk Area maps for England and Wales. The EA have identified ten FRA's, including Manchester and Liverpool. These Indicative Flood Risk Areas occur where clusters of population greater than 30,000 people are located within an area of flood risk that is above prescribed national thresholds.
- 3.5 The PFRA uses a consistent, prescribed approach, to review the national Indicative Flood Risk Areas, using the most up to date locally available evidence. All data gathered and considered in the Assessment is captured within a spreadsheet template, provided by Defra., which forms part of the submission to the EA in June. Where relevant and necessary, the PFRA sets out the need for any amendments to the indicative areas, providing an explanation of the rationale behind the proposal.
- 3.6 The PAR, which is attached to this report as Appendix 1, sets out how the assessment has been undertaken and provides a robust evidence base to help support preparation of a Local Flood Risk Strategy. The Preliminary Assessment Report is based on data held by a wide variety of sources, but primarily, the Environment Agency, United Utilities and from within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA1 and SFRA2).
- 3.7 The key findings of the PFRA are as follows:

- In relation to historic flooding, the quality and level of detail of data collected by authorities and agencies in the past, has resulted in incomplete or sometimes non-existent flood records. Although the PFRA exercise has collected a wide range of 'logged' flood events and 'hotspots' across Halton over the past twenty years, (the vast majority in relation to United Utilities sewer flooding) detailed information relating to the extent, duration and cause of flooding could not be determined with any reliable accuracy. The new duties now placed upon Halton as LLFA will of course mean that details of flood incidents will be accurately recorded in future.
- Based upon the data and evidence collected, in relation to 'local flooding' (as defined in paragraph 3.3), no past flood events were considered to have had significant harmful consequences (as defined in the national guidance criteria). Annex 1 of the Preliminary Assessment Spreadsheet therefore does not contain any records of past flooding (local flooding) within Halton. Of course, there have been instances of past flooding at several locations in Halton although the most significant of these have been related to main river or sewer flooding, for example at Halebank, Sandymoor or at Halton Brow.
- In relation to future flooding, there does remain a risk of flooding from local sources, particularly from surface water at various locations across the Borough. Based upon the Environment Agency's (EA) national surface water modelling, it is estimated that approximately 9,700 residential properties and 2,900 non-residential properties across the whole of Halton are at risk from flooding to a depth of 0.3 metres during a rainfall event with a 1 in 200 annual chance of occurring. This does not however meet the EA's threshold of 30,000 people within a 'cluster' of significant areas that is required to identify a Flood Risk Area. Consequently, Halton does not propose to declare any new FRA within Halton.
- The indicative FRA for Liverpool encroaches slightly into Halton's administrative area and this has been reviewed as part of Halton's PFRA. The area concerned is part of a cluster on the periphery of the Liverpool conurbation. Within Halton however, the land is predominantly rural, to the west of Hale Village and does not coincide with any flood risk areas identified by Halton's PFRA. It is proposed that the EA be requested to amend the boundary of the Liverpool FRA, to coincide with the administrative boundary between Halton and Liverpool City.

3.8 The outcome of the first two stages of flood risk assessment required by the Regulations (described in 3.2) is that no Flood Risk Area is proposed for Halton. This means that the next two stages, the production of Flood Risk Maps and preparation of a Flood Risk Management Plan for FRAs are not triggered.

- 3.9 However, as LLFA, Halton still has to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for the area. Although currently there is no prescribed timetable for the production of the Strategy, the data used in, and the information produced by the PFRA, together with the results of the soon to be completed Surface Water Management Study, will put the Authority in a good position to commence preparation of a comprehensive strategy later this year, once the national strategy has been approved.
- 3.10 As stated earlier in the report, Defra require a draft PAR (together with completed spreadsheet appendices) to be submitted to the Environment Agency for review by 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011. However, in recognising that authorities may not be able to achieve final sign-off of the report so soon after local government elections, Defra have extended the date for submission of the final PAR to 19th August 2011. It is proposed that the draft PAR appended to this report be endorsed by the Board and a final PAR presented to Executive Board for approval in order to meet the deadline for submission of final reports to EA.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific policy implications in relation to this report or within the PAR. The PFRA will inform the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Halton, which must be consistent with the National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management. The Board will be further appraised of progress in relation to flood risk management activities and the implementation of the Council's duties and functions as these develop.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Legal Implications**

Halton as a LLFA has a statutory duty under the Flood Risk Regulations 2009 to produce a PFRA and submit a Preliminary Assessment Report together with any proposed flood risk maps to the Environment Agency by 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

#### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

#### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The PFRA will be of considerable value to the spatial planning and development process. The analyses undertaken and outputs from the assessment will help to promote sustainable development and support a more strategic approach to implementing sustainable surface water drainage solutions.

### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

If Halton defaulted in its duty to undertake a PFRA and submit a Preliminary Assessment Report within the timescales set by Defra, under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Government may direct another risk management authority to exercise those functions and recover the costs of compliance from Halton.

### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no Equality and Diversity issues in relation to this report.

## **Appendix 1 PFRA Preliminary Assessment Report**

(Note: 50 page report including PFRA Analysis Maps)

## 9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Halton Borough Council Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment – Proposal	Highways Development Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) Final Guidance (Environment Agency)	Highways Development Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
Guidance on Selecting Flood Risk Areas (Environment Agency)	Highways Development Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe