

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal Policy
and Performance Board

DATE: 12 June 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Policy and Resources

SUBJECT: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy –
Progress Report

PORTFOLIO: Transportation

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide members of the Board with an update on the preparation of a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Halton, which is a Statutory Document required under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (F&WMA).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board notes the progress being made in relation to the preparation of a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Halton.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Under the Local Flood and Water Management Act, as Lead local Flood Authority (LLFA), Halton must produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. A summary of the scope and content of the proposed Strategy was reported to the last meeting of the Board in March (minute EUR49 refers).

3.2 Officers have been developing the draft Strategy in accordance with informal guidance published by the Local Government Association, using a common template that has been developed and agreed in conjunction with our neighbouring LLFA members of the Cheshire Mid-Mersey Regional Sub-Group. This report describes the progress made to date and sets out the next steps in the development of the Strategy.

3.3 A successful Local Strategy, with clear objectives, will enable Halton to deliver better local flood risk management by helping partners and communities understand local flood risk and setting out how Halton proposes to manage the risk. It will provide the sources of evidence to assist decision making and describe the proposed measures to achieve the Strategy's objectives.

3.4 The emerging strategy is currently in 'first draft' form. Currently, its stated aim is:

“To produce a coherent Plan demonstrating how the Council will work with individuals, the Community and organisations to reduce the risk of flooding in Halton.”

The objectives of the strategy have been developed around a range of ‘avoidance measures’ the principles of which can be summarised as:

- Prevention, through enabling an understanding of the risk;
- Protection, through reducing flood risk and the impacts of flooding;
- Preparation, through planning and appropriate and sustainable development;
- Response through planning and preparing for flood emergencies.

3.5 The Local Strategy identifies specific Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), which have roles and responsibilities in connection with flood risk in the area. Halton, as LLFA is the lead responsible RMA, has a multitude of roles, spread across the various internal departments (Highways, Planning, Open Spaces and Property Services to name but a few). Our key external ‘Partner’ organisations are:

- The Environment Agency;
- United Utilities (the local Water Company).

Again, there are many other organisations that may have a role in flood risk management such as: Peel Holdings, the Canal and Rivers Trust, Housing Associations etc. To ensure Partner Organisations and other stakeholders can contribute to its development, the next step will be to consult with them on the content and proposals of the draft Local Strategy. This process will be commenced once the initial draft is complete.

3.6 The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy must contribute to the achievement of wider environmental objectives such as encouraging biodiversity and improving water quality. It must also demonstrate that the potential impacts and consequences of the Strategy have been considered. It will be necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the developing Strategy and set out the findings in an Environmental Report. This in itself will be a significant piece of work and is likely to involve an initial ‘scoping report’ setting out the extent and methodology of the proposed SEA and which must first be consulted upon. Advice and guidance on the SEA and scoping report procedure is being currently taken from the Council’s Policy and Planning Divisions.

3.7 The draft Local Strategy also recognises the function of civil contingencies and the roles and responsibilities of Emergency Planning and the emergency services in preparedness for, and response to flooding incidents. It is proposed to engage these risk management partners in early consultation on the emerging draft strategy.

- 3.8 The need for consultation with Partner organisations and other stakeholders during the development of the draft Strategy has been referenced above, however the wider aim of the Strategy is to promote community engagement and understanding of local flood risk. A Communication and Public Engagement Strategy has therefore been included within the draft, which again must be examined and assessed for suitability of purpose, with advice taken internally before releasing the draft for consultation.
- 3.9 It is anticipated that the four 'next steps' as outlined in 3.5 to 3.8 above will be undertaken over a period of the next three months, and that we will be in a position to consult on the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in the Autumn, with further progress report being brought before the Board in November 2013.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report, however, once the Local Strategy has been adopted, it can inform specific policies, for example in relation to use of enforcement powers or the provision of flood protection measures etc.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Resource Implications.
The Local Strategy is currently being developed 'in-house' by officers in the Policy, Planning and Transportation Department. Other Council Departments and Divisions will be required to provide input into the process during the consultation stage and in the further development of the Strategy. Defra currently provide funding as Area Based Grant to LLFAs to prepare for their flood risk management duties. Halton is allocated £135,600 per year for the remainder of the Comprehensive Spending Review period, which expires in April 2015.
- 5.2 Sustainability
The sustainability themes of economy, community and the environment are all key factors in developing a successful local strategy for flood risk management and they are considered in the relevant sections of the draft document. The SEA and environmental report will inform the Strategy and the extent and implications of sustainable development will be an important part of any measures put in place to achieve the objectives.
- 5.3 Legal Implications
There are no Legal implications arising from this report. The preparation of the Local Strategy by LLFAs is a requirement under the F&WMA and its development it must take account of a framework of related legislation which is outlined within the LGA Guidance.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

There are no specific implications for children and young people in relation to this report.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are no specific implications for employment, learning and skills in relation to this report.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The development of the Local Strategy will help to manage flood risk through the adoption of prevention and protection measures and help mitigate the impacts of flooding when it does occur, which should contribute to the health and well-being of communities that may be affected.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The development of the Local Strategy will help to manage flood risk through the adoption of prevention and protection measures and help mitigate the impacts of flooding when it does occur, which should contribute to the safety of the community and potential users of affected land areas.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The development of the Local Strategy will help to manage flood risk through the adoption of prevention and protection measures. The Strategy deals with land use considerations and the environmental aspects of sustainable development contained within the Strategy will help contribute to the creation of attractive, safe places and amenities and enhance Halton's physical and natural environment.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The Council, as LLFA regularly reports to the Environment Agency on the progress being made to deliver the range of functions and legislative requirements under the F&WMA. Progress on the preparation of the Local Strategy is one of the areas covered in the report and whilst no date has been set within the legislation for the adoption of a Local Strategy, there is a reputational risk to the Council if this is delayed unduly.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues in relation to this report.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Preliminary framework to assist the development of the Local Strategy for Flood Risk Mangement. (LGA Feb 2011)	Transportation Rutland House, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
Emerging draft Halton's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.	Transportation Rutland House, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe