

Cabinet Report



13 January 2020

INDEPENDENT FLOOD REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Name of Cabinet Member	Councillor Emily Darlington Cabinet member for Public Realm
Report sponsor	Stuart Proffitt Director- Environment and Property
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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	7.11
Wards affected	All wards

Summary

After the surface water floods in Milton Keynes in May 2018 Cabinet elected to commission an Independent Flood Review. This was commissioned in November 2018 after an extended procurement process and has been carried out by AECOM. The review has produced a number of recommendations for the Council and its partner organisations. Acting upon these recommendations is intended to improve flood risk management, communications, and emergency response and recovery in Milton Keynes to support any future event.

The recommendations from the Independent Flood Review can be found in Annex A. Additional columns demonstrate progress against the actions to date and the relevant Cabinet member for each recommendation.

The full Independent Flood Review (IFR) is available from the Council's flood web pages: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/flood>

1. Decision/s to be made

- 1.1 That the continued delivery of the recommendations, to include six monthly reporting to the Cabinet member with publication of progress online be approved.
- 1.2 That the delivery approach detailed in section 2 – ‘Approach to recommendations’ be approved.
- 1.3 That the engagement detailed in Annex B be supported.
- 1.4 That the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum be requested to undertake a flood emergency response exercise in 2020.
- 1.5 That the cross-departmental nature of flood risk management and its links with climate change be recognised and therefore that the need for effective cross-council working be supported.

2. Why is the decision needed?

- 2.1 After the surface water floods in Milton Keynes in May 2018, Cabinet commissioned an Independent Flood Review. The Independent Review details 55 recommendations of which all but three require some input from this Council. The recommendations have been suggested as ways to reduce the impact of future floods on the welfare and property of communities.
- 2.2 There are a range of different recommendations covering flood policy, emergency response, recovery plans and practises, highway maintenance, communications approaches and community engagement, planning policy and flood project delivery. Some of the actions with the recommendations have already been completed and others are in progress. This information is provided in Annex A.

Relevant legislation

The Council has a number of relevant roles. It is:

- A Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Through duties/powers such as preparing a local strategy, being a consultee on major planning applications and organising asset data, it has a lead role in co-ordinating the management of surface water flood risk across a number of partners. Reduction of flood risk is not a statutory duty and hence LLFAs are not directly funded by Government for this.
- The Highways Authority under the Highways Act 1980. As the highway authority the Council has a duty to drain and maintain the highway.
- A category one emergency responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The commissioning of an independent review of the floods was not a statutory duty, but a decision by Cabinet, following recommendation from Full Council, in order to

ascertain how the Council had responded to the flooding and what actions need to be taken forward to make Milton Keynes more resilient to future floods.

Approach to recommendations

2.3 The following approach is proposed for delivery of the recommendations:

- (a) Delivery of recommendations will be phased according to the suggested timescales and urgency and the Council's resources.
- (b) Those recommendations that can be delivered within existing budgets will be (or already are being) progressed straight away. This includes those actions requiring only officer time such as community engagement or preparation of / amendment to a policy or process.
- (c) Communities, through ward councillors, parish and town councillors and community groups, will be involved in the development of flood projects. Alongside capital projects the Council will also work with community leaders to develop community flood plans. These plans are aimed at creating greater community resilience to future floods, improving communication between flood management partners and residents and enabling the sharing of local knowledge to support flood management decisions.
- (d) For those projects proposing a major capital flood risk reduction project; investigation, local engagement, modelling, project design and business case development will be required. Internal and external funding applications will also be required as the actions cannot be delivered within current budgets. For these reasons many of the very important risk reduction recommendations from the IFR have a longer timescale. Nationally it is recognised that the localised nature of surface water risk reduction schemes compared to their cost can make it challenging to achieve a good cost-benefit ratio. Reflecting this, the national average timescale for delivery of a surface water flood risk reduction project is eight years.
- (e) External funding will be sought for flood risk reduction projects which are eligible. The Council recognises that national flood risk Grant in Aid funding will only provide a proportion of the total cost of a flood project and hence local match funding will be required for most schemes. Government expects local contributions to come from those with links to, or benefitting from, the scheme e.g. Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, new road projects, Parish, Town or Community Councils and/or landowners. Contributions-in-kind are also extremely valuable, such as a drainage board or landowner agreeing to undertake future maintenance of new features. The actual amount of Grant in Aid received depends on the cost-benefit ratio for the project.

- (f) The Council will ensure that community leaders are kept up to date on the development of projects so that arising challenges or constraints can be discussed and addressed in partnership.
- (g) Progress on delivery with six monthly reporting to the Cabinet member, followed with publication of progress online.

Review findings

2.4 The Independent Flood Review found the following (IFR section references supplied in brackets):

- (a) 500 properties were internally flooded within Milton Keynes with 1,000 properties were affected in total (1.1.2). The areas with the greatest numbers of affected properties were Central and South Central Milton Keynes (e.g. Coffee Hall, Beanhill, Oldbrook, Netherfield etc), Newport Pagnell and Stoke Goldington. Some of the properties and areas have flooded previously (1.1.5).
- (b) Total economic damages are estimated at £7 million (1.1.3). 33 properties are known to have been evacuated with their occupants requiring varying levels of welfare support.
- (c) Rainfall was widespread but flooding occurred in localised areas where the rainfall was more intense. Intense rainfall was recorded at probabilities between 0.42% (1 in 237) and 0.12% (1 in 819). Most assets performed as expected in an event of this magnitude as, nationally, infrastructure is not designed to manage such intense rainfall. Drainage systems are generally designed to manage rainfall of annual probability between 50% (1 in 2) and 3.3% (1 in 30). As a result drainage systems were overwhelmed. Other areas of the country were similarly affected on this weekend (1.1.4).
- (d) In one particular area around Wolverton Road in Newport Pagnell the Anglian Water sewer network was found to need significant operational work, which has now been delivered by the water company. This scale of maintenance was not found, however, to have been needed in other areas of Milton Keynes (3.4.7).
- (e) The ethic of care of staff across the organisation should be commended for going above the 'call of duty'. Staff achieved this by working a significant number of hours outside of their contracts (1.1.6).
- (f) In the recovery phase co-ordination was good as the Council worked hard with other organisations to organise services. Temporary accommodation was arranged and welfare needs identified. The Council organised mass street cleansing, gully emptying and free bulk collections of flood damaged items. Anglian Water carried out checks on their surface water sewers, and along with Council staff, the Environment Agency and others,

mobilised staff to support identification of communities where intervention was needed. (1.1.8).

- (g) To further support residents, a 'Hardship Grant' was made available by the Council to support with immediate welfare needs and a short suspension of Council Tax was implemented for flooded homes. For Council housing tenants, rent was waived for two months and temporary accommodation costs reimbursed. A significant programme of housing repair works to the Council's properties has been undertaken (1.1.9).
- (h) All organisations have an important role in improving communications with members of the public. A greater level of engagement with communities would significantly increase the level of satisfaction among customers (1.1.5).
- (i) The Multi Agency Flood Plan was not implemented by any of the emergency responders, a major incident was not declared and co-ordination and data sharing between emergency responders presented issues. A more co-ordinated multi-agency response is needed in future (1.1.7).
- (j) Collaboration across several Council teams and with all flood risk management partners will be essential to delivering schemes that benefit communities at flood risk (1.1.11). Landscaping, maintenance, accessibility, social acceptability, technical deliverability and cost all need to be considered in partnership.

3. Implications of the decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	Y
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	Y
Communication	Y	Procurement	Y
Energy Efficiency	N	Workforce	Y

Financial implications

- 3.1 Delivery of the recommendations will require resources not just to implement the recommended policy, software or construction changes, but to develop the business cases, design the schemes and ensure a high standard of community engagement throughout the process. This will require funding from both capital and revenue in future.
- 3.2 In line with the approach in section 2, business cases will be developed for consideration where funding is needed. Phasing of projects and applications for external funding will assist where resource requirements cannot all be met upfront.

Legal implications

- 3.3 As individual policy, software or construction projects come forward there may be legal implications of each. These will need to be managed carefully with legal advice during the development process.

Other implications

- 3.4 Communication: an improved multi-agency approach to engagement with communities will help to ensure that residents and business better understand the risks of future flooding, as well as how the Council and other flood management organisations can work with them to plan for and recover from floods. Engagement with those affected as part of the development of future projects and policy changes is also essential to ensure proposals take account of local knowledge and are socially acceptable. The Council would like to make key community contacts in each area that they can work closely with in all areas of flood risk management.
- 3.5 Policies: there are recommendations for the Council's flood risk, planning and communications policies. The Council, through the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) function, will seek to implement these recommendations into policy via its Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, the next review of Plan:MK and any future communications or environment or sustainability policies. The outputs of the Task and Finish Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity may also affect the way that recommendations are implemented.
- 3.6 Procurement: delivery of projects and schemes will require significant procurement of suppliers, technical advice and contractors.
- 3.7 Workforce: at this stage there are no significant impacts. However projects or decisions resulting from the recommendations will need further consideration in this area in terms of implications for the workforce and/or changes to terms and conditions for staff contracts.
- 3.8 Human rights, diversity, equal rights: these decisions form part of a programme of activity that will promote equality of opportunity by positively addressing issues fundamental to people's essential needs around flood risk. Associated projects will be assessed individually for their impact on communities including vulnerable people and those in deprived locations, and the Council's approach will involve local people in the decision making process.

4. Alternatives

- 4.1 Option 1 – Do nothing. Stop the flood, drainage, emergency planning and communication related activities that the Council currently undertakes and do not accept the findings of the IFR. **Not recommended** as the Council has statutory duties to uphold as a minimum and the IFR was commissioned by

Cabinet to determine further actions that are needed to improve the resilience of Milton Keynes to flooding.

- 4.2 Option 2 – Do minimum. Continue with statutory and existing workstreams (e.g. highway maintenance, reviewing planning drainage strategies etc.), but do not start any new workstreams or accept the findings of the IFR to carry out improvements. Do not undertake any related community engagement. **Not recommended** as implementing the IFR recommendations is intended to improve the resilience of Milton Keynes towards future heavy rainfall events. Community engagement is essential for raising awareness of flood risk, helping communities to improve their own resilience and for incorporating valuable local knowledge into the design of flood risk management projects and services.
- 4.3 Option 3 – Accept the IFR recommendations in Annex A and approve the approach to delivery as detailed in section 2 of this report and in Annex B – **Recommended to ensure that the Council and its flood risk management partners continue to work closely with our communities to increase the resilience of Milton Keynes to flooding**

5. Timetable for implementation

The recommendations are grouped into time periods with some being suggested for immediate implementation and it being recognised that others will require several years to deliver fully. A significant proportion of recommendations have already been progressed since the flooding as the Council and partner organisations recognise the importance of local action to manage flood risk, support communities and plan for emergencies.

Progress on delivery of the recommendations to be reported six monthly to the Cabinet Member with publication online of the updated action plan.

List of annexes

Annex A – Independent Flood Review Recommendations with Progress

Annex B – Engagement Plan

List of background papers

Independent Flood Review 2019

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/flood>