Flooding in Buckinghamshire 2013-14: Lessons Learned

A report by the Buckinghamshire County Council’s Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

TEC Select Committee Members: Mrs P Birchley (Inquiry Chairman), Mr T Butcher, Mr D Carroll (Committee Chairman), Mr W Chapple OBE, Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mrs A Davies, Mr P Gomm

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Appendix D - Summary of Online Survey responses can be found via this link:

https://democracy.bucksc.gov.uk/documents/s71910/Flooding%20Responses.pdf
Executive Summary

Floods can have a disastrous impact on communities, causing both financial and emotional stress for residents if they have to move out of their home for a significant period of time. The winter of 2013-14 was the wettest on record - a large number of properties flooded nationally and over 200 homes flooded internally in Buckinghamshire. The aim of this Inquiry was to ensure that lessons learned by individual agencies from the flooding in Buckinghamshire in 2013-14 had been shared and would lead to improved responses from Buckinghamshire County Council and other partners to any future flooding event.

The Select Committee developed an online survey to gain feedback from residents across the county, who had suffered flooding in the winter of 2013-14 and were pleased to receive 105 responses. We also received additional written submissions from parishes and individuals. The Committee decided to focus the Inquiry on three particular areas, namely Marlow, Hughenden Valley and The Willows in Aylesbury, as they illustrated different types of flooding. Residents and local Elected Members from these communities, along with representatives from partner agencies, such as the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue and all four District Councils gave evidence at our 8th September Select Committee meeting. The Committee also considered both local and national reports which had been published in the wake of the 2013-14 floods.

Section 3 of the report details the Select Committee’s key findings. A strong theme of the evidence from members of the public was that they were frustrated in their efforts to obtain help during the flood event, often due to confusion as to which local authority or partner agency had a duty to respond. There is a clear need for agencies to respond more promptly to intelligence from local people on the ground. The Committee also felt that there should be a clearer policy for the County as a whole with regards to provision of sandbags.

We also heard evidence of neighbours rallying together during the floods and then pressing for improvements to maintenance arrangements and flood prevention measures after the flood event. These efforts are applauded by the Committee and we believe that the County Council should do more to support Community Resilience and promote Community Emergency Plans. This would help with future flood events, but would also encompass response to any type of emergency.

The final area of our key findings concerns strategic oversight of partners. We found evidence of strengthened partnership working during and after the flooding of 2013-14 and were assured that the majority of actions arising from the statutory S19 Flood Investigations had been completed or work was ongoing. However, the Committee had some concerns about the challenge that the Growth agenda poses for the management of flood risk.

The Select Committee would like to pay tribute to all staff from Buckinghamshire County Council, the four District Councils, Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Thames Valley Police, Transport for Buckinghamshire and other partners, including the voluntary sector, who worked so hard to support the residents of Buckinghamshire who were impacted by flooding.
during 2013-14. We would also like to extend our thanks to everyone who contributed evidence to this Inquiry.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that the County Council should take the lead in working with other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) to implement a system for sharing local intelligence before and during a flood event to ensure a prompt and co-ordinated response.

2. We recommend that the County Council should lead on the development of a clear policy for the County as a whole, to ensure the supply and distribution of sandbags during a flood event.

3. We recommend that all County Councillors should be aware of the County Emergency Plan and should attend Emergency Planning training to assist them in building community resilience in their own divisions.

4. In view of the County Council's current financial situation, we recommend that Cabinet consider delivering this aim of building community resilience by empowering existing staff who already have established community links, such as the Community Link Officers or Locality Managers, with technical support provided by the Strategic Flood Risk Management and Resilience teams.

5. We recommend that the County Council should instigate a proactive Communications and Media campaign to promote the development of Community Emergency Plans.

6. We recommend that the Local Area Forums (LAFs) be used to highlight flood risks, raise public awareness of who to contact in a flood event and most importantly, to encourage riparian owners to take their maintenance duties seriously. (To support this aim, the Strategic Flood Management team can produce flood risk maps for communities at high risk and would work in partnership with the local communities to identify land owners.)

7. We recommend that in addition to the detailed Section 19 reports which the Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority are required to produce, the Strategic Flood Management Team should maintain an incident log to encompass all flood events.

8. We recommend that the Cabinet should ask local MPs to lobby Government for changes to Planning legislation, which would require developers building by a watercourse or on a flood plain to provide flood defences, flood resilience measures and appropriate equipment in a secure store, such as pumps, sandbags for use in an emergency, as part of their S106 contributions.
1. Introduction

1. According to the Environment Agency in March 2014, 1 in 6 homes in England are at risk of flooding from coastal, river and surface water. (Source: National Audit Office report ‘Strategic Flood Risk Management’, Nov 2014) The 2012 Climate Change Risk Assessment indicates that rising sea levels and increased rainfall will have a significant impact on flood risk. Future winters are likely to be wetter with rainfall increasing across all regions of the UK. The winter of 2013-14 was the wettest on record with a large number of properties flooded nationally and over 200 homes flooded internally in Bucks.

2. It is against this backdrop that the Environment, Transport and Localities Select Committee decided to undertake an Inquiry entitled Flooding in Bucks 2013-14: Lessons Learned at its meeting held on 19th May 2015. It was agreed that the Inquiry would be carried out by the Committee as a whole. At County Council on 21st May 2015, the Select Committee was renamed as the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee and at the Select Committee meeting on 23rd June 2015, Mr David Carroll was elected as Chairman. Mr Carroll endorsed the Select Committee’s decision to undertake an Inquiry into flooding and asked Mrs Patricia Birchley, Vice-Chairman of the Select Committee, to lead the Inquiry. A copy of the updated scope for the Inquiry can be found at Appendix A.

3. The overall aim of the Inquiry was to confirm that any lessons learned by individual agencies, many of which had conducted their own internal debriefs during 2014, had been shared and would lead to improved responses from Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and relevant partners to any future flooding event.

4. Evidence gathering took place during July, August and September – the schedule of meetings is attached at Appendix B.

5. The Committee were keen to engage with all Buckinghamshire residents who had suffered flooding in the winter of 2013-14 and therefore an online survey was developed, which was open from 1st to 18th September and received 105 responses. The Committee also received a number of written submissions from parishes and individuals. In addition, evidence was gained from members of the public affected by flooding and partner agencies at the 8th September Select Committee meeting.

6. The Committee decided to focus the Inquiry on flooding which occurred in three particular areas, namely Marlow, Hughenden Valley and The Willows in Aylesbury. These areas were chosen because they illustrated different types of flooding including fluvial, ground water and surface water flooding and the different challenges these bring for both homeowners and partner agencies in terms of response. Residents from these communities gave evidence at the 8th September Select Committee meeting.

7. The evidence gathering was complemented by desk based research, which included reading the Bucks flood investigation reports (Section 19 Flood and
Water Management Act 2010) and several national reports which were published in the wake of the 2013-14 floods.

2. Flooding in Bucks 2013-14 – Context

What happened in Winter 2013-14?
8. A period of intense and prolonged rainfall in late 2013/early 2014, which proved to be the wettest winter on record, led to flooding which caused widespread damage and disruption in many parts of the UK. The Thames Valley was badly hit and Somerset in particular gained national media attention. In Buckinghamshire there were over 200 homes which were flooded internally, spread across a number of communities. In addition there was significant disruption to roads and transport links. The flooding came from main rivers such as the Thames which impacted communities such as Medmenham, Marlow and Bourne End and also from surface water and groundwater. The groundwater flooding continued in some locations for more than four months and infiltrated into foul sewers which caused additional problems. The impact of surface water runoff due to the heavy rainfall and saturated conditions impacted many communities across the County.

How Flood Risk is Managed – Significant Policy Developments
9. In 2008 Sir Michael Pitt published his final review of lessons learnt from the major flooding events in the UK in 2007. He argued that coherent and co-ordinated responses to flooding require strong local partnerships.

10. The next major step was the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act which required all Unitary and County Councils to become the Strategic Lead for local flood risk, known as Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA). Buckinghamshire County Council therefore has responsibility for a strategic overview of flood risk in the County and must ensure that an integrated approach to flood risk is adopted by all relevant Risk Management Authorities (RMAs). During a flood event the different RMAs must work together but each have different responsibilities.

### Primary Risk Management Authorities in Bucks

- Buckinghamshire County Council as the LLFA and highway authority
- Aylesbury Vale District Council
- Chiltern District Council
- South Bucks District Council
- Wycombe District Council
- The Environment Agency
- Affinity Water
- Thames Water
- Buckingham and River Ouzel Internal Drainage Board
11. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework has also recently been changed (April 2015) which has had an impact on how local flood risk management is considered, as it requires Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) to comment on Major developments as a statutory consultee. This places a requirement on developers to demonstrate that flood risk has been a consideration in all planning processes and, where development is necessary, that flood risk is managed in an effective and sustainable manner.

12. The Local Government Information Unit’s (LGiU) report, ‘Managing Floods: Supporting Local Partnerships’, suggests that the complexity involved in local flood risk management means that there is a real need for clarity and leadership. However this is challenging due to the network of agencies which have decision-making powers and control over budgets to protect communities from flooding. For example, the Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for main river flooding, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) Buckinghamshire County Council is responsible for surface water and groundwater flooding, water on the roads is the responsibility of the highway authority and water in sewers or treatment works is the responsibility of private water companies. In addition, it should also be noted that individual property owners are responsible for protecting their own property from flood risk.
3. Key Findings

A need for Immediate Response and Co-ordination

13. A strong theme in the evidence we received from members of the public who were impacted by flooding in 2013-14 was that they were frustrated in their efforts to obtain help during the flood event. Often residents were unsure which local authorities or partner agency had a duty to respond and then when they did approach an organisation, the response was unhelpful or slow. The online residents’ survey showed that 60% of respondents did not know who to approach in the event of flooding.

14. This is consistent with findings in other areas of the country. The final report of the Somerset Flooding Summit held in May 2013 states ‘Overwhelmingly the majority of delegates identified the need for clarification on the roles and responsibilities of all the agencies involved in Flood Management……. at a time of crisis it was difficult to know who to contact in various situations.’

15. We heard that even those residents who had previously suffered flooding and therefore knew who to contact for assistance and understood what action was needed to resolve the problems, had difficulties. For example, Mr Kippax from Marlow had difficulty obtaining accurate information about the local river levels as he was directed to the EA’s call centre in Sheffield. By the time he obtained a number for the local office in Wallingford his home was already flooded.

16. In 2014, residents in Hughenden Valley had issues with high groundwater levels causing the sewers to discharge into their gardens, a problem they had previously experienced back in 2001. On that occasion Thames Water had responded by installing hydraulic pumps in manholes in the affected properties, which were then monitored and maintained daily. In 2014, Mr and Mrs White raised the alarm with Thames Water before the sewers began to vent but on this occasion Thames Water advised them that because the sewers were full to capacity due to ingress of groundwater, it was not their responsibility and they would not supply any pumps.

17. We believe that there is a clear need for agencies to utilise local intelligence to drive a more effective and robust response to a flood event. Amanda Webb, a resident of Marlow, told the Committee in a written submission that ‘there are certain trigger points that some agencies wait for before they will escalate anything. For example; the Environment Agency published flood status seems to drive the deployment of pumps and sandbags. Our road was still on flood alert when we were a foot or so deep which meant agencies were less likely to want to help us as we were not yet on flood warning……A resident on the ground can clearly see that a road is flooding, rather than relying on a computer model which can’t predict exactly how a flood will progress. The agencies need to pay more attention to the feedback they receive from residents, particularly if it is consistent and co-ordinated.’

18. This use of local intelligence is perhaps even more crucial during a slow-onset emergency – the flooding in Marlow for example, was not a flash flood but was
caused by a slower build-up of the river levels in combination with rising groundwater, exacerbated by further heavy rainfall. 'The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) defines a slow-onset emergency as 'one that does not emerge from a single, distinct event but one that emerges gradually over time, often based on a confluence of different events.' (UNOCHA, cited in Relief Web 2011) and as such the ability to state a categorical point when an issue becomes a major incident that requires the activation of a new level of administrative plans is rendered more difficult. ' (Source: Bucks New University Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum Independent Academic review of Response to Flooding, Nov 2014) By listening to residents on the ground in these circumstances, agencies may be able to trigger a co-ordinated emergency response at an earlier stage.

19. In addition to the valuable evidence gained from residents, the Committee also heard from partner agencies about their experiences of responding to the flooding incidents in 2013-14 and how they managed demand at that time. Thames Water and the Environment Agency (EA) in particular had to respond to multiple flood events across a very wide region and this explains to some extent why residents complained about a lack of response. Thames Water advised that they had to resort to using an automated telephone system due to the high volumes of calls they were receiving. Also their initial reluctance to deploy pumps in Hughenden Valley was because they had to prioritise responding to those homes which were internally flooded with sewage.

20. The EA reported that the response of partners was significantly better in 2014 than it had been in the past. However it was recognised that because the full length of the River Thames was affected, some areas may have felt that they did not receive support as quickly as they would have wanted, but the EA had to deploy resources as best as they could.

21. The Committee heard that in Marlow the establishment of a Command and Control Unit in Pound Lane, led by Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS), was a turning point which led to improved communications with the public and a more co-ordinated approach to activities. BMKFRS brought in high volume pumps and additional crews from Staffordshire which helped to keep water levels stable. Councillor Richard Scott, the local Member, stated that in future agencies needed to co-ordinate much more quickly and the early establishment of a Command and Control Centre would help to facilitate this. In 2014, there was a feeling that Marlow Town Council had been left to their own devices for about a week before BMKRS arrived to take charge.

22. Like the residents, even BMKFRS had difficulties with identifying which agency should take responsibility, noting in their debrief report that 'One of the main frustrations throughout the Marlow incident was concerning the lack of ownership of the problem and once committed to supporting the community how BMKFRS can withdraw resources and which agency should take responsibility for the flooding.'

23. Whilst acknowledging that the legislation around flooding is complicated and the onus is on the individual householder to protect his property, we believe that the
relevant agencies need to be more responsive to local intelligence and co-ordinate better during a flooding emergency. The Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum exists to plan and prepare for a co-ordinated response to any emergency, but the Committee felt that the response in 2013-14 could have been improved.

RECOMMENDATION 1
We recommend that the County Council should take the lead in working with other Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) to implement a system for sharing local intelligence before and during a flood event to ensure a prompt and co-ordinated response.

Sandbags

24. Another key issue raised in evidence from both residents and partners concerns the supply and distribution of sandbags during a flood event. There is no statutory duty on BCC or any of the district councils to supply sandbags unless it is due to highway flooding – it is the duty of the individual property owner to protect their own property. The standard policy is that local authorities do not provide sandbags to members of the public, reinforcing the message that property owners are responsible for the protection of their own property. In reality, district councils do respond to requests for help when residents’ houses are in imminent danger of flooding. BCC has traditionally provided sandbags in a similar fashion and it was confirmed in January 2014 that BCC would support the district councils by providing sandbags as a mutual aid request. In 2013-14 due to budgetary constraints, a number of the district councils only had a small supply of sandbags or gel bags, in the region of 2000, available initially.

25. The Committee heard that in Aylesbury, Kerr Construction delivered sand to The Willows and provided personnel to help residents to fill sandbags, in response to a tweet by Councillor Steven Lambert, the local Member, asking for assistance during the flooding. Whilst the Committee commend this act of generosity, ad hoc responses like this cannot be relied upon and are inadequate if faced with wide-scale flooding as experienced in 2013-14.

26. The Committee were also told that whilst in Marlow, Wycombe District Council provided approximately 15,000 sandbags, there were issues with sandbags disappearing very quickly and they were not always taken by those residents in most need. Also some residents in the worst affected areas were elderly or disabled and could not collect sandbags themselves. There were also issues with the disposal of sandbags afterwards, particularly in areas where they had been contaminated with sewage.

27. Whilst the Committee accept that sandbags are not the most sophisticated form of flood protection and may not always be the most appropriate response, they can help and residents certainly feel reassured when sandbags are provided. We feel that BCC, in partnership with the district councils, should take the lead in developing a clearer County wide policy in relation to sandbags.
RECOMMENDATION 2
We recommend that the County Council should lead on the development of a clear policy for the County as a whole, to ensure the supply and distribution of sandbags during a flood event.

4. Community Resilience

28. The Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience, March 2011 provides the following definition of Community Resilience ‘Communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, in a way that complements the response of the emergency services.’ In a time of diminishing budgets for all public sector organisations, including local government, concurrent with the increasing scale of forecast hazards and risks (Climate Change), it seems sensible to encourage community resilience and to enable communities to be able to help themselves as much as they can, in an emergency.

29. The Committee heard many examples of neighbours helping each other and rallying around those people, such as the elderly or disabled, who were less able to help themselves during the flooding of 2013-14. Local people know their area and the people living there and so are best placed to respond in an emergency situation. It is important to note that a key part of the definition of the Community Resilience given above is ‘in a way that complements the response of the emergency services’ – the Committee are of course not advocating that communities should be left to fend for themselves, but often local people on the ground can act very quickly to help each other before the emergency services even arrive on the scene.

30. Parish and Town Councils, have a key role to play in supporting community resilience. We saw evidence of this in Marlow, where Annie Jones, the Clerk to Marlow Town Council acted as a focal point and co-ordinated relief efforts before the true scale of the flood event was recognised and the BMKFRS Control and Command Unit was deployed. Also at The Willows in Aylesbury we heard that Aylesbury Town Council took a very pragmatic approach, in clearing rubbish from the Ellen Road ditch, without waiting to establish who had the riparian duty to maintain it.

31. Elected members should also be integral to building community resilience. At The Willows in Aylesbury, Steven Lambert, County, District and Parish Councillor for the area, was involved at the onset of the emergency, knocking on people’s doors at 5am to alert them to the fact that their house was about to be flooded and then continued to support residents with the clean-up operation and the establishment of the Willows Flood Group. This resident’s led group has been proactive in driving multi-agency efforts to improve the maintenance of the Stoke Brook, drainage assets and ditches to prevent flooding on the estate in future. In particular the Committee would like to applaud their willingness to pool their Repair and Renew grant funding, which was awarded by government, to install a trash screen on the Stoke Brook and to purchase pumps and other flood defence equipment.
32. In order to support elected members in building community resilience, we feel it is important that all members should receive training on the County Emergency Plan. We are also aware that staff in the newly established Member Services team in the Council’s Headquarters have been trained to take on the responsibility to act as a communication link between elected members and the Resilience team in an emergency situation.

RECOMMENDATION 3
We recommend that all County Councillors should be aware of the County Emergency Plan and should attend Emergency Planning training to assist them in building community resilience in their own divisions.

33. Several flood groups have been established following the floods of 2013-14 and the communities involved have made real progress in securing meaningful interventions from relevant organisations, for example, in Hughenden Valley, the Drainage Improvement Group (DIG) have worked closely with Thames Water who have undertaken work on their sewer network in the area and if a similar flood event occurred in future, mobile filtration units would be urgently deployed from Thames Water’s depot in Little Marlow. In Marlow, the Town Council and residents have created a Community Flood Plan and appointed flood wardens in the areas most at risk, who will co-ordinate activities during any future flood event. The Committee were impressed with this Plan and consider it to be a useful model for other communities to consider.

34. Flooding is not the only emergency that a community could be faced with and it would be helpful if in addition to specific Community Flood Plans, more general Community Emergency Plans could be put in place across the County. These might be led by the Parish or Town Councils or in unparished areas, by other established community groups. Since 2005, the BCC Resilience Team has worked to promote Community Emergency Plans but had limited success. In 2014 it was estimated that only 33 of the 165 Parish and Town Councils in Buckinghamshire had Community Emergency Plans.

35. It is a generally held belief that communities who have Community Emergency Plans cope better during a crisis and are able to recover more effectively afterwards. Therefore we feel that this is something which should be actively encouraged by the Council. This would help with future flood events in areas prone to flooding, but it would also encompass response to any type of emergency. Parish and Town Councils may feel that they lack the expertise or training to lead on these plans and therefore the Council should put in place additional support to drive forward progress in this area. The Committee feel that this should be in the form of a dedicated resource, a new officer who can draw upon the expertise of the Strategic Flood Risk Management and Resilience teams and support communities in understanding their risk, developing and updating their own Community Emergency Plans and establishing local Flood groups where appropriate.

36. It is important that the Community Emergency Plans are seen as living documents which should be updated regularly. Any system put in place is only as
good as the people who you are relying on to implement it - as people grow older or move out of the area, the plans must reflect these changes. However if local people are involved in the development of the plans this should foster a feeling of ownership and a responsibility to deliver if an emergency does arise.

37. Ideally, we would like to recommend that the Council should appoint a dedicated Community Resilience Officer whose role would be to drive forward community resilience by empowering Parish and Town Councils and other community groups to understand their flood risk, develop and deliver their own Emergency Plans and where relevant, Community Flood Plans and establish Local Flood Groups. This would be a wider remit than purely Flooding emergencies and as such would benefit and support the work of a number of Business Units within the Council. This post would also contribute to the Council’s priority of Creating Opportunities and Building Self-Reliance. However we recognise that the County Council’s current financial situation and vacancy freeze precludes this and therefore we offer the following recommendation as an interim measure.

**RECOMMENDATION 4**
In view of the County Council’s current financial situation, we recommend that Cabinet consider delivering this aim of building community resilience by empowering existing staff who already have established community links, such as the Community Link Officers or Locality Managers, with technical support provided by the Strategic Flood Risk Management and Resilience teams.

**RECOMMENDATION 5**
We recommend that the County Council should instigate a proactive Communications and Media campaign to promote the development of Community Emergency Plans.

38. In addition, the Committee believe that in the Local Area Forums (LAFs) the Council has an existing network which can be used to educate local people and raise awareness of flood risks and promote community resilience moving forward. A resident in Marlow told us that ‘Locals still have no real idea what’s happening with the wider Flood Alleviation Scheme. Communication is absolutely key and you could massively increase levels of confidence by proactively holding meetings to inform residents of progress. Why not hold an event ‘pre-winter’ to build confidence and give information.’ This is something that the LAF could incorporate into its agenda relatively easily and partner agencies told the Committee that they would be happy to attend community meetings/events.

**RECOMMENDATION 6**
We recommend that the Local Area Forums (LAFs) be used to highlight flood risks, raise public awareness of who to contact in a flood event and most importantly, to encourage riparian owners to take their maintenance duties seriously. (To support this aim, the Strategic Flood Management team can produce flood risk maps for communities at high risk and would work in partnership with the local communities to identify land owners.)
5. Strategic Oversight of Partners

39. As the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) it is the Council’s responsibility to act as the strategic lead for flood risk in Buckinghamshire and there is an important role to play in ensuring an integrated approach to flood risk by all Risk Management Authorities (RMAs). As we have found, the roles and responsibilities around flooding are complex so it is vital that the strategic oversight of partners complements work going on at an operational level.

40. One of the key responsibilities for an LLFA under the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act is to have a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. By March 2014 only 16% of local authorities had a flood strategy in place. In Bucks, the 2013-2018 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy was adopted by the Buckinghamshire Strategic Flood Management Committee, which is a multi-agency meeting chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment. We have been advised that although the strategy is not due to be revised until 2018, this will actually take place in 2015-16 to take into account the recent changes to BCC’s duties around sustainable drainage (SUDs) and the lessons learned from the Winter flooding of 2013-14.

41. The Committee heard that partnership working was strengthened and enhanced during and after the flooding of 2013-14. Internally the Strategic Flood Risk Management team are now holding regular meetings with Highways colleagues in Transport for Buckinghamshire to highlight flood and drainage issues and to ensure a more strategic approach is taken to maintenance works. In addition we saw evidence of effective partnership working with external partners, in particular at The Willows in Aylesbury, where the EA, Thames Water, AVDC, BCC, Aylesbury Town Council and residents through the Willows Flood Group have met regularly after the flood event to drive forward improvements to maintenance regimes and other preventative measures, including the installation of a trash screen on the Stoke Brook, flap valves on outlet pipes and the purchase of pumps and flood protection for emergency use.

42. The Committee also heard from Amanda Nobbs, Chairman of the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. This is one of 12 regional committees across the UK and covers a large area which includes 47 upper tier authorities including BCC. The regional committee can take a strategic oversight of the wider Thames catchment as a whole. The Committee has a key role to play in ensuring co-ordinated plans across organisations, ensuring that local authorities, utility companies and other agencies work together and approving the investment programme to manage flood risk across the Thames catchment. Preliminary road raising work has recently taken place in Marlow, as the first part of the Marlow Flood Alleviation Scheme which is part funded by the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, in partnership with DeFRA/EA, BCC and Marlow Town Council. This is a large scale scheme which will protect 287 properties in Marlow. Amanda Nobbs also advised that smaller scale community based projects could also be considered for funding by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

43. Another statutory duty for the LLFA is to complete Section 19 Flood Investigation reports after a significant flood event – the criteria used in Bucks to trigger a S19
report is attached as Appendix C, but in general terms it is for areas where more than 5 properties have flooded internally and where roads have been closed. After the Winter Flooding of 2013-14, the Strategic Flood Management team undertook 17 flood investigations which produced valuable information, a useful opportunity to share learning and recommendations for both BCC and partners going forward. BCC as the LLFA has no legal power to enforce the recommendations within a S19 report, but the Committee were impressed to see that the majority of the S19 recommendations had been completed or that work was ongoing and commend Karen Fisher, Strategic Flood Risk Management Team Leader and the Strategic Flood Risk Management team for following up on these recommendations and building effective relationships with partners.

44. Whilst the Committee was happy that the S19 process is working well, we had concerns about flood events which do not meet the criteria to trigger a S19 flood investigation. In Hughenden Valley, we learned that although a very similar issue with the sewers venting due to groundwater had occurred in 2001, none of the local authorities or any of the other RMAs had any record of this incident. In 2014, Mr and Mrs White recognised that the sewers were going to vent again and raised the alarm. Again this demonstrates the value of local knowledge but with communities being more transient in nature in current times, it would be useful for the LLFA to maintain records which could help to inform future flood response.

**RECOMMENDATION 7**

*We recommend that in addition to the detailed Section 19 reports which the Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority are required to produce, the Strategic Flood Management Team should maintain an incident log to encompass all flood events.*

**Growth Agenda**

45. The Growth agenda presents a major challenge for managing flood risk. BCC has new statutory duties to perform in connection with sustainable drainage (SUDs). As the LLFA, BCC is now a statutory consultee on all major planning applications and the Strategic Flood Management Team have appointed 2 new officers to discharge this duty. A major application is defined as a development of over 10 properties or over one hectare in size. Detailed drainage maintenance and management plans have to be submitted to the LLFA for advice as part of the planning process. There are concerns that although BCC has this duty to give advice, the enforcement of any planning conditions, rests with the Local Planning Authorities i.e. the four district councils in Bucks, therefore close partnership working is again very important.

46. Members heard that an advisory note is being produced for the River Thame and its tributaries which will identify standards and approaches that developers should meet when developing close to a watercourse. The Committee welcome this and would encourage Aylesbury Vale District Council to include policy in their local plan to promote the use of such an advisory note, as a similar approach has worked very well in Wycombe district.
The Committee learned that development went ahead on a flood plain in Marlow in the 1970s and although it is unlikely that this level of development would be allowed today, Members are concerned that flood risk should be given an appropriate level of consideration in the planning process, particularly when authorities are under pressure to find space for new homes. Furthermore, we feel that Planning legislation should be changed to ensure that if developers build by a watercourse or on a flood plain, they should be required to contribute financially to possible flooding issues which may arise in the future.

**RECOMMENDATION 8**

*We recommend that the Cabinet should ask local MPs to lobby Government for changes to Planning legislation, which would require developers building by a watercourse or on a flood plain to provide flood defences, flood resilience measures and appropriate equipment in a secure store, such as pumps, sandbags for use in an emergency, as part of their S106 contributions.*
APPENDIX A

Inquiry Scope

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Flooding in Bucks 2013-14: Lessons Learned</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed-off by</td>
<td>David Carroll, Chairman of TEC Select Committee *</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sara Turnbull, Head of Member Services (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Kelly Sutherland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Drafted 7th May 2015 – Agreed by Committee 19th May.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiry Group Membership</td>
<td>Proposal is that the Inquiry will be chaired by Tricia Birchley supported by the full Committee membership*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member Services Resource</td>
<td>Member Services will provide the following officer support: Sara Turnbull, Head of Member Services – Policy Advice and Report Quality Assurance Kelly Sutherland – Policy Lead &amp; Project Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Cabinet Member</td>
<td>Mr Warren Whyte, Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead HQ/BU Officer</td>
<td>Mrs Karen Fisher, Strategic Flood Management Team Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the problem that is trying to be solved?</td>
<td>To ensure that lessons learned from the 2013-14 flood experiences will lead to improved responses from Buckinghamshire County Council and relevant partners in the event of flooding incidents in future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the issue of significance to Buckinghamshire as a whole?</td>
<td>During the winter of 2013-14, a number of communities across the County were affected by surface water, fluvial and/or groundwater flooding – from Denham in the South to Aylesbury in the North.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the topic of relevance to the work of BCC?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this topic within the remit of the Select Committee?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What work is underway already on this issue?</td>
<td>The Flood Management Team have completed Section 19 investigations into flood incidents and have looked at preventative measures. The Resilience team have also assessed the Council’s emergency response and have been involved in the multi-agency lessons learned process. Community Emergency Plans, held by Parish and Town Councils, have been encouraged as a result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any key changes that might impact on this issue?</td>
<td>Increased development across the County and associated drainage implications. Cutbacks to resources in the Public Sector. Climate change – possible increase in periods of heavy, prolonged rainfall. Approval of Marlow Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the key timing considerations?</td>
<td>Would like the Inquiry’s recommendations to be made by Winter 2015-16.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who are the key stakeholders & decision-makers?

- Buckinghamshire County Council (incl TfB)
- District Councils
- Parish Councils
- Environment Agency
- Utility Companies e.g Thames Water
- Bucks Fire and Rescue Service

What might the Inquiry Achieve?

- Educate residents and elected members on how best to deal with Flooding emergencies
- Ensure a more co-ordinated response between agencies/stakeholders in future.

What media/communications support do you want?

- Press release to launch inquiry evidence-gathering
- Press release to promote the report once published

Evidence-gathering Methodology

**What types of methods of evidence-gathering will you use?**

- Desktop research
- Evidence gathering meetings
- Visits to flood sites
- Local Area Forums – use previous minutes/reports of LAF meetings in areas affected by Flooding

How will you involve service-users and the public in this inquiry?

- Invite written submissions from any Bucks residents who experienced flooding in 2013-14
- Invite representatives from Resident’s Flooding Groups to meeting to give evidence and answer members’ questions – possibly Marlow as an e.g. of River flooding, Hughenden Valley as an e.g. of sewage issues and The Willows as an e.g. of Surface Water flooding.

Outline Inquiry Project Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Key Activity</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoping</td>
<td>Inquiry Scope Agreed by Select Committee – propose to hold an initial meeting late May to further refine the scope with members.</td>
<td>May/June 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-gathering</td>
<td>21st July Select Committee Meeting – Inquiry Evidence from BCC Officers – Karen Fisher, Andy Fyfe, rep from TfB. Setting the scene, understanding BCC’s responsibilities around flooding and emergency response, what work has been done internally as a result of the 2013-14 flooding.</td>
<td>21st July 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8&quot;th September Select Committee Meeting</td>
<td>8&quot;th September 2015</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry Evidence from Residents and Key Partners – invite resident’s groups to talk about their experiences at the time of the flooding and afterwards, to highlight any issues. Then speak to reps from District Councils, Parish or Town Councils, Environment Agency, Utility Companies such as Thames Water, to understand their different duties and responsibilities and how they responded in 2013-14. Would they do anything different now as a result of lessons learned?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visits to Flood Sites</th>
<th>August/September according to member availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Developing Recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Group/SC meeting – Key Findings Report &amp; Possible Areas of Recommendations considered</th>
<th>September 2015</th>
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</thead>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testing &amp; developing recommendations with stakeholders</th>
<th>Late September</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Reporting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Inquiry Group report with recommendations completed (signed-off by SC Chairman)</th>
<th>October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Report published for Select Committee</th>
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</table>

| Select Committee agrees report to go forward to decision-makers | October/November 2015 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|

| Cabinet/Partner considers recommendations | November/December 2015 |
|-------------------------------------------|

*Updated June 2015 to reflect changes in Member appointments.*
### APPENDIX B

**Flooding Inquiry Evidence Programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
<th>Witnesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 21<sup>st</sup> July | - Karen Fisher, Strategic Flood Management Team Leader, BCC  
- Andy Fyfe, Resilience Manager, BCC  
- Simon Dando, Contract Director, TfB |
| 18<sup>th</sup> August | - A small group of Members conducted site visits in Marlow, Hughenden Valley and The Willows, Aylesbury.  
- Steven Lambert, County, District and Parish Councillor for The Willows  
- Annie Jones, Town Clerk, Marlow Town Council |
| 8<sup>th</sup> September | - David White, Hughenden Valley resident  
- Debbie White, Hughenden Valley resident  
- Matt Hopkins, Hughenden Valley resident  
- Richard Scott, County, District and Town Councillor for Marlow  
- Trevor Kippax, Marlow resident  
- Steve Lambert, County, District and Parish Councillor for The Willows  
- Lee Buckingham, resident of The Willows  
- Andre Durand, resident of The Willows  
- Mr & Mrs Chris Spreadborough, residents of The Willows  
- Barry Russell, Operations Manager, Environment Agency  
- Huw Thomas, Local Government Liaison, Thames Water  
- Karen Nelson, Operations Manager, Thames Water  
- Chris Moloney, Operational Control Manager, Thames Water  
- Tim Parkins, Performance, Evaluation and Projects Team Leader, Bucks Fire and Rescue Service  
- Emma Chilton and Adam Heeley, Aylesbury Vale District Council  
- Glynis Chanell, Chiltern District Council  
- David Gilmour, South Bucks District Council  
- Neil Stannett, Wycombe District Council  
- Simon Dando, Contract Director, TfB  
- John Gibbons, TfB  
- Dave Smith, Local Area Technician, TfB  
- Amanda Nobbs, Chairman of the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee |
APPENDIX C

BCC criteria for a Section 19 Investigation

• Internal flooding (including to basements) to five or more residential properties within an area of 1km²
• Internal flooding of two or more business premises within an area of 1km²
• Internal flooding (including to basement) of at least one property for one week or longer
• Flooding of one or more items of critical infrastructure, which could include hospitals, health centres, clinics, surgeries, colleges, schools, day nurseries, nursing homes, emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) stations, utilities and substations.
• Caused a transport link to be impassable for the following periods:
  • Motorways, trunk roads and major rail links – 2 hours or more
  • Class A and B highways and other railway links – 4 hours or more
  • Class C highways – 10 hours or more unless the route is the only means of access, or is primary route for critical infrastructure then reduce to 4 hours
  • Class U highways – 24 hours or more unless the route is the only means of access, or is primary route for critical infrastructure then reduce to 4 hours
• Any flooding event that a risk management authority deems significant does not meet the agreed thresholds should be brought to the next strategic flood management committee for consideration.