

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	9 November 2015
	Cabinet		11 November 2015
Subject:	Flood Improvement Works Update		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All Wards		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Completed Flood Works/Schemes		
	2. Capital and Maintenance works ongoing		
	3. Future works for consideration		
	4. List of areas where clearance works are carried out		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members of the flood alleviation works which have been completed across the City throughout 2014/2015, those that are currently in progress and to outline future proposed works.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is asked to consider the information contained in the report and make any recommendations it considers appropriate to Cabinet.

2.2 **Cabinet** is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) The contents of this report be noted.
- (2) Authority be delegated to the Corporate Director to work in partnership with relevant agencies and landowners to recognise the importance of all flood alleviation works within the City in minimising the risk and impact of flooding events.
- (3) The importance of the ongoing partnership working to secure the best possible outcomes for residents and businesses in Gloucester in reducing flood risk, including bidding for external funding and entering into appropriate agreements on terms approved by the Council Solicitor be recognised.
- (4) To support officers in investigating and utilising additional resources to maximise opportunities to reduce flood risk.

- (5) The continued importance of information, education, consultation and signposting as funding reduces be recognised.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 Introduction 2007- 2015

- 3.1.1 To date 123 schemes and major improvement works have been completed since 2007 to reduce the risk of future flooding to residents and businesses city wide.
- 3.1.2 Many of the projects undertaken have only been possible as a direct result of partnership working and by securing external funding.
- 3.1.3 The City Council has previously contributed towards these projects with funding secured from a number of sources including the Environment Agency, DEFRA, Gloucestershire County Council/Gloucestershire Highways and Developers through section 106 agreements and commuted sums.
- 3.1.4 The City Council has secured around £1.84 million pounds since 2007; approximately £1,227,000 has been spent on the delivery of schemes to date.
- 3.1.5 The current Capital Schemes budget is £727,445 which is fully committed to the delivery of projects already identified with funds secured from a number of sources as above.

3.2 Capital Schemes

- 3.2.1 Between September 2014 and September 2015 approximately £240k was secured in funding and £159k spent on Capital Schemes and associated works see Appendix 1 for list of completed schemes.
- 3.2.2 There are currently 6 Capital projects in progress and a further 7 schemes planned to start in the near future. Details can be found in Appendix 2.
- 3.2.3 An additional 8 Capital projects identified will be investigated and progressed over the next 12 months if viable, cost effective and funding can be secured. See Appendix 3 for details.

3.3 Future Funding

- 3.3.1 The City Council continues to work with partners to identify potential funding opportunities and will look to deliver schemes in those areas at the greatest risk in addition to works which can deliver quick wins.
- 3.3.2 Funding for flood alleviation projects and works is decreasing however schemes that can deliver additional environmental benefits including improved water quality, creation of wildlife habitats and increased biodiversity are looked upon more favourably and present additional funding opportunities.

3.4 **Maintenance Works**

- 3.4.1 Inspections and assessments of flood assets throughout the City including; culverts, trash screens, balancing ponds, flood barriers etc is ongoing.
- 3.4.2 Works to manage Himalayan Balsam (where there are known issues) and other invasive weed species such as Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed on City Council land is ongoing with the support of the TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) and specialist contractors.
- 3.4.3 The City Council has Riparian Responsibilities of approximately 25 kilometres of watercourse the majority of which is not included in the Amey contract. Works are carried out on a priority basis by contractors and voluntary groups. Appendix 4 identifies stretches of watercourses and assets which have been identified for inspection and clearance works.
- 3.4.4 Between September 2014 – and September 2015, TCV accumulated 301 volunteer hours carrying out watercourse clearance works on behalf of the City Council.

3.5 **Planning**

- 3.5.1 Regeneration is important for Gloucester and officers from the City Council have been actively working with developers to attract further investment whilst offering constructive planning advice to reduce future flood risk.
- 3.5.2 There are ongoing discussions with internal and external partners including Developers to resolve issues related to land adjacent to watercourse and flood assets which the City Council will adopt from developers which can also attract a commuted sum.

3.6 **Education**

- 3.6.1 Working with Riparian Owners in relation to the ongoing maintenance of private land alongside watercourses in addition to assisting with enquiries, offering advice and support regarding proposed works which could impact flow.
- 3.6.2 The need for improved signposting and information for residents, Members and other customers in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the relevant organisations involved with flood related work in addition to the identification and operation of flood assets.

3.7 **Resilience**

- 3.7.1 The City Council and partners continue to work together on promoting community resilience in those areas at greatest risk of flooding. A number of events planned for this year to promote community resilience have been rescheduled for next year.
- 3.7.2 There are future plans to work with businesses in relation to giving advice on reducing flood risk and business continuity plans.

3.7.3 The continued work with communities/Friends Groups on management plans (i.e. Barnwood Park and Saintbridge Balancing Pond) to assist with future ongoing maintenance requirements. A number of other sites have been identified for consideration in relation to promoting Friends Groups and creating additional opportunities for communities i.e. funding and awards.

3.7.4 Better management of water including the need for additional flood storage capacity to further reduce the risk of future flooding. A number of options are currently being considered including:

- Additional storage within the existing drainage ditches at Blackbridge
- Flood storage area at Winnycroft Farm as part of a proposed development
- Improving a number of existing balancing ponds including Appleton Way, Milton Avenue and Combrook Close.
- Diverting surface water along Coney Hill Road into the existing balancing pond near Harley's Field

3.8 **Gloucestershire Highways**

3.8.1 The City Council continues to work closely with Gloucestershire Highways (GH) to resolve a number of ongoing localised highways flooding issues with the agreement of further investigations and future planned works.

4.0 **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations**

4.1 Increasingly local government is moving away from being an organisation that drivers services to one that creates the conditions for people to help themselves and each other.

4.2 A number of City Council officers are continuing to work with our communities, Friends and Residents groups with addition support from the voluntary sector including the TCV and Probation Payback Service delivering watercourse maintenance and associated improvement works. For example a number of sites were identified and put forward for a Green Flag award including Barnwood Park and Saintbridge Balancing Pond. Further sites have also been identified for future Green Flag applications.

4.3 We will continue to work with communities to promote an ABCD approach whilst exploring opportunities to work with new groups/residents assisting them in shaping their communities.

5.0 **Alternative Options Considered**

5.1 Do minimum; only carry out maintenance works currently on contract and no further submission of bids in relation to funding of Capital Schemes and additional maintenance works resulting in minimal costs and resources.

5.2 Doing the minimum would increase the flood risk to residential and businesses premises in addition to important infrastructure and assets. Given Gloucester City's geographical location and history of flooding events this would be seen as unacceptable and would increase anxiety for residents and business owners. There is the expectation that works to reduce flood risk will continue attracting investment

and employment into the City. Flood schemes are politically supported in Gloucester and the City Council has built up a good reputation which could be affected if works do not continue.

- 5.3 To put all maintenance works on contract, however there is not the capacity or funding to put all maintenance works on to contract and resources are focused on those areas at greatest risk.
- 5.4. The City Council could consider making funds available to fund Capital Schemes however given the current economic climate this is unlikely option.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 To reduce the risk of future flooding to residential properties and business premises through continued investment in flood alleviation schemes/works, the promotion of self resilience, advice and information, community flood plans and drop in sessions.
- 6.2 Reducing flood risk to homes and businesses will continue to support regeneration and further investment into the City which will be communicated to developers through planning policy.
- 6.3 To meet the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 in respect of flood risk management including working with partners to resolve flooding issues.
- 6.4 The ongoing Capital Works Schemes and Maintenance Programme in 2014/2015 is still proving to be effective in reducing flooding incidents however we have been fortunate and not experienced the same intense weather events such as those in 2012 and early 2014.
- 6.5 Continue to investigate and utilise additional sources of funding and resources to deliver schemes and improvement works to further reduce flood risk to homes, businesses and critical infrastructure throughout the City.
- 6.6 To investigate improving the effectiveness of our resources with the aid of technology, better signposting for customers and building community resilience.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 The City Council will continue to plan, prioritise and deliver flood alleviation schemes and works where resources allow, whilst delivering improvements to watercourse biodiversity, habitat creation, water quality and amenity value in accordance with legal requirements in partnership with internal and external partners.
- 7.2 Maintenance works will continue to be funded through our maintenance budget and external funding will be sought to enable the delivery of Capital schemes where opportunities present themselves and where resources allow.
- 7.3 The City Council will continue to work with partner organisations to identify where flood alleviation schemes and watercourse improvement works are required and seek joint funding where possible to deliver schemes.

- 7.4 Continue to target areas at highest risk and to assist Riparian Owners with carrying out regular maintenance works.
- 7.5 An update report will be provided for Members on an annual basis regarding works that have been completed and future planned works.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Costs for capital and maintenance works have been met through existing budgets. The City Council continues to be proactive in securing additional funding from external sources for capital projects.
- 8.2 The Council will continue to bid for funding for flood alleviation and watercourse improvement works wherever the opportunity presents itself and where resources allow.
- 8.3 With the ongoing constraints on Local Authority and partner organisations budgets there is a need to investigate alternative sources of funding whilst prioritising existing resources.
- 8.4 The City Council will continue to work with communities and the voluntary sector to assist with the delivery of maintenance works.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report).

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The report identifies that the City Council has Riparian Responsibilities as a land owner under the Land Drainage Act 1991 which requires responsible parties to maintain the watercourses in such a condition as to ensure that the free flow of water is not impeded. The City Council should enter into appropriate agreements with landowners and partner organisations in respect of works undertaken to clarify terms and conditions, particularly on-going responsibilities and liabilities.
(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report).

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 See table below -

Risk	Opportunities
Flood Alleviation structures and assets will not perform to their full potential if ongoing maintenance is not carried out subjecting residents/ communities and businesses to greater risk of flooding during extreme weather events which increases anxiety and concern.	To prioritise resources on those areas at greatest risk and to work with partners to deliver additional works to reduce flood risk. The Council will work with communities to promote resilience and participation with schemes and works in their areas.
Increased insurance premiums or becoming uninsurable and the potential loss of investment and employment to the City.	Continue working with voluntary groups and to promote a programme of community events which we will publicise through the Partnerships and Community Groups.

Reduced funding to deliver works.	Continue working with communities to establish more 'Friends Groups' which can have a number of positive outcomes including residents taking ownership of their area, attract funding opportunities for further enhancements and awards.
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11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 11.1 Reducing flood risk to an individual property or a community does not prejudice against any one group or community. Reducing flood risk and increasing flood resilience provides re-assurance and comfort to those communities and groups at risk.
- 11.2 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 12.1 Flood alleviation works and measures have a critical role to play in protecting communities. Proper maintenance of flood assets will reduce the risk and impact of flooding events.

Sustainability

- 12.2 Given the ongoing reductions to local authority resources there is a need to support communities to become more resilient.
- 12.3 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems are promoted in relation to new developments and used whenever possible in flood alleviation schemes. SuDS (ponds, swales, rain gardens etc) are usually less expensive to implement, maintain, add amenity value and are important for habitat creation.
- 12.4 Consideration is given to other requirements such as the Water Framework Directive to enhance and renaturalise watercourses in addition to improving water quality which may include the retro fitting of SuDS.

Staffing & Trade Union

- 12.5 None.

Press Release drafted/approved

- 12.6 Not applicable.

Background Documents: None