

North Somerset Council

Report to the Executive

Date of Meeting: 8 February 2023

Subject of Report: Pre-consultation sign-off of the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – in preparation for public consultation (February-March 2023)

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Cllr Mike Solomon - Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services

Key Decision: Yes

Reason:

The strategy addresses how we propose to manage local flood risk across North Somerset.

Recommendations

To approve the draft local flood risk management strategy document for public consultations.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 North Somerset Council has been developing its draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS).
- 1.2 Having a LFRMS is a statutory requirement under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Consultants wrote the first version in 2014, and this is a revised version based on current best practices and has been developed by the Council's Flood Risk Team.
- 1.3 Preparing for flooding is vital in North Somerset because there are around 2,100 properties at risk of surface water flooding for a 1 in 100-year event. This is likely to increase with climate change; by 2080, as many as 11,000 properties could be at risk. Flooding to low-lying land from the sea and tidal estuaries is a principal flood risk source within North Somerset. Without defences in place approximately a quarter of the area of North Somerset is at risk of flooding. However, the tidal flood defence network across the study area is well-developed and extensive; therefore, flooding rarely occurs due to high tidal levels alone. Climate change and associated sea level rise will increase this risk.
- 1.4 The draft LFRMS has been developed with other flood risk management authorities such as North Somerset Levels Internal Drainage Board, Wessex Water and the

Environment Agency. This ensures that a partnership approach will continue through the North Somerset Local Flood Risk Management Partnership.

- 1.5 The draft LFRMS has objectives and actions adapted from the Environment Agency’s National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-strategy-for-england--2>

Objectives

- OB1 - A flood resilient North Somerset
- OB2 - Today’s growth and infrastructure in North Somerset being resilient in tomorrow’s climate
- OB3 - North Somerset ready to respond and adapt to local flooding

Actions

- A1 - Appropriately maintaining assets
- A2 - Inputting into planning
- A3 - Regulating surface water activities
- A4 - Making North Somerset flood resilient
- A5 - Investigating surface water flooding and assets
- A6 - Using natural flood management
- A7 - Scheme opportunity assessment: understanding where in North Somerset large schemes to reduce flood risk would be viable

- 1.6 The strategy consists of seven parts that break down this complex subject into discrete, easily read documents. The sections are self-contained and can be actively used by the North Somerset Council Flood Risk Team when engaging with residents and businesses. These seven parts are:

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Part A | Local Flood Risk Reduction Actions in North Somerset | This will explain what all the relevant organisations working together aim to achieve |
| Part B | A Guide to North Somerset Flood Risk Management Authorities | An explanation of who does what in North Somerset |
| Part C | A Guide to Flood Risk Funding | An explanation of how flood risk activities can be funded in North Somerset |
| Part D | North Somerset Natural Flood Management | How natural features and land management can slow the flow, thereby reducing flood risk |
| Part E | Flood Resilient North Somerset | How local communities can be more resilient to flooding, adapt and recover more quickly when flooded |
| Part F | Small Watercourse Maintenance Good Practice | A guide to maintaining small watercourses for flood risk and wildlife |
| Part G | North Somerset Coastal Flood Risk Awareness | An explanation of the risk from coastal flooding and the impact of climate change and sea level rise |

- 1.7. The strategy aims to produce a readable, engaging, plain English document that can easily explain a complex subject. The complexity of legislation is highlighted in a

diagram showing the relationship between national legislation and local strategies and policies.

- 1.8 A decision is sought to approve the draft LFRMS document for public consultation.
- 1.9. Following the consultation, the final LFRMS document will be returned to the Executive for approval.
- 1.10 A draft Executive Summary (Appendix A) and complete Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Appendix B) have been prepared.

General information about reporting flooding

Because of the recent bad weather, the below describes how residents can report concerns about surface water flooding and highway drainage:

High rainfall can affect all of us in different ways and there is a complex interaction between different types of flooding. One of the most obvious impacts of heavy rainfall is flooding of the highway. We maintain thousands of gullies on public land and their connections to the drainage system along roads. Residents are advised that if they notice a problem they should report it to the highway team, through the channels available.

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/nuisances-pollution-environmental-issues/flooding-drainage/drainage>

More serious flooding is that which affects homes and businesses, and it is essential that all such incidents are recorded to assist with the development of the strategy and the planning of future works. Residents are advised to report this more complex type of flooding to the flood risk team via this link: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/nuisances-pollution-environmental-issues/flooding-drainage/reporting-flood>

2. Policy

- 2.1 The LFRMS is a key strategic document that interacts with a wide range of national strategies and policies, including:
 - Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England
 - Environment Agency Flood Risk Management Plans
 - North Somerset's Strategic Flood Risk Management Assessment
 - North Somerset's Green Infrastructure Strategy

3. Details

- 3.1 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 states that North Somerset Council must implement a local flood risk management strategy.
- 3.2 'Local' flooding in North Somerset means the risk of excess water from manufactured drainage systems, small watercourses, rainfall flowing off the land and when water rises from below ground to above the surface. Although this strategy does not explicitly cover flooding from the sea or larger watercourses and rivers, as that is the responsibility of the Environment Agency, some of the measures discussed will apply to any flooding.

3.3 The strategy has been broken down into seven sections for the reader's ease as the subject area is complex. The LFRMS produced in the past by this authority and others have tended to be long technical documents impenetrable by a non-technical reader.

Each of the seven chapters is described in more detail below.

3.4 Part A - Local Flood Risk Reduction Actions in North Somerset starts with an introduction to Flood Risk in North Somerset and details the number of properties at risk now from different types of flooding. It then explains what that risk means, where to find flood risk maps and how to interpret them.

3.5 The objectives for the LFRMS have been adapted from the Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England. The LFRMS must relate to and accord with the national strategy. This comes from the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which lists detailed requirements to be included within the strategy. The LFRMS must also relate to the recently approved Flood Risk Management Plans, which the Environment Agency has updated on behalf of North Somerset Council, and the final plans were due to be published in Autumn 2022. Flood risk management plans (FRMPs) show how organisations, stakeholders and communities will work together to manage flood risk in England. Flood risk management plans for England to cover the period from 2021 - 2027. These strategic plans explain the objectives and the measures (actions) needed to manage flood risk at a national and local level.

Details of these plans can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-risk-management-plans-2021-to-2027>

There is also an interactive Flood Plan Explorer that presents the objectives and measures on maps.

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/flood-planning/explorer/cycle-2/home>

3.6 The objectives of the LFRMS are:

- i. A flood resilient North Somerset
- ii. Today's growth and infrastructure in North Somerset being resilient in tomorrow's climate
- iii. North Somerset ready to respond and adapt to local flooding.

They apply collectively to all the risk management authorities (RMAs) that deal with surface water flooding, and these are:

- North Somerset Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority
- North Somerset Council as the Highway Authority
- North Somerset Levels Internal Drainage Board
- Wessex Water
- National Highways

The effect of the strategy is that the risk management authorities must act in a manner consistent with the local strategies and guidance.

3.7 A series of actions and an associated action plan define how the objectives will be delivered in North Somerset. Some actions are the continuation, improvement and extension of the vital day to activities of the RMAs, and others are new actions to make North Somerset more flood resilient.

The actions are:

- A1. Appropriately maintaining assets: Ensuring that maintenance of flood risk infrastructure continues in an economically beneficial way that is compatible with broader aspirations such as biodiversity net gain and the green infrastructure strategy.
- A2. Inputting into planning: Ensuring that appropriate, timely and effective responses are made to planning application consultations with the aim that any new development will not be detrimental in terms of broader flood risk and, where possible, can have a positive impact in reducing flood risk overall.
- A3. Regulating surface water activities: Ensuring that the consenting and enforcement powers of the RMAs are used effectively to make North Somerset more flood resilient.
- A4. Making North Somerset Flood resilient: A flood resilience approach aims to reduce the impact and damage caused by floodwater. This can mean a combination of several small actions, such as being prepared for a flood; knowing what to do in a flood; being able to recover from a flood quickly; changing a property so there is less damage when it floods; and adapting a community so that flooding has less of an impact. This is a detailed and complicated area that is covered in Part E - Flood Resilient North Somerset.
- A5. Investigating surface water flooding and assets: Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, North Somerset Council must investigate the actions of RMAs regarding any flood event to understand if they performed their function effectively. NSC also must compile a list of structures or features that significantly affect flood risk in the area. Although this was carried out ten years ago, it will require updating based on forthcoming national standards to be published by the Environment Agency.
- A6. Using natural flood management: This subject has a separate chapter (Part D) and explains how to use natural features and the land to slow water flow and provide a flood risk benefit downstream.
- A7. Scheme opportunity assessment: This is a separate project intended to be a high-level flood risk assessment of the highest risk communities across North Somerset; and then to identify potential options for mitigation, cost them and assess the cost-benefit ratio for each mitigation option. The funding needed to deliver each scheme will be calculated, with potential funding options identified. Opportunities for nature-based solutions will be the first consideration for any mitigation option. Funding for this complex project has been sought from the Environment Agency.

3.8 An action plan is appended to Part A and contains detailed specific actions for each risk management authority.

3.9 The other standalone chapters are:

- Part B – A guide to RMAs: This explains what risk management authorities are, who fulfils what role and their duties, responsibilities and functions. This is specific to North Somerset.
- Part C – A guide to flood risk funding: aims to explain the complexities of flood risk funding and the principles of cost-benefit ratios required by the Environment Agency that will be the core of any external funding application for capital schemes.
- Part D – North Somerset Natural Flood Management (NFM): explains the principles of NFM, the different types of features that can be used and how they can be used in North Somerset.
- Part E – Flood resilient North Somerset: This explains what flood resilient actions can be undertaken in North Somerset, not only by RMA's but also by

communities, businesses and individuals to help them better plan, respond to, and recover from flooding and coastal change.

- Part F – Small watercourse maintenance good practice. North Somerset has significantly more than the national average watercourses across its district. If these are forgotten and neglected, they can pose a flood risk to adjacent properties, and open water habitats can be lost, impacting wildlife. This guide provides simple steps that homeowners and landowners can take in managing watercourses they have a responsibility for.
- Part G – North Somerset coastal flood risk awareness: This is an introduction to the coastal flood risk present within North Somerset. It explains how we are protected by flood defences and the challenges that will be faced with a changing climate and associated sea level rise.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 It is proposed that the consultation runs for eight weeks commencing February 2023.
- 4.2. We will use North Somerset Council's online portal as the host website for information and submission of responses.
- 4.3 The consultation will encourage residents to report flooding of the highway and also flooding of homes and businesses.
- 4.4 There is a range of key audiences for this consultation whom we will engage with through various methods, including the Council's website, social media, North Somerset Life and eLife, and utilising known contacts of the various organisations. This will harness as much involvement from residents, businesses and stakeholders as possible.
- 4.5 Key audiences include the following
 - The wider public who are at risk of flooding through an online consultation on the strategy
 - Members of the public with a specific interest in flood risk management through direct engagement where they are known to the Flood Risk Team
 - Professional organisations (Flood Risk Management Authorities such as the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and The North Somerset Levels Internal Drainage Board) with interests in flood risk management through early engagement during the production of the strategy
 - Town and Parish Councils through two meetings in the north and south of the district.
- 4.6 Internally, we will address an all councillors informal scrutiny panel during the consultation period.
- 4.7 We will engage closely with other teams within NSC to ensure that we manage the information and messaging around our LFRMS public consultation consistently and clearly.

5. Financial Implications

Costs

- 5.1 The LFRMS has no immediate direct financial impact. However, the document will inform and shape our strategy for financial allocations from within existing resources and our bidding and project development priorities.

Funding

- 5.2 Many schemes will require external funding, and these usually require some element of match funding (for example, through secured revenue funding).
- 5.3 The LFRMS outlines potential funding sources for proposals where this is known. The delivery of the LFRMS projects will require further funding for proposals to be developed and delivered. This will be sought as appropriate opportunities, e.g., through external grants, become available. North Somerset Council has a good track record in securing external and Government funding through bids.
- 5.4 Any future scheme or project that requires additional funding will go through the usual council processes.
- 5.5. The LFRMS also outlines a range of existing and proposed activities, some already funded and some by internal revenue funding streams. Other proposals may require additional funding to be sought.
- 5.6. Where resources (including additional staff) are required, this will be dealt with via the processes of the MTFP.
- 5.7. As with any new or changed infrastructure schemes, indirect costs or savings may be associated (e.g., maintenance).

6. Legal Powers and Implications

- 6.1. The LFRMS is a statutory document that creates commitments and statutory requirements on the Council, legal, financial and otherwise. These commitments have been carefully considered and are consistent with existing duties and responsibilities. There are no land or property implications, as any schemes proposed would remain subject to the usual consultation, planning and land acquisition requirements.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The LFRMS objectives and associated actions demonstrate the commitment to addressing the climate and nature emergency, which are intrinsic to the strategy's purpose.
- 7.2 The key area for identifying how the LFRMS will specifically address climate and environmental implications is in the Action Plan. Projects are associated with the objective most appropriate to their primary aim.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1 If the draft LFRMS document is not approved, changes will be made to the document and public consultation will happen later.
- 8.2. If implemented, it would provide an extensive range of positive outcomes, including (but not limited to) delivery on the Council's efforts to address the climate and nature emergency and make North Somerset more flood resilient. All of these are corporate aims and objectives for North Somerset Council.
- 8.3. As individual schemes are developed, these will be subject to appropriate risk management procedures.

9. Equality Implications

Have you undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment? No.

- 9.1 The LFRMS directly addresses inequalities as those most impacted by flooding are the most vulnerable in society.
- 9.2. As schemes are developed, North Somerset Council officers will engage closely with user/interest groups to ensure that proposed interventions reflect the needs of vulnerable users.
- 9.4. The latest guidance and design standards will be followed during the design and construction of schemes, and it is not foreseen that any deviations from standards will be required.

10. Corporate Implications

- 10.1 The LFRMS document supports the North Somerset Council policies outlined in Section 2 above.

11. Options Considered

- 11.1 Not developing the LFRMS would make it difficult for the district to deliver key Council objectives around the Climate and Nature Emergency and statutory requirements, as well as putting us at a disadvantage when applying for Environment Agency and other external funding for flood risk schemes. We have therefore considered that not producing this document is not an option. Presentation of a less ambitious strategic approach will fail to deliver on our corporate aims and ambitions.

Author:

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Appendices:

Appendix A - draft Executive Summary of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, attached separately due to size constraints.

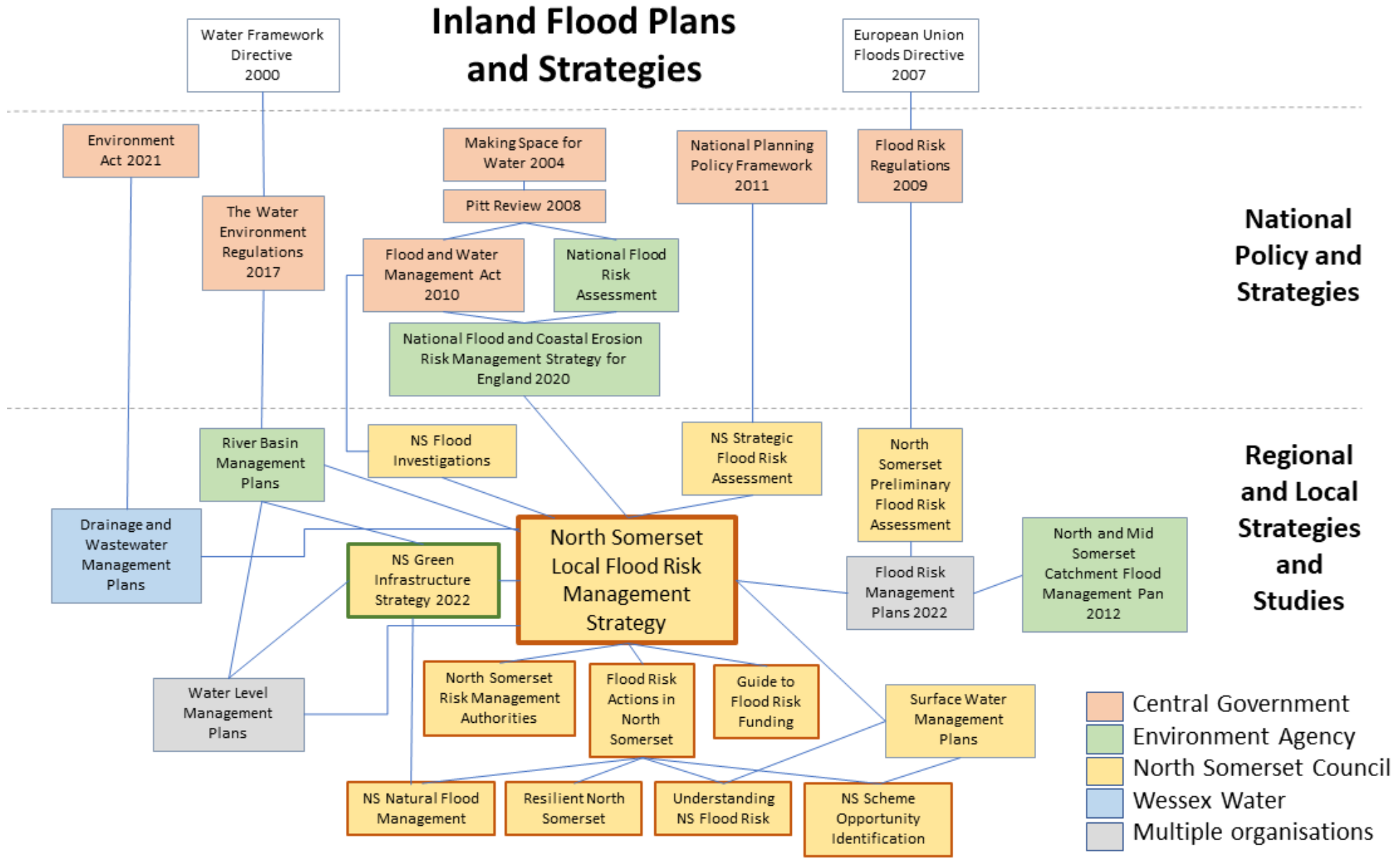
Appendix B - Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, attached separately due to size constraints.

Appendix C – Legislative context diagram

Background Papers:

Informal Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel: All-Member engagement – North Somerset Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – 25 October 2022

Appendix C – Legislative Context Diagram



Coastal Flood Plans and Strategies

