

# North Somerset Council

## Report to the Executive

**Date of Meeting: 21 June 2023**

**Subject of Report: Adoption of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy following public consultation (February-March 2023)**

**Town or Parish: All**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Cllr Annemieke Waite Executive Member for climate, waste and sustainability**

**Key Decision: Yes**

### **Reason:**

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

### **Recommendations**

To adopt the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy following public consultation; and delegate any necessary minor amendments to style and content post adoption to the flood risk team to ensure the document is kept up to date with proposed legislation changes and action plan progress.

#### **1. Summary of Report**

- 1.1 North Somerset Council has developed its Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS). Having a LFRMS is a statutory requirement under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. A report was taken to the Executive meeting of 8 February 2023 detailing the contents of the strategy and obtained approval for public consultation.
- 1.2 A decision is sought to adopt the LFRMS following 8 weeks of public consultation.
- 1.3 No material changes have been made to the LFRMS following the consultation.
- 1.4 The adopted LFRMS will be kept up to date through minor changes in line with updates to the action plan and when legislation and government advice changes. This is to ensure the document remains valid and is adaptable when changes occur. Any changes that are significant and would fundamentally change the strategy would come back to the Executive for approval.
- 1.5 An Executive Summary (Appendix A) and complete Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Appendix B) have been prepared

#### **2. Policy**

- 2.1 The LFRMS is a key strategic document that interacts with a wide range of national strategies and policies that can be seen in Appendix C, 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 For full details of the strategy refer to the report for Agenda item 20 of the 8 February 2023 Executive meeting and decision EXE 81.

### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 The public consultation ran for eight weeks commencing February 2023.
- 4.2 North Somerset Council's online portal was used as the host website for information and submission of responses.
- 4.3 The consultation also encouraged residents to report flooding of the highway and flooding of homes and businesses.
- 4.4 The key audiences for the consultation were engaged with through various methods, including the Council's website, social media, North Somerset Life and eLife, and utilised known contacts of the various organisations. This enabled us to encourage as much involvement from residents, businesses and stakeholders as possible.
- 4.5 Key audiences included 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, all councillors were invited to an informal scrutiny panel during the consultation period.
- 4.7 We engaged closely with other teams within NSC to ensure that we managed the information and messaging around our LFRMS public consultation consistently and clearly.
- 4.8 The public consultation did not elicit a large response. This is consistent with national flood risk consultations and experience elsewhere. A summary of the consultation responses are:
- 45 responses in total.
  - 9 organisations responded including 8 Parish Councils.
  - Not all questions were answered by all the responders.
  - 16 responders recorded that they had read the strategy.
  - 3 responders recorded that they had not read the strategy.

- 12 responders have used flood risk maps to find their level of flood risk.
- 11 responders said they were at risk of flooding.
- 5 responders have signed up to the flood warning service.
- 9 responders thought that North Somerset would benefit from Natural Flood Management.
- 3 responders have been flooded in the past.
- All that had been flooded would consider property flood resilience measures.
- 2 responders have a responsibility for a watercourse.
- 1 out of 2 responders who have responsibility for a watercourse thought that the document provided them with enough information to maintain their watercourse.
- The most popular points made in the free text section were that there should be no building on the flood plain and that highway drainage should be maintained more often. Both are outside of the scope of the LFRMS but will be addressed through changes to NSC's website.
- Concern was also expressed regarding the level of funding and resources to deliver the strategy particularly by Parish Councils.
- Complimentary responses were also received.

4.9 After careful analysis of the responses, no material changes have been made to the strategy and only one minor change regarding other funding opportunities for small scale works has been made. Other improvements will be made to NSC's website as a direct result of the consultation as clarity regarding roles and responsibilities at NSC is needed.

4.10 The two consultation events for the Parish Councils were advertised and one Parish Council attended the first event and the second was cancelled due to a lack of registered interest. After the events, direct engagement was held with two more Parish Council who expressed concerns about local issues.

## **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 becoming 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 The impact to North Somerset Council of flooding is High, both from local flood risk and from tidal and fluvial flood risk. The likelihood of extreme flooding is rare currently but will increase with time due to climate change. The residual risk is therefore low/medium.
- 8.2 Not having an up to date local flood risk management strategy in place is not critical to service delivery but is advantageous as it explains the approach that is being taken and formalises action plans and priorities and allows funding bids. The overall risk associated with the adoption of the strategy is therefore low and will contribute towards reduction of future flood risk increase associated with climate change.
- 8.3 If implemented, the LFRMS would provide an extensive range of positive outcomes, including (but not limited to) delivery of 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.
- 8.4 As individual flood reduction 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:**

Simon Bunn (Flood Risk Manager)

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A - 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

Informal Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel: All-Member engagement – North Somerset Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and flood update – 14 February 2022

Report to the 8 February 2023 Executive seeking pre-consultation sign-off of the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – in preparation for public consultation (February-March 2023). Agenda item 20 and decision EXE 81.