



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

West Oxfordshire District Council

Name and date of Committee	Climate & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Thursday 23 June 2022
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 7
Subject	Witney Flood Update
Wards affected	Witney
Accountable member	Cllr Lidia Arciszewska - Cabinet Member for Environment Email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Phil Martin, Group Manager, Business Support Services Tel: 07764352360; Email: phil.martin@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update the Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) on the progress of the actions set out in the S19 Flood Investigation Report for Witney in conjunction with a verbal presentation from the Environment Agencyb) on Thames Water's response to the Motion raised by Cllrs Graham and MacRae at the Council meeting on the 23rd February 2022
Annexes	None
Recommendation	That the Committee notes the report
Corporate priorities	Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity
Key Decision	N/A
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	N/A

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1. On the 23rd and 24th December 2020 approximately 54 residential and business properties were affected by some degree of internal flooding.
- I.2. Due to the number of properties affected a formal investigation into the flood incidents in Witney was carried out.
- I.3. The main areas affected with internal flooding were Woodford Mill, Riverside Gardens, Bridge Street, West End (including Industrial Estate), Millers Mews, Newland area (near the Madley Brook) and Eastfield Road. One property was also affected in New Yatt Road.
- I.4. Whilst Oxfordshire County Council are the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), responsible for Section 19 reports, as the Council wanted to ensure the investigation report was concluded in an appropriate timeframe it procured additional support to produce the report for Witney (see Appendix 1) and invited Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), the Environment Agency (EA) and other stakeholders including the Witney Flood Group and landowners for their comments.
- I.5. At the Council Meeting on the 23rd February 2022, Councillors Andy Graham and Norman MacRae raised the following motion –

"This Council believes that historical underinvestment in the sewerage infrastructure in West Oxfordshire and further up the catchments of the rivers Windrush, Evenlode and other Thames tributaries in West Oxfordshire has led to a marked deterioration in water quality in these rivers and in the Thames due to excessive spills of untreated or partially treated sewage in both storm and normal conditions.

The Council would like to receive the following details:

- Capital improvements by Sewage Treatment Works (STW) over the last ten years (description and cost);
 - Operating capacity analysed by STW over each of the last ten years;
 - Capital Plans by STW over the next five years (description and estimated cost);
 - Number of spills by STW over each of the last ten years together with reason for spill;
 - Details, including logs, of failures at pumping stations, and to include downtimes and the use of tankers;
 - The level of any fines levied by the regulator or courts for spills over each of the last ten years."
- I.6. Thames Water has provided a detailed response, which is outlined in Appendix 2, however as not all the information requested has not been supplied, a follow up meeting with Thames Water is being arranged and the results of this will be fed back to the Committee at a future meeting.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The S19 Flood Investigation Report for Witney was presented to the Committee at their meeting on the 3rd February 2022.

- 2.2. The report concluded that the 2020 event was greater than the current EA modelled '1 in 100 year' flood event, and confirmed that an updated flood risk model for the Windrush and its tributaries through the town, which includes information gathered since 2014 and from the December 2020 floods needed to be carried out by the EA.
- 2.3. The report also included a table of actions on pages 2 to 4, many of which are led by the EA who will provide a verbal update to the Committee. The report also has specific recommendation for all the relevant agencies.
- 2.4. The Council continues to work closely with a range of partners, including Thames Water, OCC (LLFA), EA and riparian land owners to help mitigate the risk of future flooding not only in Witney but across the district.
- 2.5. Progress on the specific actions identified for the Council to lead on is outlined in the table below:

Action	Progress
Investigate if the perimeter ditch of the Aquarius site can be modified/ diverted to increase flow Capacity	Before the investigation work can be undertaken the results of the EA modelling are needed to help clarify whether any benefit would be achieved from such work.
Look at opportunities for schemes to manage flows upstream of the Hailey Road drain such as nature based solutions through partnership working.	EA modelling is needed to help define what needs to be achieved to deliver tangible protection.
WODC to continue regular maintenance of their ordinary watercourse assets and use their powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991 to ensure Riparian owners carry out required maintenance	WODC continue to utilise UBICO to maintain Council owned watercourses. The team negotiates with landowners/riparian owners to maintain watercourses/ditches that are causing a tangible flood risk.
Measures to improve the resilience of existing public or community-owned infrastructure;	The team will discuss with partner organisations at planned multi-agency meetings how to protect such infrastructure.

- 2.6. The Flood Risk Management (FRM) team currently work with colleagues in the planning department in respect of planning applications for new developments to reduce flood risk as well as applying its enforcement powers on riparian owners who fail to maintain ordinary watercourses in their ownership.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The actions identified in the report, where the Council has been identified as the lead, can in part (WODC ditch maintenance and some surveying) be undertaken with the existing budgets. If further financial support is required to support potential schemes/works, a follow up report will be presented to the Committee for consideration. A new agency contract with Oxfordshire County Council is current under negotiation to formalize an existing arrangement where the Council acts as an agent for OCC on consenting and enforcement for land drainage and watercourse alterations in return for the current fee of £15,000 pa.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The Council has limited enforcement powers. However, due to an Agency Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council, the Council is able to take action against riparian owners whose conduct and activities affects local water-courses.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The main risk associated with the report is that if progress on the actions identified are not undertaken then a similar event could occur in the future.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1. None.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. None.