

Growth & Regeneration Scrutiny Commission

28th February 2022



Report of: John Smith, Director Economy of Place and Matthew Sugden, Principal Flood Risk Officer (presenting)

Title: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy update

Ward: Citywide

Recommendation

This report is mainly for information. It is our annual update to G&R Scrutiny on progress with our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. It is recommended to update the Strategy in accordance with recent national guidance on how to produce local strategies.

Summary

This report provides an overview of elements of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy that have made progress in 2021/22 and provides a recommendation of how and when to update the Strategy.

The significant issues in the report are:

The Bristol (citywide) Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is a statutory document. It was first adopted in 2014 and was formally updated in 2018. We present an update on our Strategy every year to Scrutiny to seek their views and steer on our approach. A significant point to note in this report is our progress in developing the Frome Catchment Innovation Programme – a new project that is being progressed but not yet identified in the strategy.



Policy

Bristol City Council has a statutory duty (under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010) to develop and maintain the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. Making the city more resilient to flooding is identified as specific actions in the One City Plan and helps us meet the requirements of the Corporate Strategy, such as the Build City Resilience Principle. It is also closely linked to the Local Plan, in particular policy BCS16 – Flood and water management.

Consultation

1. Internal

Not applicable

2. External

Not applicable

Context

The Bristol Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (the Strategy) sets out how the Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Bristol, will manage flood risks from local sources now and into the future with key partners such as the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and the Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board. The Strategy was first adopted in 2014 and was formally updated in 2018. Our update this year is seeking the views of Scrutiny on our progress to date and how we can continue to engage with our communities on flood risk and resilience.

The Strategy is an Action plan to ensure delivery. The Actions help to meet five higher level objectives, which are as follows:

1. Understand the risk of flooding to the city through flood risk assessment studies and data management
2. Manage the likelihood of flooding through flood defence schemes and maintaining our watercourses
3. Encourage communities to take action to reduce their risk of flooding
4. Encourage sustainable development through reviewing planning applications to ensure development achieves reduction in flood risks, where appropriate
5. Improve flood prediction, warning and post flood recovery by working proactively with our colleagues to improve processes in advance of a flood event

The Strategy has a particular focus on working with nature and encouraging green infrastructure to manage flood risks by slowing the flow of water. Officers will raise this in their presentation to Scrutiny and seek views as to how we can further encourage the implementation of such measures to help meet the challenges of the climate and ecological emergencies.

The Strategy includes Actions that relate to large scale projects – the Avonmouth Severnside Ecology Mitigation and Flood Defences project, the Bristol Avon Flood Strategy and Bedminster Green River Restoration, along with many smaller projects, measures and actions. The Bristol Avon Strategy (which is presented to Scrutiny as a separate report. Officers will provide an update on other ongoing projects, including one new project not identified in the existing Strategy, namely the Bristol Frome Innovation Programme. We will provide an update with progress on:

- Supporting sustainable development
- Frome Catchment Innovation Programme
- Community engagement activity to manage debris clearance
- Utilisation of Confirm asset management software
- Minor land drainage works
- Provision of advice regarding flood warnings
- Flood risk asset inspections

A key statutory duty of the Lead Local Flood Authority is to be a statutory consultee to major planning applications for surface water drainage as well as advising on wider flood risk issues. Officers will provide an update on how we approach this duty and use it to ensure developments reduce flood risk through sustainable drainage techniques.

The Bristol Frome Innovation Programme is a partnership between Bristol City Council, the Environment Agency, South Gloucestershire Council and Wessex Water. In April 2021 it was announced by DEFRA as one of 25 programmes across the country that was successful in its expression of interest in the national flood and coastal innovation resilience programme - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-and-coastal-resilience-innovation-programme>

The partnership is now developing an Outline Business Case to unlock funding for the delivery phase of the programme 2022-27. Cabinet will make a decision on whether to approve and submit the business case to Defra in June 2022, and if so provide authority to bid for grant funding of circa £6m to deliver the programme. The programme will cover 6 work packages as below, which officers will provide an overview of.

1. Natural Flood Management
2. Sustainable drainage systems retrofit
3. Policy challenge areas
4. Frome Gateway river restoration opportunities
5. Improved monitoring of city centre culverts
6. Innovative funding mechanisms

Officers will also provide an update on other projects, measures and actions that have been progress since last year's annual update.

At last years' Scrutiny update, it was proposed to commence the Strategy refresh in 2021/22. Since that time, an Environment Agency (EA) project was commenced to provide local authorities with guidance on how to align local strategies with the recently adopted National Flood Risk Management Strategy, and give best practice guidance to ensure consistency in local strategies across the country.

Furthermore, due to the loss of key flood risk management staff in summer 2021, it is now proposed to delay the update to the Strategy until such time that resources are filled and the updated EA guidance is available to inform the update.

The current Strategy can be found at:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33379/Local+flood+risk+management+strategy/0ef84c>

[1b-05a3-4a71-a6da-62fe1a14f3d4](#)

Proposal

It is recommended that members support the proposal to delay the update to the local strategy until such time that internal resources are available and national guidance can be utilised to inform the update. It is recommended that the scrutiny note the progress made in delivering the actions of the current strategy since last year's annual update. It is recommended that scrutiny support the continuation of developing the Frome Catchment Innovation Programme OBC, to be captured as a priority project as part of the updated Strategy.

Other Options Considered

A minor update to the Strategy was considered to be brought to Scrutiny at this time, but was discounted on the basis of limited value, resource limitations and emerging guidance.

Risk Assessment

It is a statutory obligation to maintain a local flood risk management strategy. While no legislative timeframe is given for updating strategies, if the strategy were not to be updated at all, it risks failing on statutory obligation to maintain the strategy.

Summary of Equalities Impact of the Proposed Decision

The current strategy was informed by an Equality Impact Assessment and any future updates will do the same.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

There are no direct legal implications in this report. In line with good practice and compliance with legal duties, the Strategy should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis

Legal advice provided by Nancy Rollason

Financial

The report is for information only, and there are no new direct financial implications. Scrutiny have been asked to note progress against projects previously commissioned, as well as bids that have been submitted for additional flood related work, for which announcement of the councils success are still outstanding.

Financial advice provided by Kayode Olagundoye, Interim Finance Business Partner, Growth and Regeneration, 14/02/2022)

Land

Not applicable

Personnel

Not applicable

Personnel advice provided by n/a

Appendices:

None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None