

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 6TH OCTOBER 2021

UPDATE ON DRAINAGE AND FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

REPORT OF DIRECTOR: NEIGHBOURHOOD & ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 It is widely acknowledged that the impacts of climate change is having an impact on the severity and frequency of extreme weather events across the UK.
- 1.2 2020 saw a number of particularly severe flood events, including the worst floods on the River Severn since 2000. Following Storm Dennis in February 2020, August 2020 saw heavy rainfall widespread across the Borough that resulted in similar flooding last experienced in 2007. This was followed by Storm Christoph where river levels on the Severn were similar to those experienced in February 2020.
- 1.3 Managing flood risk in the Borough is a priority for the Council as part of our work to Protect, Care and Invest to create a better borough. In its role as Highway Authority, the Council is responsible for highway drainage; as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) the Council is responsible for flood risk management that places a statutory duty on the Council to manage flood risk across the Borough.
- 1.4 There is widespread recognition that the impacts of flooding will increase as a result of climate change; we may already be seeing these impacts and there is an increasing acknowledgement between the Council and our partner organisations such as the Environment Agency that a long term approach is required to manage flood risk from water courses including the River Severn through the Ironbridge Gorge.
- 1.5 This report provides the Environment Committee with an update on actions taken in relation flood risk management during 2020 along with a summary of the impacts severe weather events are having in the Borough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Committee note the positive steps being taken to manage flood risk across the Borough.
- 2.2 The Committee note the impact that climate change is having on the frequency and severity of severe weather events, the Council's response and measures in place to support those affected.

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3. INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 The Drainage & Flood Risk Team are responsible for highway drainage and flood risk management. This covers asset management roles for the highways (revenue and capital works) and strategic and regulatory roles as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The team is also responsible for the safety of four Statutory Reservoirs under the Reservoirs Act 1975.

Recent Flooding Events

- 3.2 2020 saw a number of particularly severe flood events, including the worst floods on the River Severn since 2000. Following Storm Dennis in February 2020, heavy rainfall was experienced in the north of the Borough during August 2020 that resulted in impacts not experienced since 2007. This was followed by further river flooding in January 2021 where river levels along the River Severn were similar to those experienced in February 2020.
- 3.3 Since February 2020, the Council is aware of a number of properties that have experienced flooding as a result of weather events. The Council has provided support for those affected while working to secure government funding to assist in recovery and flood prevention measures.
- 3.4 In response to recent flooding in Coalbrookdale, a Flood Action Group has been successfully set up; the Council is working with affected residents and partners such as the Environment Agency, to develop schemes that reduce the risk of flooding in the area. This Action Group has shaped the delivery of localised drainage improvements that the Council is planning to deliver shortly.
- 3.5 The record river levels seen on the River Severn in February 2020 resulted in movement of the flood barriers in Ironbridge. The Environment Agency have undertaken a detailed review of the barrier movement; interim measures were successfully deployed by the Environment Agency in January 2021 when the barriers were deployed. Work is currently underway to resurface the Wharfage to ensure the temporary demountable flood barriers remain suitable. Resurfacing will be completed by mid-October in readiness for the 21/22 winter flood season.
- 3.6 To support residents affected by Storm Dennis in 2020, the Council has delivered DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant for those affected by flooding. A total of £58,800 in grant funding has been awarded to affected properties.

Partnership Working

- 3.7 We continue to be an active participant in the English Severn and Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) with attendance by the Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure. This is a committee established by the Environment Agency (EA) under the Flood and Water

Management Act 2010 and brings together Members appointed by the Local Lead Flood Authorities, the EA and other risk management authorities and the aim of the committee is to ensure there are coherent plans for identifying, communicating and managing flood risk across the catchment.

- 3.8 We're also part of the recently established River Severn Partnership and engaged with the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme. The River Severn Partnership is a collaboration between Mid Wales, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Telford & Wrekin Council with the aim 'To make the Severn Catchment Britain's most vibrant and resilient river network; where an exceptional quality of life, prosperous local economies and an outstanding natural environment is driven by a programme of innovation to reduce flood risk, secure future water resources and improve and deliver shared natural assets'. This is a partnership that is still developing and the Council will continue to engage with it to ensure the aims of the group are realised in the borough.

Community Support

- 3.9 Building resilient communities is an area of increased focus in the new National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy. We continue to support communities where able and are currently looking to set up the National Flood Forum, who are a specialist charity, to provide dedicated community resource in the Borough. This would provide support to residents locally and replicate the recent success in Coalbrookdale.
- 3.10 Following the River Severn flooding in Ironbridge Gorge during February 2020, the Council has undertaken a detailed assessment to improve our understanding of properties and infrastructure that is affected at certain river levels. This has enabled a robust support plan to be developed during the response phase where the Council can proactively provide support to the community when river levels result in their properties being at risk. This plan includes delivering sand bags in advance of properties being impacted, closing roads prior to them being flooded and also enabling safe and well calls to be made throughout.
- 3.11 This detailed review has provided a comprehensive list of properties that are at risk of flooding and possible impacts along with contact details allowing targeted recovery support to be offered to those affected. It is a priority for the Council to ensure the community feel supported after a flooding event where they continue to be impacted by the flooding long after the flooding incident.
- 3.12 During the recovery phase of the flooding in the Ironbridge Gorge in January 2021, the Council asked those who were impacted by flooding to provide feedback on the Council's response and support throughout the incident. 93% of respondents said that they felt the Council responded in a timely manner and 92% indicated they felt supported by the Council before, during and after the flooding incident.

Flood Risk Management Schemes

- 3.13 The Council, working in partnership with The Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, the Environment Agency, Harper Adams and Wolverhampton University have recently completed a pilot Natural Flood Management scheme, referred to as

the 'Farm the flow' project in the Coal Brook catchment. The purpose of this project was to investigate whether natural flood management measures could help alleviate the severity of flooding working with local land owners.

- 3.14 We also have several bids in the English Severn and Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee's current 6 year programme. These bids include property flood resilience for undefended properties in the Ironbridge Gorge, a scheme for property flood resilience and small scale flood management schemes for those worst affected by the August 2020 floods across the borough.

Highway Drainage – Asset Collection and Gully Cleansing

- 3.15 The highways team are currently finalising the implementation of a new asset management system to help manage highway drainage assets. This is a specialist gully management system which helps us to effectively manage our gullies and target resource to the areas that most require maintenance. This builds on the work done in the first two years of the new Highways Maintenance Contract where all 33,000 gullies were cleansed each year. During 2021/22, we have moved to a risk based approach to ensure our resource is targeted at the areas with the greatest need, and will see £150,000 invested each year in to routine and reactive maintenance of highway drainage systems.
- 3.16 In addition to collecting data on highway gullies, the team have been identifying and mapping all footway gullies across the borough and will be developing a maintenance plan and establishing investment requirements as a result of these inspections.
- 3.17 Work to improve the footway gullies in Brookside has recently been undertaken as part of a £500,000 investment to improve the footpath network in the estate. It is proposed that this investment will continue across the borough and drainage improvement works will be scheduled as required.

Report prepared by Adam Brookes, Service Delivery Manager – Highways, Engineering and Project Delivery.