

**From:** Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

**Subject:** Kent County Council Flood Response Emergency Plan

**Decision No:** 19/00086

**Summary:**

Kent County Council Flood Response Emergency Plan sets out contingencies for response and recovery to flooding incidents and is routinely updated at two yearly intervals. This report outlines the scope and ambition of the latest updates and seeks input from Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee ahead of sign-off by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree the scope and content of the updated KCC Flood Response Emergency Plan.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 KCC is a 'Category 1 Responder' within the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and is legally bound to ensure plans are in place to respond to threats to life, property and the environment. Coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding (including reservoir inundation) are all identified as significant risks within the Kent Resilience Forum Risk Register. Further, flood resilience generates high levels of interest and concern amongst many local communities and their representatives. Sign-off of this emergency plan is therefore considered to be a Key Decision for the County Council as it affects all Divisions and acts as overarching policy guidance for KCC flood response interventions which have historically resulted in a significant budget impact (e.g. flooding in 2013/14 totalled at least £3,624,595).

1.2 The Kent County Council Flood Response Plan was first issued in its current format in 2010 and outlines the principles governing KCC's planning for, response to, and recovery from flooding events. Notably, this plan provides local geographical data and analysis of flood risk in Kent. This 'local knowledge' component has been consistently highlighted as best practice by partners. The interrelationship with the Environment Agency and other partners with a key role in planning for and responding to a flooding event is also set out in this

Emergency Plan. Latterly, increasing coverage of forecast climate change impacts and the County Council's recognition of the UK Climate Emergency in May of this year has further raised the profile of this key area of resilience planning and activity.

- 1.3 This report focuses upon the County Council's planning for flood response and recovery, rather than its Lead Local Flood Authority, Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and highways drainage roles.

## **2. Updates to Plan**

- 2.1 Updates and revisions to the Kent County Council Flood Response Emergency Plan include:

- 2.1.1 Inclusion of a plan activation summary and flowchart. This innovation will enhance accessibility of the document and consequently the speed of mobilisation during an incident.

- 2.1.2 A new horizon scanning section which addresses both current and projected climate change impacts for Kent (see section 6.3). This new section expands upon risks identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 and incorporates additional research from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Committee on Climate Change (CCC), specifically focusing on the impacts to the South East.

- 2.1.3 A new section on people and communities who may be especially vulnerable to flooding impacts by virtue of age, infirmity, poor health and deprivation has also been added (see section 10.2). This provides an analysis of social vulnerability, i.e. political, social and economic factors which can constrain the ability of the population to respond to an event and their ability to adapt to flooding and any associated impacts on the health and social care sectors. Content is further informed by research from Climate Just 2019. This section also incorporates maps identifying communities exhibiting multiple levels of deprivation which are located within areas vulnerable to flooding (please see figures 10.3, 10.4 and 10.5).

- 2.1.4 A range of other smaller updates address organisational change, wastewater incidents, key contacts, alerting and activation as well as additional emphasis upon duty directors and tactical manager roles.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 All costs associated with drafting, upkeep and associated training and exercising for this plan are covered by the core Resilience and Emergency Planning Service budget. Indeed, through improving the effectiveness of planning, response and recovery (through enhanced evidential underpinning, such as greater demographic detail), the updated plan will enable more cost-effective use of staff, assets and other County Council resources.
- 3.2 Historically, flood response activity in Kent has resulted in significant expenditure by the County Council. For example, the cost of the KCC response to wide-area flooding in winter 2013/14 totalled at least £3,624,595, which included materials, staff and contractor costs (source: Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System). A series of debrief events were undertaken in the aftermath of this event and have informed current planning and response.
- 3.3 KCC may be eligible to claim against the Bellwin Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance to Local Authorities, which works to reimburse councils for costs incurred in responding to emergencies. Before being eligible for the grant, the local authority must submit an expression of interest within the prescribed timetable and have spent a 0.2% of its calculated annual budget on works reported to MHCLG as eligible for grant. For the current financial year, the Bellwin Scheme threshold for the County Council is a further £1,764,324. It is worthy of note that this figure acknowledges only those sums spent on response and recovery and not of the annual KCC spend on flood resilience and planning activities. Currently, there is no identified allowance in the annual budget for such a level of additional spend other than the Emergency Conditions Reserve, which is available to all KCC services.

### **4. Legal Requirements**

- 4.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on KCC to plan for and respond to major emergencies. The definition of an emergency at part 1 of the Act specifically references: 'An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare and the environment of a place in the United Kingdom'.
- 4.2 A further provision of the Act is that Local Resilience Forums must maintain a Community Risk Register. The Kent Community Risk Register features 'fluvial or river flooding' as the highest risk to Kent, in terms of both impact and likelihood, with 'coastal tidal flooding' second highest. 'Surface water flooding', 'reservoir dam collapse' and 'localised extremely hazardous flash flooding' also feature within the register.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 Coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding present a significant risk to Kent communities and County Council services are central to effective planning, response and recovery from such events. The updated Flood Response Emergency Plan, with its inclusion of the latest data on and mapping of vulnerable communities in flood risk areas, enhanced alerting and activation guidance and latest projections for climate change impacts in the South East, will enhance local preparedness by enabling more effective operational interventions and use of resources.

## **6. Equalities Impact**

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to address the implications of flooding events for vulnerable individuals and communities. Effective arrangements to support affected communities are delivered through the revised and updated Flood Response Emergency Plan and associated contingency planning. The County Council's Resilience and Emergency Planning Service and Social Care teams co-operate with the NHS, voluntary sector and other partners to enable dynamic identification of and support for individuals and communities potentially at risk in the event of flood emergencies.

## **7. GDPR Considerations**

- 7.1 Emergency planning and response sometimes require the County Council to collect, use and be responsible for certain personal information to ensure an appropriate response can be delivered. The General Data Protection Regulation means that the County Council will be responsible as a 'controller' of that personal information.

## **8. Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree the scope and content of the updated KCC Flood Response Emergency Plan.

## **9. Background Documents**

Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

Appendix B - KCC Flood Response Emergency Plan EqIA

## **10. Contact Details**

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