

From: **Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste**

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

To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 15 June 2017**

Subject: Medway Flood Partnership

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet

**Electoral Division:**

- Ashford Rural South
- Ashford Rural West
- Cranbrook
- Maidstone Central
- Maidstone North East
- Maidstone Rural East
- Maidstone Rural North
- Maidstone Rural South
- Maidstone Rural West
- Maidstone South
- Maidstone South East
- Malling Central
- Malling Rural East
- Malling Rural North East
- Malling West
- Sevenoaks East
- Sevenoaks South
- Sevenoaks West
- Tenterden
- Tonbridge
- Tunbridge Wells East
- Tunbridge Wells North
- Tunbridge Wells Rural
- Tunbridge Wells South
- Tunbridge Wells West

**Summary:** The Environment Agency has established the Medway Flood Partnership to coordinate flood risk management in the Medway Catchment, which KCC has been invited to join. The partnership will develop a 5 year action plan and a 25 year vision for the catchment to coordinate flood risk management activities.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse KCC's role on the Medway Flood Partnership.

**1. Introduction**

1.1. Following the 2013/14 floods, the Environment Agency (EA) has been working with partners, including Kent County Council (KCC), to improve flood resilience in the county and reduce the risk of flooding. This work includes capital investment in flood defences and more effective partnership working to prepare for future incidents.

1.2. These issues are particularly complex in the Medway Valley. To address these the EA established the Medway Flood Partnership (MFP) in January 2017 which was also endorsed in a Parliamentary debate led by Tom Tugendhat MP.

The Partnership brings together local partners, including KCC, along with national agencies, non-governmental organisations and community representatives to coordinate all flood risk management activities across the whole catchment of the River Medway, upstream of Allington Lock (the Partnership does not include the tidal parts of the River Medway downstream of Allington). The Partnership is currently working to develop and deliver a Medway Flood Action Plan.

- 1.3. This report provides an overview of the MFP and what KCC can expect from the new Partnership.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. The River Medway is a large river that has a number of large tributaries, including the Rivers Beult, Teise and Eden.
- 2.2. At Allington, the River Medway has a catchment area of approximately 1,393 km<sup>2</sup>. Of this, approximately 972 km<sup>2</sup> lies in Kent; in fact the Medway catchment area in Kent represents approximately 27% of KCC's administrative area. There are approximately 279 km of Main River in the Medway Catchment upstream of Allington, of which approximately 248 km lies in Kent (approximately 89%). As such, the Medway is a significant feature of the Kent environment.
- 2.3. There are approximately 7,700 properties at risk of flooding from rivers in the Medway catchment, and a significant proportion of these will be in Kent. There are also approximately 5,900 properties at risk of surface water flooding in Kent in the Medway catchment.
- 2.4. There have been a number of large floods in the catchment recently, notably in 2000 and 2013 when Tonbridge, East Peckham, Yalding, Collier Street, Edenbridge and other areas were flooded by high flows on the Rivers Medway, Teise Beult and Eden. There are also more localised flooding issues arising from smaller tributaries of these rivers and surface water problems in the catchment.

## **3. The Medway Flood Partnership**

- 3.1. The Medway Flood Partnership is modelled on the Cumbria Floods Partnership that has developed the Cumbria Flood Action Plan. The Cumbria Flood Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cumbria-flood-action-plan>. [Taking an integrated approach to catchment planning lies at the heart of the Government's forthcoming 25 Year Environment Plan.](#)
- 3.2. The Medway Partnership includes all forms of flooding in the catchment area to any community. It is not focussed on any particular area or source of flooding. Through the work of the partnership, the partners hope to coordinate all activities in the catchment that influence flood risk to reduce the risk of flooding and improve the response and recovery from a flood
- 3.3. The Medway Flood Partnership is led by the Environment Agency. It consist of two groups:

- **Strategy Group** that provides strategic oversight and governance, it is made up of senior leaders from the partners; and
  - **Practitioners Group** that provides technical input and leads on delivering the activities identified, it is made up of technical leads and representatives from the partners.
- 3.4. Julie Foley, Environment Agency, Area Manager for Kent South London and East Sussex, chairs both of the groups.
- 3.5. The other partners in the partnership are:
- Country Land and Business Association
  - Forestry Commission
  - Joint Parish Flood Group
  - Kent Association of Local Councils
  - Maidstone Borough Council
  - National Farmers Union
  - Natural England
  - Sevenoaks District Council
  - South East Rivers Trust
  - Southern Water
  - Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
  - Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
  - Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board
- 3.6. The work of the partnership is divided into three themes: Capital Investment and Maintenance, Natural Flood Management and Community Resilience.
- 3.7. The objectives of the partnership are:
- Develop a shared understanding of the strategic challenges and opportunities within the Medway catchment and the need for collaboration to address them.
  - Develop a shared action plan for the next 5 to 10 years, and a 25 year vision for the future.
  - Improve communications and engagement by adopting a joined up approach to engagement with communities, local partners and government.
  - Broker strategic solutions to the problems identified through the partnership.
  - Identify the inter-relationships between projects and ensure coordination.
- 3.8. A draft action plan and 25 year vision will be reviewed by the Strategy Group in the Autumn when organisations will approve their actions. The EA will publish the final plan in November 2017. More details about the partnership and the current progress can be found in the attached briefing note and progress update in the appendices.

#### **4. KCC interest in the Partnership**

- 4.1. KCC is the highway authority, the Lead Local Flood Authority for Kent and a Category 1 responder for emergencies. As such, KCC has a significant role to play in the preparation for and response to flooding incidents, and therefore, the

many teams across KCC are likely to be involved in delivering the actions identified in the action plan.

- 4.2. KCC is likely to be leading or supporting actions that will be identified by the MFP's action plan, including improving highway response and resilience to flooding, delivering natural flood risk management works, working with developers and planners on flood risks and working with communities to improve their understanding of flood risk and our activities to manage it.
- 4.3. KCC is represented on the Strategic Group by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste and Katie Stewart, Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement. KCC is represented on the Practitioners Group by Max Tant, Flood and Water Manager. Lisa Guthrie is also a member of the Practitioners Group representing the Kent Resilience Forum.

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1. The Medway Flood Partnership is bringing together the various authorities and agencies involved in flood risk management in the Medway catchment to develop and deliver a joint action plan and vision. This will improve the coordination and delivery of flood risk management activities and help to identify collaboration opportunities to work more effectively across the catchment.
- 5.2. The Medway represents a significant portion of KCC's administrative area and one of the largest flood risks in the county. The partnership represents an opportunity to improve how this risk is managed.

## 6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 The Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse KCC's role on the Medway Flood Partnership.

## 7. Background Documents

- Medway Partnership Briefing 30 January 2017  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD5172&ID=5172&RPID=15203880>
- Medway Partnership Update 9 March 2017 -  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD5173&ID=5173&RPID=15203887>

## 8. Contact details

<b>Report Author:</b>  Max Tant Flood and Water Manager Phone: 03000 413466 Email: <a href="mailto:max.tant@kent.gov.uk">max.tant@kent.gov.uk</a>	<b>Relevant Director:</b>  Katie Stewart Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement Phone: 03000 418827 Email: <a href="mailto:katie.Stewart@kent.gov.uk">katie.Stewart@kent.gov.uk</a>
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