

## **REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ECONOMY and EXECUTIVE**

**Date of Meetings: 12 November 2015 and 17 November 2015**

**Report of: Assistant Director Public Realm**

**Title: Topsham Flood Alleviation Measures**

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

\* One that affects finances over £1m or significantly affects two or more wards. If this is a key decision then the item must be on the appropriate forward plan of key decisions.

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

#### **Council**

#### **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 Consideration of the provision of funding towards the cost of flood alleviation and protection measures for up to 120 properties in Ferry Road Topsham, north of St Margaret's Church, at particular risk from tidal flooding.
- 1.2 Consideration of further funding to underwrite an additional scheme to provide enhanced protection to around 50 further properties to the south of the scheme above, at the lower end of Ferry Road and The Strand.

#### **2. Recommendations:**

That Scrutiny Committee - Economy requests Council to approve the following:-

- 2.1 That the Council makes a capital contribution of £20,000, towards Scheme 1 Ferry Road North, described in paragraph 8.2 below, conditional upon the community being able to raise the balance of the shortfall between grants and project cost, estimated at £80,000;
- 2.2 That the Council writes to Hugo Squire MP to establish whether there are any other funds available to meet the shortfall between grants and the project cost of Scheme 1, estimated at £80,000;
- 2.3 That the Council continues to work with community groups and with other agencies to identify external funding for Scheme 1. In addition we will work with the beneficiaries of the scheme with a view to them raising the shortfall between the cost and the grants available; and
- 2.4 That the Council underwrites up to £15,000 of the cost of Scheme 2: Ferry Road South, described in paragraph 8.4 below to enable the works to be commenced during the current financial year. This amount will be conditional upon suitable guarantees from the Topsham Emergency Group being in place for the repayment of the money.

#### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

- 3.1 Funding for the two flood alleviation schemes outlined in this report is not available within existing budgets. The City Council has no direct responsibility for the impact of flooding except where it is the riparian owner of affected land and where it has responsibilities within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

**4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.**

- 4.1 Scheme 1 requires a capital contribution of £20,000 subject to community funding being found. There is no budget allocation for this work at present.
- 4.2 Scheme 2 requires £15,000 funding to underwrite the unconfirmed contribution from Topsham Emergency Group. This would be an unbudgeted capital contribution if it was eventually drawn upon.
- 4.3 The additional funding that the Council has received in terms of New Homes Bonus attributable to new housing developments has freed up funds that the Council can use to provide the funding requested.
- 4.4 Staff resources would be absorbed within existing resources to undertake the administration and coordination of funding of the schemes. Similarly, work will be required to ensure that community contributions emerge and this will require significant community engagement if the finances of the scheme are to be found.

**5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 5.1 The schemes if approved will be added to the current capital programme. This remains affordable to the Council.

**6. What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1 Legal advice regarding the content of this report has not been sought from legal services.

**7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

- 7.1 The Council is being asked to part fund a scheme for which it has no statutory responsibility. In addition it would appear that the extent of the match funding available from the local community/ householder is yet to be quantified.

**8. Report details:**

- 8.1 The Council has been asked to contribute to two flood alleviation and prevention schemes in Topsham, which is receiving greater Government priority for funding following the damage experienced in the storms of Winter 2014.

**8.2 Scheme 1: Ferry Road North**

At a total cost of £300,000, this scheme will offer flood alleviation and protection measures for up to 120 properties in Ferry Road Topsham, north of St Margaret's Church, at particular risk from tidal flooding. The maximum Government grant available is in the region of £180,000 (60%), leaving a shortfall of £120,000 to be made up by equal contributions from local authority and private funding. Devon County Council has pledged £20,000 towards this and the ability of householders to provide the money themselves is as yet unknown. As a result, in order to secure the Government grant, a shortfall of £100,000 must be secured. The contribution recommended within this report will leave some £80,000 of community/householder contributions required. The Council has no existing budget to support this scheme. There would be a modest saving in terms of the cost of emergency tidal flood

defences under normal circumstances. However the exceptional tidal events in 2014 that caused considerable damage and cost overall somewhere in the region of £320,000 was recovered from Government/ Local Levy grants.

8.3 Meetings have progressed with the Topsham Community Association and the Topsham Emergency Group however neither organisation is able to commit to a financial contribution towards the scheme.

#### 8.4 **Scheme 2: Ferry Road South**

At a total cost of £130,000, this scheme will offer flood alleviation and protection measures for around 50 properties at the lower end of Ferry Road and The Strand. £100,000 is available from the Environment Agency through the Local Levy. Devon County Council has agreed a contribution of £15,000 and Topsham Emergency Group is confident that they can raise the remaining £15,000 locally. Exeter City Council has been requested by the Environment Agency to underwrite this local contribution. The Council has no existing budget to support this scheme but revenue budgets would be used should underwriting be necessary given that the risks to the council are small and the benefits to the community significant.

8.5 Both schemes will provide greatly enhanced flood resilience, the northern area being larger but less prone to onshore wave effect. Neither scheme is dependent upon the other, each having a distinct benefit to a particular area. A map is attached at Appendix A.

### 9. **How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

- 9.1
- Keep my environment safe & healthy
  - Maintain our property assets
  - Help me run a successful business

### 10. **What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

- 10.1 Properties along the river will continue to flood without flood resilience measures being put in place. Climate change suggests that the regularity of this will increase. The works directly benefit individual properties and if the householders and community groups are able to make a contribution to these schemes they will realise substantial benefits.
- 10.2 There is a risk that the DEFRA grant for Scheme 1 is not guaranteed and may not be allocated in 2016. This is considered to be a small risk.
- 10.3 There is a risk that the community funding for Scheme 1 will not be raised and the scheme may not be able to proceed. This is considered a significant risk.
- 10.4 There is a risk that the £15K required from local contributions for Scheme 2 may not be raised and this will be an unbudgeted call upon the Council's resources. This is considered to be a small risk.
- 10.5 There is a reputational risk in that if the council does not support the schemes the funding may be lost to the community.

### 11. **What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults,**

**community safety and the environment?**

11.1 None.

**12. Are there any other options?**

12.1 The City Council could chose to make a capital contribution of £100,000 to Scheme 1 to guarantee the DEFRA funding in 2015. However, there is no budget allocation for this. The Council could also choose not to make any funding available for either scheme. The City Council is not the Flood Authority and has therefore no direct responsibility to finance such schemes.

**Sarah Ward**  
**Assistant Director Public Realm**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**  
None

Contact for enquires:  
Democratic Services (Committees)  
Room 2.3  
01392 265275