

Scrutiny Committee report



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Section 19 Flood Investigation update

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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	58
Wards affected	Bletchley, Newport Pagnell, Olney, Stony Stratford

Executive summary

Flooding occurred during December 2020 and January 2021 within Milton Keynes affecting 93 properties. Across the wider region over 1000 properties within the Great Ouse and the River Nene Catchment were affected. The flooding impacted communities across several local authority districts: Bedford Borough Council, Buckinghamshire Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, East and West Northamptonshire Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Norfolk County Council.

On becoming aware of a flood incident under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) must decide whether it is necessary or appropriate to investigate further in order to:

- a) identify which risk management authorities (RMAs) or individuals have flood risk management functions in respect of the flooding (it could be for example the Environment Agency if it comes from main rivers); and
- b) establish whether that authority or individual has responded or is proposing to respond to the flood.

Section 19 flood investigations were commissioned to investigate the cause and impacts across: Bletchley, Stony Stratford, Newport Pagnell, Lavendon, Ravenstone, Sherington and Tathall End.

Background

Causes and Impacts: As stated by the EA, December 2020 was a very wet month with a total rainfall of 108mm (195% of the Long-Term Average (LTA) rainfall) across East Anglia.

December 2020 was the second wettest December in this area since the records began in 1981. The consistently above average rainfall in the River Great Ouse catchment during October, November and December 2020 saturated the catchment and contributed to the flooding in Stony Stratford and surrounding areas during Christmas Eve of 2020.

Climate change is leading to an increased frequency of weather extremes throughout the Borough of Milton Keynes. Several recommendations have been made in the Section 19 Flood Investigation.

Section 19 Report Updates

In the previous report written for public scrutiny committee, five recommendations were put forward for the approval of the committee on actions to be taken forward to address flood risk in multiple locations across the borough. The first four of these recommendations are underway. The fifth recommendation specifically concerning Stony Stratford has evolved since the committee meeting, and recommended actions in the final Section 19 flood investigation report for the area have also been modified. The following section will describe these changes and subsequent actions.

Bletchley update

The Section 19 report regarding the single property in Bletchley is nearing completion and is under final review by WSP consultants. Clearance works on the river were conducted in May 2021 by the Environment Agency, which should have ameliorated some of the previous obstructions to conveyance. The cause of flooding in this location to be outlined in the Section 19 report is likely to reflect information already provided to the Public Scrutiny Committee, due to the proximity of the property to the river during a catchment wide fluvial flood event.

Stony Stratford update

The final version of the Section 19 flood investigation report outlines recommendations for several stakeholders involved in flood risk in Stony Stratford. These stakeholders include communities and residents, the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Environment Agency, and Anglian Water. The recommendations include:

- Supporting the community to create a community flood plan
- Collaborating with stakeholders to forward flood mitigation measures
- Enhancing the capacity of Queen Eleanor Street culverts to improve floodplain connectivity

The first of these recommendations is underway, with an initial meeting booked for the 20th October between Stony Stratford Town Council and the flood resilience officers from both the LLFA and the EA. Communications are in preparation to gather support and involvement from residents. Once a community flood plan has been established, the EA will set up a CCTV camera for community monitoring on the River Ouse and will support the flood group with £1500 for flood equipment. Ongoing support will be provided by the LLFA regarding volunteer co-ordination and the community flood plan.

The second recommendation on collaboration to assess flood mitigation options in the area is also underway. A dialogue between the Parks Trust and the LLFA was held regarding vegetation and siltation build up under the arches on the London Road Bridge, with the EA asset maintenance team contacted following this. Works under and around the bridge crossing the main river require further collaborative work to be actioned. Further multi-agency collaboration was undertaken on the 28 September with the relevant flood risk management authorities, the National Flood Forum and Stony Stratford Flood Action Group (FLAG) in attendance.

The final recommendation regarding the culverts on Queen Eleanor Street is also being progressed. The EA have agreed to undertake modelling to assess the local benefit and downstream impacts of removing raised land to increase overflow conveyance away from the High Street and playing fields. Works to remove vegetation have been agreed by both MKC Structures team and the Parks Trust. As the MKC Highways ownership map shows an area wider than the road and culverts, the Parks Trust believe land directly in front of or behind the Queen Eleanor Street culverts is the responsibility of MKC. The MKC Structures team have been doing their usual maintenance work to keep the structures functioning and safe to the public and have agreed to bring their inspections of the culverts forward for this year. However, MKC Structures do not have the resources to extend works beyond their usual maintenance responsibilities. Therefore, the removal of land close to the culverts to allow the free entry and exit of water is a set of work without clear ownership responsibility. The LLFA will progress these works through partnership with the Parks Trust and the IDB, funding the works from the LLFA budget if necessary. The culverts at Tombs Meadow are partially blocked by the pond and walkway area established by Stony in Bloom, but discussions regarding this area concluded that no works will be undertaken there, to maintain the public recreation and biodiversity benefits offered by the pond area.

Newport Pagnell Update

As part of the Section 19 investigation for Newport Pagnell a review has been conducted on how the balancing lakes operate and respond to flooding. The review investigated the flooding in October and December. The data from the October event identified the balancing lakes operating during the heavy rainfall. Based on the data available so far the balancing lakes were not operating during the December flooding.

The Section 19 for Newport Pagnell has not yet been fully finalised; however the following recommendations have been made:

- Better understanding of the capacity of the local drainage systems in partnership with Anglian Water to determine any potential improvement opportunities and capacity issues.

- Better understanding of the hydrological catchment of the River Great Ouse and River Ouzel.
- Further liaison with Anglian Water telemetry engineering team to clarify the thresholds that trigger the operation of gates in the balancing lakes.
- Improve coordination between Community Flood Group, Emergency Planning Team, Environment Agency and other flood management authorities.

Lavendon update

The Section 19 for Lavendon has been completed and a further study to provide recommendations on removing an existing to remove a culvert to reduce the flooding is at the final stages of procurement. There has been a delay to procurement services arising from insurances but this delay has enabled an opportunity to enhance the scope of the study to include an options appraisal to test if building a floodwall will help reduce flooding in this area. The suggestion for building a floodwall has been provided directly by the residents that were flooded as part of the community outreach and engagement.

Lavendon, Ravenstone, Sherington, Tathall End update

Several joint recommendations have been made for Lavendon, Ravenstone, Sherington, Tathall End and these are listed below:

Recommendations for Lead Local Flood Authority:

Work with Flood Risk Management Authorities, riparian/property owners, the community and those affected by flooding. The work should:

- Aim to manage surface water to provide a better standard of protection to Highway infrastructure, and the community. There is consideration to set up a dedicated Drainage Authority approach within the Authority to ensure better overlap and integration between public land owners for drainage including Highways, Housing and Landscaping;
- Identify further surveys, investigations and studies required to locate and record existing drainage systems in the area of the flood incident and the wider catchment;
- Identify all legal responsibilities for drainage and watercourse maintenance in the area of the flood incident and the wider catchment, reminding relevant parties of these responsibilities and the benefits of doing it;
- Identify further surveys, investigations and studies required to fully understand how the flooding occurred and the likelihood of it occurring again;
- Assess the requirement and viability of engineering schemes to ensure the existing infrastructure operates as intended, and to provide a better standard of protection if required. This might include community level flood resilience measures, improving drainage to accommodate extreme rainfall events, providing attenuation storage areas and creating formal overland flood flow routes; and
- Work with the MKC Emergency Planning Team and the EA to support community based Flood Wardens, should they be recruited.
- Work with the MKC Emergency Planning Team, the EA and other flood management authorities to support the community in the production of a Community/Household Emergency and Flood Plan and provide advice to residents and occupiers on how to explore options for property level resilience.

Recommendations for Milton Keynes Highways:

- Undertake regular highway drainage cleansing throughout the catchment. Identify and develop a detailed plan of their assets to share with the LLFA and the community;
- Consider more regular inspection and maintenance of highway drainage systems in areas identified as being at risk on the Surface Water Flood Risk Mapping, and where flooding has occurred;
- Assess the capacity of their assets and identify any areas with insufficient capacity for draining normal runoff from the highway. Where this leads to flood risk to properties improvement works should be considered;
- Assess the suitability of third-party drainage systems accepting discharge from Highway Drainage systems and report any unsatisfactory areas to the LLFA; and
- Assess the viability of works to provide overland flood flow routes from the highway to safe areas, to reduce reliance on drainage systems in extreme rainfall events.

Financial implications

Resourcing will be required to delivery these objectives and additional gully will have resource implications; however, this can be funded through the recent increase in funding for gully cleansing.

Committee to note:

The committee is requested to note that it is proposed that all Section 19 reports will be (pending the completion of the Newport Pagnell Section 19 Report) published on the Milton Keynes Council website on 1 November. The reports are all published in accordance with the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

The committee is requested to note that the Flood and Water Management Team have identified that single one off procurements for Section 19 reports continue to add between 3 – 6 months to the timetable for delivery of Section 19 reports. Public expectation understandably facilitates the need to expedite these and therefore, the F&WM Team will be procuring single supplier from a framework to undertake these reports. This procurement will begin in November 2021. Low risk low yield investigations may be delivered in-house by the team.

The reports will be posted at this location: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/urban-design-and-landscape-architecture-udla/flood-and-water-management-drainage?chapter=4>

All actions identified from the reports will be placed into a tracker which will be reviewed at the Flood and Water Management meeting chaired by Councillor McPake (Milton Keynes Council representative for the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee). Subsequent scrutiny oversight from the Strategic Placemaking Committee can be requested as to the status of these respective actions by location or by recommendation as requested.

List of annexes

Annex A – Lavendon Flood Investigation

Annex B – Ravenstone Flood Investigation
Annex C – Sherington Flood Investigation
Annex D – Tathall End Flood Investigation

List of background papers

None