



## Mayor and Cabinet

### **Response to recommendations on flood risk by the Sustainable Development Select Committee arising from the Committee's meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

**Date:** 16 September 2020

**Key decision:** No.

**Class:** Part 1.

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and the Public Realm

### **Outline and recommendations**

This report sets out the proposed response to recommendations on flood risk by the Sustainable Development Select Committee arising from the Committee's meeting on the 10 March 2020.

The Committee's proposal to seek further information from the Environment Agency will help inform our local work on flood risk. Mayor and Cabinet are recommended to agree the approach proposed in section 4 below.

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report sets out the proposed response to recommendations on flood risk by the Sustainable Development Select Committee arising from the Committee's meeting on the 10 March 2020.
- 1.2. The Committee's recommendations align with current work to review the Council's Flood Risk Strategy and to engage with the Environment Agency's planned update of the National Flood Risk and Coastal Erosion Management Strategy. The Committee's proposal to seek further information from the Environment Agency will help inform our local work on flood risk.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. The Mayor and Cabinet are recommended to agree the approach proposed in section 4 below.

### **3. Policy Context**

- 3.1. The Council's work on flooding supports delivery of the following Corporate Priorities:
- Making Lewisham greener - Everyone enjoys our green spaces, and benefits from a healthy environment as we work to protect and improve our local environment.
  - Building safer communities - Every resident feels safe and secure living here as we work together towards a borough free from the fear of crime
- 3.2. Lewisham Council adopted a Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan in March 2020 intended to support delivery of the aspiration for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2030. Achieving this target is important in the context of the significant risks associated with a failure to limit global warming to below 1.5°C. Nevertheless action to reduce carbon emissions is not in itself enough. The climate is already changing as a result of human activity with implications for extreme temperatures, storms and flooding. The Council's work as a Lead Local Flood Authority therefore needs to align closely with action on the Climate Emergency as well as our work across all aspects of the environment.
- 3.3. The Flood Risk Regulations (2009) and The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) established the Lead Local Flood Authorities function in England and Wales, giving local authorities statutory duties and powers for local flood risk management in relation to ordinary watercourses, groundwater and surface water flooding.
- 3.4. Statutory duties and powers for Lead Local Flood Authorities include:
- Develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management;
  - Producing a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment;
  - Producing a Surface Water Management Plan;
  - Co-operation with other relevant flood risk authorities;
  - Statutory consultee on planning applications;
  - Recording and investigating all 'significant' flooding incidents;
  - Establishing and maintaining a register of structures which may have a significant effect on flood risk; and
  - Administration and enforcement of consents regarding private changes to ordinary watercourses.
- 3.5. The Environment Agency has responsibility for flood risk in relation to main rivers and tidal flooding.

### **4. Select Committee Recommendations and Response**

- 4.1. The Sustainable Development Select Committee discussed an agenda item on flood risk at its meeting on the 10 March 2020. The focus of the agenda item was the Council's statutory role as a Lead Local Flood Authority as determined under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Committee also discussed wider issues relating to flood risk in Lewisham and London.
- 4.2. The Committee referred the following recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet:
- The Committee recommends that the Council should carry out further investigations into the former Willow Tree riding stables site –as an important location for managing flood water runoff and of nature conservation.
  - The Committee believes that additional consideration has to be given to the capacity of the Thames Barrier to protect London from flooding. The Climate

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Emergency – and the impending melting of the Greenland ice shelf may result in rises in sea levels which are far beyond the Environment Agency’s current projections. The Committee intends to carry out further scrutiny of the Environment Agency regarding this issue and it would welcome the support of Mayor and Cabinet in this regard.

- 4.3. Officers are reviewing the Council’s Flood Risk Strategy published in 2016, and are in discussion with the Environment Agency in relation to their plans to update the National Flood Risk and Coastal Erosion Management Strategy. The review of the Council’s Flood Risk Strategy will include all locations across the borough where there are known or potential flood related issues and further investigations into the site at Willow Tree riding stables can be integrated within this work.
- 4.4. The Thames Barrier and other flood-related infrastructure managed by the Environment Agency are critical to the long term resilience of London and any significant flooding events affecting Lewisham are likely to have the biggest impact on our most vulnerable residents. Given the potential importance of investment decisions relating to the Thames and to the other main rivers in the borough: the Ravensbourne, Quaggy and Pool; the Committee’s proposal to seek further information from the Environment Agency will help inform our local work on flood risk.
- 4.5. It is proposed therefore that Mayor and Cabinet agrees the Committee’s recommendations as set out in paragraph 4.2.

## **5. Financial implications**

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however flooding can have severe economic consequences for individuals, organisations and the economy. The Government’s estimate of the economic damages from the severe flooding across the UK in winter 2015/16 was £1.6 billion.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1. The Council’s Constitution sets out the procedures relating to reports referred to the Mayor from a scrutiny committee. The Constitution sets a timescale of two months (not including recess) for a formal reply from receipt of such reports.

## **7. Equalities implications**

- 7.1. Understanding and taking action on flood risks has important equalities implications and severe flooding events have the potential to have the most significant impact on vulnerable individuals and communities. The impact of Hurricane Katrina across New Orleans in 2006 was one of the first widely recognised examples of this in terms of initial vulnerability and the challenge of rebuilding lives and livelihoods following the storm and flood damage.

## **8. Climate change and environmental implications**

- 8.1. Lewisham Council adopted a Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan in March 2020 intended to support delivery of the aspiration for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2030. Achieving this target is important in the context of the significant risks associated with a failure to limit global warming to below 1.5°C. Nevertheless action to reduce carbon emissions is not in itself enough. The climate is already changing as a result of human activity with implications for extreme temperatures, storms and flooding. The Council’s work as a Lead Local Flood Authority needs to align closely with action on the Climate Emergency as well as our work across all aspects of the environment.

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## **9. Crime and disorder implications**

9.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **10. Health and wellbeing implications**

10.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

## **11. Background papers**

11.1. Lewisham Lead Local Flood Authority update for the Sustainable Development Select Committee 10 March 2020  
<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s72419/04%20Flooding%20update%20100320.pdf>

## **12. Report author and contact**

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