

FLOOD RISK ALLEVIATION – MEDWAY STREET FLOOD BARRIER

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Director	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Classification	Public
Wards affected	High Street

Executive Summary

Maidstone Borough Council is a flood risk management authority and works closely with Kent County Council, the Lead Local Flood Authority, and other public authorities to manage flood risk. In constructing the Medway Bridges Gyratory Scheme in 2017, a requirement was identified for a barrier to prevent flood water flowing through the Medway Street underpass and impacting the lower High Street area of the Town Centre. This report describes progress with the project to install the flood barrier.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That progress be noted with the Medway Street Flood Barrier.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee	9 November 2021

FLOOD RISK ALLEVIATION – MEDWAY STREET FLOOD BARRIER

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The decision will support all four strategic plan objectives by reducing flood risk, but in particular supports that strategic priority of making the borough safe, clean and green.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations support the objective of respecting biodiversity and environmental sustainability.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Risk Management	See paragraph 5.1.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Financial	The Council has a capital budget to fund the project described in this report.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Staffing	Staffing support for flood risk alleviation and community resilience is provided by the Head of Commissioning and Business Improvement and her team.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Legal	<p>The initiatives to manage flood risk detailed in this report as proposed by the Medway Flood Partnership will enable the Council to continue to discharge its statutory duties to include the responsibilities outlined below.</p> <p>The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 gives the Environment Agency (EA) a strategic overview of the management of flood and coastal erosion risk. It also</p>	Legal Team

	<p>gives upper tier local authorities, responsibility for preparing and putting in place strategies for managing flood risk from groundwater, surface water and ordinary watercourses in their areas.</p> <p>Kent County Council as the lead local flood authority has the responsibilities referred to above.</p> <p>In addition, Maidstone Council is a risk management authority and can carry out flood risk management works on minor watercourses, working with Lead Local Flood Authorities and others, including through taking decisions on development in their area which ensure that risks are effectively managed.</p> <p>The public authorities with responsibility for flood risk management are obliged to have regard to the EA's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England and KCC's strategy when taking action to tackle flooding in their area.</p> <p>All risk management public authorities have a duty to co-operate with each other and to share data. to deliver flood risk management better to the benefit of their communities.</p> <p>The recommendations in this report are in accordance with the statutory obligations and the requirement for co-operation between the public authorities when discharging their functions under the 2010 Act.</p> <p>The recommendations also fall within the Policy and</p>	
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	Resources functions, which includes (1) risk management strategy; (2) emergency and resilience planning.	
Privacy and Data Protection	Data collected as part of projects described in this report, e.g., data about individual households affected by flooding, is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act.	Policy and Information Manager
Equalities	Consideration is given to the equalities impacts as part of each individual projects.	Senior Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	The report recommendations support the public health agenda by reducing the risk of individuals being affected by flooding.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	Flood risk has an impact on community safety generally. The measures outlined in the report will help to achieve increased community resilience and reduce the risk to health and safety during incidences of flooding.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Procurement	Council and statutory procurement requirements will be met in relation to all procurement and commissioning carried out as part of flood risk management work.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Climate change requires the implementation of adaptations that will allow communities to manage the impact. The project described in this report is such an adaptation and will help to manage flood risk in Maidstone town centre.	Biodiversity & Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Background

- 2.1 Maidstone Borough Council is a flood risk management authority and works closely with Kent County Council (KCC), the Lead Local Flood Authority, and

other public authorities to manage flood risk. The Medway Flood Partnership has provided a formal framework for joint working in the Medway catchment area since 2017. The authorities in the Medway Flood Partnership collectively adopt a holistic approach to flood risk, recognising that managing the risk comprises a number of different elements:

Capital investment in schemes that reduce flood risk. For example, Maidstone Council has recently completed a £1.5 million scheme to reinforce the dam at the western end of Mote Park Lake, thus protecting the town centre from the flooding that would arise from failure of the dam.

Ongoing maintenance, for example of drains and gullies.

Natural flood management schemes, which attempt to mitigate the impact of floods upstream. Under this heading, Maidstone Council has funded leaky dams which reduce the volume of water flowing down the Hogg Stream, Headcorn, into the River Beult and from there into the River Medway.

Community resilience, which recognises that flooding will occur, and that communities and households need to be prepared and able to manage in the event of floods. Flooding is projected to increase in frequency due to the impacts of climate change (eg. Heavier rain falls and storms) and long-term, adaptation, resilience and awareness raising is part of MBCs Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.

This report concerns a project under the first heading, capital investment.

Medway Street Flood Barrier - Project Initiation

- 2.2 Maidstone Council has developed a scheme to manage flood risk in the area of Medway Street, Maidstone. The scheme was originally conceived as part of the Bridges Gyratory Scheme, which eased traffic flow on the two road bridges in the centre of Maidstone by creating northbound lanes on the A229 on the eastern (town centre) side of the River Medway and was completed in 2017.
- 2.3 Prior to construction of the Bridges Gyratory Scheme, there had been flooding in the Lower High Street area, which was attributed to the flow of water through the subways beneath the A229. As a consequence, the two subways either side of the High Street were blocked up. The Medway Street subway, which also acts as a conduit for flood water to reach the lower High Street area, was kept open as it was considered important to retain pedestrian access to the riverside. However, this led to a residual flood risk. Appendix 1 shows the area at risk of flooding.
- 2.4 Originally a flood door at the entrance to the subway was identified as a solution which would allow access to the river during normal conditions, but could be closed during periods of flood. However, as the design was developed, this option proved too costly, due to its impact on the structural integrity of the subway itself. An alternative, more cost-effective solution was identified, namely fitting a glass flood barrier in place of the existing pedestrian barrier opposite Drakes, with additional returns constructed to contain flood water. This is shown at Appendix 2.

- 2.5 The Environment Agency has advised that a glass flood barrier would provide flood protection to the Drakes public house area in excess of the 2% Annual Exceedance Probability event (AEP - also commonly known as 50Yr return period).
- 2.6 There is an additional risk of floodwater entering this area from the A229 Fairmeadow carriageway from the junction with St Faith's Street. In this event, flood water would then flow south past the Fremlin car park and potentially over Medway Street into the Drakes area by the subway. However, flooding could be prevented under the events >1.33% AEP (75yr) by introducing demountable defences at key points. The demountable barriers would be procured and maintained in readiness for deployment as demanded by flood warnings.
- 2.7 Key principles of the scheme were agreed by the Bridges Gyratory Project Team, led by KCC Project Manager Russell Boorman. Maidstone Borough Council undertook to deliver the scheme, using residual funding from the Bridges Gyratory project.

Scheme Development

- 2.8 Development of the scheme has unfortunately been much delayed, in spite of agreement in principle in 2017 by KCC and the Council to go ahead with it and the availability of funding. Amongst the factors contributing to the delay have been: outsourcing of project management, given lack of capacity in-house to manage the scheme; changes in personnel amongst the project managers; replacement of Amey, who were originally contracted to design the scheme, by Evans & Langford; delays in processing the AIP (Approval in Principle) submission, which is required by KCC for highways structures.
- 2.9 Recent discussions with KCC have focused around the following issues:
- Confirmation that the scheme as designed is the optimum solution
 - Need for a commuted sum for ongoing maintenance and operation.
- 2.10 Further consideration of the scheme and external consultation confirms that the proposed scheme is the most effective means of addressing the flood risk identified. The need for the scheme has meanwhile been reinforced by more recent experience with flood events.
- 2.11 A commuted sum would be payable to KCC if the flood barrier were to be handed over by MBC and KCC were to maintain it. Given the relatively low level of maintenance required, and MBC's existing experience of responding to flood events locally, it is now proposed that the flood barrier remains as an MBC asset and takes responsibility for it. An assessment will be undertaken of the likely ongoing costs and risks involved before making a final commitment.
- 2.12 Confirmation has been obtained from MBC Planning that planning consent is not required, as it is covered by a General Permitted Development Order for works required by a local authority in connection with the operation of a public service administered by them. Work is now ongoing on obtaining the other

necessary consents to enable work to commence and on arranging for it to be commissioned, including the appointment of an Employer's Agent for the works.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option 1:** To continue to work with partners in the Medway Flood Partnership to deliver the Medway Street Flood Barrier.
 - 3.2 **Option 2:** To cease work on the project.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is Option 1 as this will deliver a reduction in flood risk.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 This report deals with a specific flood risk in the Medway Street area, which would be addressed by the proposed Flood Barrier. Risks associated with project delivery would be addressed through use of the Council's project management methodology, which includes the maintenance of a Project Risk Register.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Progress on flood risk management work generally is reported to Policy and Resources Committee twice a year. These reports have included reference to the Medway Street flood barrier project.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The Council will proceed with implementing the actions described in the report.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix 1: Map showing area of flood risk

Appendix 2: Drawing of proposed barrier

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.