

Executive Member for the Environment

6 March 2017

Report of the Corporate Director of Economy & Place

Flood Resilience Grant Scheme Review

Summary

1. City of York Council has administered a range of flood resilience grants following the Boxing Day 2015 floods, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have provided funds for council tax and business rate exemptions and recovery and resilience grant payments to homes and businesses.
2. Recovery grants were administered in the early weeks following the floods to almost 400 homes and more than 170 businesses, council tax and business rate exemptions have been administered on application to many of these properties.
3. The provision of flood resilience or resistance measures to homes and businesses is a lengthy and technical process, this has been administered by a range of CYC officers and almost 200 applications have been approved to a value of £758k.
4. A recommendation is made for a 31 May 2017 closure date for new applications to the scheme, further flood resilience programmes will be considered as part of funding agreed in response to the York Flood Inquiry report recommendations.

Recommendations

5. The Executive Member is asked to:
 - 1) consider the review of the flood resilience grant process to date which is outlined in this report.
 - 2) agree to the recommended closure of the flood resilience grant application process on 31st May 2017, this will be widely

communicated and we will continue to work with any applicants of approved schemes after this time.

- 3) Agree to the recommendations of the York Flood Inquiry and the 9th February 2017 Executive meeting to target additional funding subject to the Council budget process to reinforce flood resilience in the city.

Reason: Delivery of the flood resilience grant has helped a wide range of homes and businesses prepare for future flood events, further development of flood risk resilience will move to the delivery of the recommendations of the Flood Inquiry.

Background

6. The flooding in late December 2015 followed an intense period of rainfall across November and December due to the impacts of Storms Desmond and Eva. Record river levels were observed in many river catchments across the north of England. More than 4000 homes and 2000 businesses flooded across Yorkshire with 453 properties and 174 businesses flooded in York.
7. Government have previously initiated the flood resilience grant scheme following the 2013 tidal surge/winter 2014 Somerset Levels flooding, Government reopened the scheme and administered direct funding to all authorities who suffered flooding as a consequence of storms Eva and Desmond.
8. Formal guidance for authorities distributing the grant was slow to be developed and no further support was given to authorities to administer the grant, the additional impact upon current staffing was: 1 FTE technical support officer, 0.4FTE Senior Technical Support Officer, 0.1-0.2FTE Housing Standards and Adaptations Manager, Lead Local Flood Authority team technical input c. 0.25FTE, input from Listed Building officers, Input from Two Ridings Community Foundation / Make it York /Marketing and communications team / Insurance team / Building Maintenance.
9. The grant distribution process is a lengthy process dependant on property owners working with insurers and builders to ensure that the building is dried out and able to accommodate resilience measures as part of wider reinstatement works.

10. The measures themselves are often difficult for home and business owners to understand, the concepts of increased flood resilience versus flood resistance need a high degree of technical input to ensure any measure will work effectively and are accepted by the property owner.

Consultation

11. We have promoted the grant in a wide range of CYC and partner led drop in sessions – more than 40 hours of sessions – online, broadcast and print media communications and the Flood Advisory Service display trailer was brought to the city to promote flood resilience and the grant, we part funded a case worker who has dealt directly with flooded residents and businesses. The recommendation regarding the scheme closure will be widely communicated, if approved.

Options

12. The following options are available to the Executive Member:

- i) Agree to the recommendation made in section 3 of this report, the recommendations are based on the performance and closure of a resilience grant scheme that has been well communicated and delivered widely
- ii) The Executive Member accepts the review of the delivery of the resilience grant to date but recommends alternate closure dates for the scheme.

Analysis

13. An overview of the resilience grant scheme to date is provided below:

Confirmed number of internal flooded properties – 453

Number of flood recovery grants paid (£500 per household) – 395

Value of flood recovery grants paid out - £197,500

Council tax exemptions issued following application (to April 2016)
- £274,824

Council tax exemptions issued following application (since April 2016) - £97,711

Confirmed number of flooded businesses – 174

Number of recovery grants paid following application (£2.5k per business) – 114

Value of recovery grants paid following application - £221,674

Business rate exemptions issued following application (to April 2016) - £1,353,170

Business rate exemptions issued following application (since April 2016) - £55,305

Number of flood resilience grants approved following application – 197

Value of flood resilience grants approved following application - £758,160

Value of flood resilience grants paid out following completion of works - £498,142

14. Flood recovery grants of £500 and £2,500 were administered to flooded homes and businesses respectively, the majority of household grants were directly paid via council tax payment accounts, where this was not possible property owners were able to apply to the council for payment. The grants for businesses were administered, following application, by Make it York.
15. A range of grant applications remain live on our system, some have had the interim surveyor payment progressed and others are awaiting formal quotes or are formal expressions of interest. These 102 'pipeline' schemes will be supported through the application process if the scheme closure recommendations are approved.
16. DCLG are not formally recommending a closure date to administering authorities but they will be carrying out a final reconciliation of funding to authorities in the summer. It is therefore important that administering authorities encourage applicants to deliver schemes and make final claims before this date. The recommendation for the receipt of final applications in section 3 of this report is made to ensure applications have enough time to provide final applications and for works to be completed before the summer.

Council Plan

17. The delivery of the flood resilience grant scheme ensures that homes and businesses in the city are more resilient to future flood events and helps to deliver the Council Plan priority 'a prosperous city for all'.

Implications

Financial

18. Funding for the resilience grant scheme was paid directly to CYC immediately following the floods, this was based on flooded property information available at that time and a final reconciliation of funding balances will ensure affected authorities receive an accurate final settlement. DCLG have confirmed that the final reconciliation of the funding will occur in the summer and it is therefore important to set a closure date for the scheme based on this.

Other

19. The flood resilience funding scheme has been widely communicated and CYC officers have worked with a wide range of affected home and business owners. There are still some outstanding applications for resilience works but demand has slowed and many applicants are back in their homes and are considering resilience as an additional set of measures. It is therefore considered reasonable for a closure date to be set, this will allow any remaining applicants to make decisions on how they are to take forward any existing expressions of interest or applications.

20. CYC have committed to continue to deliver flood resilience works subject to the Council budget process in response to the York Flood Inquiry recommendations that were agreed at the 9th February Executive meeting.

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Report
Approved

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annexes

None

Abbreviations

DCLG Department for Communities and Local Government
FTE Full Time Equivalent