

Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	7 October 2025
Report of:	Dave Atkinson, Director of Environment and Regulatory Services
Portfolio of:	Councillor Jenny Kent (Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Emergency)

Decision Report: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Subject of Report

1. York has a history of flooding. There are currently 8,478 properties at risk from main rivers and 16,566 properties at risk from local flood risk sources (Surface water, ordinary watercourses and groundwater).
2. Significant flooding occurred in the city on Boxing Day 2015 which saw 627 households and businesses affected and led to more than £100million of funding to improve the future resilience of the cities defences. Further significant floods occurred in 2000 (highest on record), and 2012 in September and November. More recently surface water flooding affected large areas of York in 2018.
3. City of York Council as Lead Local Flood Authority is required by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) to “*develop, maintain, apply and monitor a local flood risk strategy*”. City of York Council first published the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) in 2015.
4. Section 9 of the FWMA requires LLFAs to “develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in its area”. Local flood risk is defined as flood risk from surface runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses flooding. Due to the interactions between flood risks from a variety of sources, our strategy looks at all flood risks in the Council area.

5. The strategy is included in full in Annex 1 of this report. Executive are recommended to approve the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

Benefits and Challenges

By approving the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) this enable all stakeholders and communities to have the opportunity to understand the roles and responsibilities of the Risk Management Authorities tasked with managing flood risk within York. This will enable them to seek out resolutions and hold Risk management Authorities to account. The LFRMS will also enable communities to be at the heart of the decision-making process in protecting York from flood risk.

The actions contained within the LFRNS are not legally binding and there is no legal requirement, for example, for partner organisations to fund or part fund any schemes that involve multiple sources of flooding e.g. main river, sewers etc

Policy Basis for Decision

6.

Affordability;

The implementation of flood schemes is based on a cost/benefit basis and any scheme is assessed in terms of the avoided damages i.e. benefits being greater than the costs. Each scheme will include a needs based assessment with a series of options identifying the most cost beneficial option.

Environment;

City of York Councils 'One City, for all' plan sets out the priorities for 2023 – 2027. Part of this includes a Climate Change Strategy with the aim of being net zero by 2030. A key component of this plan is '*Sustainability: Cutting carbon, enhancing the environment for our future*' with plans to '*Develop an Adaptations Strategy to prepare the city for the impact of climate change*'. A range of adaptive measures relating to flood risk such as early warning systems, flood defences and measures within and upstream of York to '*Slow the Flow*' will be integral to this plan.

City of York's Local Transport Strategy sets out a vision in which York is more climate/flood resilient with improved health and well-

being through place shaping. The incorporation of blue green infrastructure, referring to a network of green spaces (and 'blue' water systems) is embodied within the Movement and Places Plan whereby opportunities exist to incorporate blue green infrastructure e.g. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as part of improvements to the public realm including parks/open spaces and active travel infrastructure.

Equalities and Human Rights

The provision of flood risk measures is based on risk to flooding rather than any protected characteristics. The Council intends to implement flood resilience and mitigation measures and the impacts will be positive for people, property and infrastructure.

Health Inequalities

Through the safeguarding of existing and protection of future communities, the strategy supports the well being of those who live work and visit York.

Financial Strategy Implications

7. The Strategy Action Plan (Section 2) contains costs which are either estimates and not approved (with confirmation of a funding source where applicable) or have been approved and the funding source is identified within the Action Plan. The Council also has a capital programme of works.
8. The Local Flood Risk Strategy will assist in aligning with National and Regional Government Strategies in addition to partner ambitions e.g. Yorkshire Water, York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority. The Government announced funding of £4.2 billion towards flood defence spending over three years (2026 - 2029). The Council will seek opportunities through these funding streams and any others that come forward to ensure costs to the Council.

Recommendation and Reasons

9. Recommendation: that Executive delegates authority to the Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services to commence public consultation, as referenced in the report.

Reason: to comply with consultation requirements.

Background

10. We have a long association with flood risk and future risks are predicted to increase due to climate change. It is essential that we continue to develop ways to minimise current risks and ensure future development is managed to ensure that risk is not increased. Flooding is a natural process and while it is not technically, economically or environmentally feasible to prevent all flooding, a risk based approach targets resources to those areas where they can have the most beneficial effect in reducing its impact. Several bodies have responsibility for flood risk management and historically it has been difficult to take a coordinated or strategic approach in its management, particularly at a local level.
11. The aim of the strategy is to understand flood risk from all sources in the city, reduce its likelihood and impact on residents and visitors and take the opportunity to improve the city environment. It is a living document which will provide an ongoing comprehensive framework for managing York's flood risk. As new technical information associated with flood risk management evolves, and real events occur, it will need to change to take this new information into account.
12. The York Flood Risk Management Strategy comprises a collection of six guidance documents which aim to advise and direct the reader to further information to increase knowledge and understanding of flood risk management. These are bound together by the Policy Framework and Strategic Action Plan sections.

Consultation Analysis

13. This is a draft strategy for consultation with internal and external partners, prior to public consultation. Public consultation documents will be compiled following review of all comments and a period of public consultation events (12 weeks) will follow approval, to consult, by Executive in October 2025.
14. To date the strategy has been reviewed by the Head of Service, Director of Service and in addition the Portfolio Holder for Flood

Risk (Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Emergency). In addition, key stakeholders and Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) were sent a draft of the Strategy on the 20/06/2025 and a meeting was held with key stakeholders and RMAs on the 30/07/2025 to review the strategy. Updates from these stakeholders have been incorporated.

15. It is proposed to publish the full strategy in late 2025 and it will be fully reviewed in line with the six year Flood Risk Regulations cycle. It is intended that changes and updates to the individual guidance notes (Sections 3-8) would be agreed and endorsed through the relevant committee, scrutiny or member decision making session. Any changes or updates to the Policy Framework or Strategic Action Plan would be brought to Executive for approval. The Strategy and its action plan will be monitored by the North Yorkshire Flood Risk Partnership.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

16.

Option 1

Councillors do not accept the report at Annex 1 in its current form and approach and recommendations are made to steer the development of a fully revised strategy.

Advantages – the form and content of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is partly dictated by the requirements and expectations of the Flood and Water Management Act. A separate approach could be developed to ensure the strategy delivers a wider role and remit.

Disadvantages – There is a risk of non-compliance and limitations in linking with future funding strategies for all partners. The strategy in its current form already makes links to wider programmes and strategies.

Option 2

Councillors accept the need for a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in its current form at Annex 1 and make recommendations and comments to be incorporated into the final report

Advantages – the strategy delivers the Councils requirements as part of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) and forms an important tool to identify and attract future flood risk funding.

Disadvantages – further opportunity for comments and recommendations may be required.

Organisational Impact and Implications

- ***Financial*** - The Strategic Action Plan at Section 2 of the strategy includes estimated costs for interventions. This is a needs based assessment based on varying existing investment programmes from a range of partners. Delivering the individual interventions will require formal funding bids and assessments to be developed by all partners. Individual appraisal studies will be commenced to take this forward. The Council also has a capital programme of works.
- ***Human Resources (HR)*** - There are no HR implications contained within this report
- ***Legal*** - The realisation and delivery of the range of flood risk management interventions is underpinned by a range of flood risk legislation and guidance. This is detailed in Section 5 of the strategy and all individual appraisals and studies will be progressed within this legislative context. In addition, any contracts to be commissioned for any interventions and projects detailed in the strategy will require the advice and input of Legal Services. Likewise, any external grant funding for any interventions and projects detailed within the strategy will need to be assessed by Legal Services to ensure compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 at the earliest opportunity, and any grant funding terms and conditions will require the advice and input of Legal Services.
- ***Procurement*** – There are projects proposals that have been identified within the Strategy Action Plan. Some are being progressed and reviewed by Procurement where as others will need to follow procurement guidelines when initiated.
- ***Health and Wellbeing*** – The Strategy is focussed on improving the wellbeing of residents and businesses within York through flood resilience measures. It is acknowledged flooding causes major health issues and again these will

have a disproportionate impact on disabled and older people as well as anyone else prone to disease and infection.

- ***Environment and Climate action*** – Climate change is likely to increase the frequency and intensity of flooding events. The ambitions of the Climate Change Strategy to become a net zero and climate ready city, align with those of the Local Flood Management Strategy. The Climate Action Plan includes actions relating to flood management, acknowledging this as a key requirement for being a climate ready city.
- ***Affordability*** – The Strategy Action Plan at Section 2 has indicative costs associated with a series of measures. As and when these are developed they will be brought forward for scrutiny and review by the Council to assess their affordability.
- ***Equalities and Human Rights*** – Please see the attached Equalities Impact Assessment. Whilst the Local Flood Risk management strategy is to manage risk, which is universal, it should be noted the impacts will be very individual with the resilience of some more limited e.g. older people or those who are disabled due to the impacts on for example access more limited access during times of flooding. These issues are recognised within the EiA and the LFRMS.
- ***Data Protection and Privacy*** – The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.
- ***Communications*** – The draft strategy will follow a period of public consultation following a review of the strategy internally and with key stakeholders. Communications will play a vital role in supporting the implementation of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy by ensuring clear, consistent, and timely messaging. This includes raising public awareness of flood risks, promoting community

engagement opportunities, and facilitating updates on progress and decisions.

- **Economy** – The Strategy Action Plan set out in Section 2 includes ongoing projects and proposed projects that will support the economy of York through the provision of flood schemes to provide resilience and mitigation to properties, people and infrastructure.

Risks and Mitigations

17. The main risk is non-compliance with the Council’s statutory duty to “develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in its area”. In addition, this will risk the ability of the Council to secure opportunities to fund local flood risk schemes to ensure well being of residents and sustain and improve the economy of York.

Wards Impacted

This Strategy covers all wards within the administrative boundary of York.

Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

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Background Papers:

Annexes

Annex 1 – York Flood Risk Management Strategy

Annex 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment