

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

27 May 2009

Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 AYLESFORD FLOOD ALLEVIATION PARTNERSHIP

Summary

This report notes recent flooding in Aylesford and invites members to endorse the Borough Council's continuing involvement in reducing flood risk in the village.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 For many years now, flooding has occurred periodically in the centre of Aylesford village and it has been the objective of the Council, together with other agencies, to find a way of mitigating flood risk by devising and implementing physical works and in raising awareness of local action that can be taken by the community.
- 1.1.2 Just over three years ago, the Aylesford Stream was re-designated as a 'main river' by the Environment Agency (EA) and added to the Statutory Main River Map. This resulted in the role of Land Drainage Operating Authority being transferred from the Borough Council to the EA and the stream becoming subject to EA byelaws and policies.
- 1.1.3 Following 'enmainment', the Borough Council and the EA jointly commissioned a hydrological / hydraulic model of the stream and its catchment in order that options for flood alleviation could be evaluated. The Council's equal share of the cost of the model was funded from the Capital Plan allocation for this scheme.
- 1.1.4 The EA must, however, now take on the lead role and I do not envisage the Council making further capital contributions to the main flood alleviation scheme. Nevertheless the Council should continue to play a key role in providing community leadership as well as helping facilitate a long term solution through the practical help, advice and expertise we can bring to this project.

1.2 Recent Events

- 1.2.1 A significant flood occurred in February this year which followed a period of several years without a serious flooding event. A further flood then occurred in April.
- 1.2.2 In the wake of the first flood, a public meeting was held at which residents voiced their concerns to officers of the EA and this Council. Essentially the main concerns were the usefulness of flood warnings, the emergency response to flooding and securing long term alleviation from flooding.
- 1.2.3 The public meeting saw the formation of a flood action group comprised of local residents and this group has already been active in reviewing the village flood response plan in conjunction with the Parish and Borough Councils.

1.3 The Way Forward

- 1.3.1 Shortly after the public meeting, I wrote to the EA's Area Manager for Kent and East Sussex suggesting a partnership approach to flood alleviation in Aylesford on a similar basis to the model that served so well at East Peckham.
- 1.3.2 The Environment Agency's Area Manager has very appropriately agreed to take the lead on the project. An initial partnership meeting is due to be held at Kings Hill on 14 May. Other parties invited to the first meeting are the flood action group, Aylesford Parish Council and Kent Highway Services. I shall update members as to the proceedings on the night of the Advisory Board meeting.
- 1.3.3 I am hoping and expecting that the product of the partnership will be to formulate and deliver a physical scheme of the Aylesford stream to bring relief to flooding in the village at times of high risk. This will require a significant degree of technical justification, a successful bid for funding from the EA area programme, and possible DEFRA, and a good deal of community support. I am also expecting that the partnership will bring clarity to the emergency flood response in the short term.
- 1.3.4 The benefits to the Council of continuing involvement in this project will be:
- To ensure that our previous investment in examining the feasibility of a flood mitigation scheme eventually bears fruit
 - To secure an acceptable level of flood risk management in the village
 - To support local members and through the partnership arrangements to focus community activity on a practical and positive approach to flood mitigation and response.
 - To contribute the benefit of knowledge and experience gained prior to EA involvement
 - To resolve a long standing problem once and for all

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 It is likely that the partnership will be established through a memorandum of understanding, or similar, rather than anything more formal.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 There are no current proposals which would impact upon capital or revenue budgets arising from forming the partnership, although staff resources will need to be dedicated to the project.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 By not being involved in the partnership, the Council would lose the benefits identified above. In the long term, a reduction in flood risk would bring key benefits to local people and relieve an ongoing problem that causes periodic stress in the community and in itself demands resources from time to time.

1.7 Policy Considerations

- 1.7.1 Working with the Environment Agency to reduce the risk of flooding in Aylesford is a stated aim in the Corporate Performance Plan.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 The Board is invited **TO ENDORSE** the Council's continuing involvement in reducing flood risk in Aylesford and the role in the Flood Alleviation Partnership described in the report.

The Director of Planning Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

Steve Humphrey
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