

To: City Executive Board
Date: 24 March 2016
Report of: Executive Director Community Services
Title of Report: Oxford and Abingdon Flood Alleviation Scheme

| Summary and recommendations | |
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| Purpose of report: | To seek authority to enter into an agreement with the Environment Agency in regard to funding the above scheme, and to seek project approval for the scheme. |
| Key decision: | Yes |
| Executive Board Member: | Councillor Bob Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development |
| Corporate Priority: | Clean and Green Oxford |
| Policy Framework: | Corporate Plan and budget |
| Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board resolves to: | |
| 1. | Authorise the Council's entry into the proposed agreement with the Environment Agency, as described in this report, under which the Council would play an active role in the establishment of the business case of the Oxford and Abingdon flood alleviation scheme, and provide funding to a capped sum. |
| 2. | Grant Project Approval for the Council's involvement in the Oxford and Abingdon flood alleviation scheme, as described in this report. |

| Appendices |
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Introduction and background

- At its meeting on 29 January 2015, the City Executive Board authorised the Council's entry into a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with the Environment Agency in regard to bringing forward a major flood relief scheme for the city ("the Scheme"). Under the provisions of the MOU, the City Council indicated its general support for the Scheme and its intention to provide certain funding in support of it, subject to contributions also being made by other relevant bodies, and the contract conditions being otherwise satisfactory.

2. In the period since January 2015, the arrangements for the Oxford and Abingdon flood alleviation scheme have been further discussed between the interested parties, and progress has been made in regard to finalising the scheme design and securing the total funding package, with the result that a formal agreement between the City Council and the Environment Agency has now been drafted. This Agreement formalises the relationship between the parties in regard to progressing and implementing the Scheme, and the Council is now being asked to formally commit to the Scheme by executing the Agreement.

Financial Issues

3. In accordance with the proposals set out in the MOU, the proposed Agreement commits the Council to provide funding totalling, but capped at, £1.5m. It is proposed that the first tranche of funding be drawn down in the financial year 2015/16.
4. The Council has budgeted for this contribution in the capital programme over the next 5 years, profiled to match the expected drawdown by the Environment Agency.
5. The total cost of the scheme is currently estimated to be £140m, most of which is funded via central government sources.

Legal Issues

6. In contrast to the MOU, the proposed Agreement would create a legally enforceable arrangement between the Council and the Environment Agency. The Agreement sets out the proposed governance arrangements for the scheme, which are thorough and sophisticated. Under these the Council would be represented on the proposed Programme Board.

Other implications

7. For the Council to be able to play an active role in guiding the implementation of the Scheme and the proposed flood alleviation measures, it will be necessary for it to become part in the Scheme by entering into the Agreement with the Environment Agency and by providing the specified funding.

8. Environmental

There will inevitably be significant environmental implications arising from the implementation of the Scheme, and these will need to be dealt with by the Programme Board as and when arising.

Equalities impact

9. No Equalities Impact Assessment is considered necessary due to the nature of the Scheme proposed.

10. Risk

The risk involved to the Council is primarily financial, due to its commitment to make a substantial financial contribution to the Scheme, but this risk should be mitigated by the provisions of the Agreement itself and the Council's on-going presence on the Programme Board.

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Background Papers: None

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