

ITEM 18: APPENDIX M

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 01/04/2014

Title:

WBC OWNED DITCHES – IMPROVING FLOOD RESILIENCE

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Julia Potts]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

To request that the Executive agrees to extra resources to ensure all ditches and culverts on Council owned land are in a good condition, in order to reduce the potential flood risk to residents and roads and improve the Councils flood resilience.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Value for Money

By mapping out all known ditches and culverts on Council owned land, the Council has accurate quantities to ensure we are getting value for money from our grounds maintenance contractor, Glendale.

Understanding Residents Needs

By ensuring all ditches and culverts on Waverley-owned land are mapped out, we are helping to minimise the risk of potential flooding to properties and roads across the borough. The recent very wet weather conditions have highlighted that flood risks are a major concern of our residents.

Financial Implications:

The report advocates allocating £35,000 from the unspent balance of the provision for urgent schemes carried forward from the 2013/14 Capital Programme to cover this proposed expenditure.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Introduction

1. The country has just experienced the wettest winter on record, with the resultant flooding causing significant damage to roads and property across the country. This has highlighted the need to ensure all watercourses and ditches on Council owned land are regularly maintained to reduce any potential flood risk.

2. The Council owns significant amounts of land within the borough of which many sites have networks of ditches and culverts crossing our land and adjoining neighbouring land. However there has never been any formal mapping exercise to identify the full extent or quantity of ditches undertaken by the Council.
3. Due to the very wet winter and also the reports of significant flooding to the area, several emergency ditch works operations were required to be undertaken to prevent flooding to residents property and local roads from Council owned ditches.
4. As a result of this, the Parks & Countryside service recently embarked on an exercise to map out ditches and culverts on Council owned land (excluding housing tenant gardens). This data has now been added onto the Councils Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping system, so that there is clarity over the quantity of ditches and culverts the Council owns.
5. The majority of these ditches are to be found on Countryside land, notably in the Cranleigh, Shamley Green and Wonersh areas, mainly consisting of roadside verges or common land bordering roads and properties. A smaller quantity of ditches can be found in areas of Hale, Weybourne, Frensham, Farnham and Haslemere.
6. However despite all the mapping work undertaken of ditches, there is still further work required to identify the initial works needed to restore all the ditches to a good state of repair before they can be considered for regular annual maintenance as per contract requirement. The Countryside rangers are currently visiting all the ditches and culverts to identify the initial capital works required and which areas should be prioritised first.
7. Through the Council's star chamber process last year, the Parks & Countryside had already identified a requirement to resource some £10,000 (Agreed by Council) to fund essential ditch repair works to high priority areas that were identified as a flood risk to roads. Additionally, the Customer, IT and Office services section identified a need for £25,000 to assess the condition and serviceability of piped water courses across the borough.
8. However, there is still a need to resource further capital outlay so that all the open ditches identified through the mapping exercise will be put into good condition. It is anticipated that a further £35,000 will be required.

Conclusion

9. Whilst it is recognised that a resource is required to ensure that all ditches are in a good condition, the view of officers is that this work is essential to ensure that the Council increases its flood resilience and is reducing the potential risk of flooding to properties or roads.
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Recommendation

It is recommended to the Council that £35,000 of capital funds be approved from the urgent schemes provision to restore all Waverley-owned ditches to a good condition.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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