Task Group

Councillor(s)
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1. **Background**

1.1 During Summer 2013 members set up a task group to review the Council’s flood risk management to ensure that the risk of flooding in the borough is dealt with in-conjunction with partners such as the Environment Agency, United Utilities, the community and individual households.

1.2 The report and recommendations were presented to the Cabinet in Autumn 2013 and Cabinet responded back to the Scrutiny Panel in Spring 2014. There has been an update to the Panel with regards to the recommendations and their progress and members requested that this be revisited.

1.3 A flood is defined as when water covers land that is normally dry. The risk of flooding to any particular area can be increased as a consequence of poor maintenance resulting in blockages or other types of failure of watercourses, sewers or drainage systems. It can also be a consequence of poor development and planning and inappropriate development in and around floodplains.

1.4 The flooding events in September 2012 in St Helens were mainly due to Main Rivers overflowing their banks or high flood flow levels (fluvial flooding) and were the worst for over a decade and prompted the Scrutiny to look at this more closely.

2. **Findings**

2.1 The Council and its partners have been working closely during the past two years to limit the effects of this type of event happening again within the St.Helens area. They are also working on the bigger picture of the Mersey heading from St.Helens down through Warrington and Widnes to the River Mersey which has a knock on effect to events in St.Helens.

2.2 The task group visited three sites across St.Helens in April 2015;  

- Milton Street / Bell Lane, Sutton
2.3 **Milton Street / Bell Lane, Sutton**

2.4 This area had been an issue for a number of years, with highway, property and agricultural flooding causing major problems. Following the weather events in 2012 there was substantial flooding in the area caused by a couple of factors.

2.5 A third party study was undertaken by JBA to identify the best option to reduce potential future flooding at this location and improvements to the existing ditch course, bank protection work and to increase the culvert capacity underneath Bell Lane. Parties included in the works were St.Helens Council, local farmer, residents, allotment holders and Environment Agency.

2.6 The task group were very impressed with the works undertaken at this location and spoke to local residents who also said the work had made a great difference to the area. Although it was noted that the parts of the new wooden fence around the area are repeatedly being stolen and that the matting protection / seed put down to stabilise the bank and promote plant growth has recently been set on fire.

Further work is required to stabilise bank downstream of the Milton Street Culvert.

Before ....

![Before image]

After the work…

![After image]
2.7 *Griffin Close, Eccleston*

2.8 This flood area was identified following the extreme weather in 2012, there was a substantial bank collapse to the water course which included part of a rights of way footpath and residential garden fencing to a bordering property.

2.9 Once it was established who’s responsibility it was to undertake the work it was duly undertaken and included liaison with St.Helens Council, local farmer, residents, United Utilities and the Environment Agency. The result is a much safer, cleaner and functional site that will decrease the risk of future flooding incidents.

Before…

After the work….
2.10 Sankey Valley / Blackbrook & Westend Road, Blackbrook

2.11 The flooding events at Blackbrook in September 2012 were one of the worst incidents during that period of intense weather in September 2012. Flooding to several residential properties, The Ship Inn and garage caused tens of thousands of pounds worth of damage. The flood had been caused by several factors all of which had to be investigated.

2.12 The task group learnt that a number of scheme ideas and proposals have been identified which will reduce the risk of flooding in this area again. These schemes are being evaluated as a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with parities including St.Helens Council, Environment Agency, Natural England, Healthy Waterways Trust, United Utilities, Residents, National Flood Forum and the Canals and Rivers Trust being involved.

2.13 The Environment Agency has supplied properties with level protection such as flood doors. The partnership has also developed a small trial scheme of debris dams at the back of the old slitting mill in Sankey Valley park and is considering using further land to attenuate water along Black Brook and Clispley Brook. There are also ongoing highways investigations into further property protection.

2.14 The task group was again pleased to see that the Council and its partners are working together and that residents will feel that progress is being made to tackle these issues.

Before…. West End Road

After the work….Sankey Valley
2.15 Work will continue to be undertaken and the longer term plans will require many years of investigations, partnership working and planning to ensure the best outcomes can be achieved for the future of St. Helens.

3. **Recommendation**

1. Members of the task group continue to monitor this report and the original recommendations made by regular updates to the Environment, Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel.