

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 24 March 2009  
**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director / Corporate Manager, Health & Environmental Services

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### GOVERNMENT GRANTS FOR HOUSEHOLD-LEVEL FLOOD RISK MITIGATION

#### Purpose

1. This report is to advise the portfolio holder for Environmental Services of the latest Government initiative designed to provide funding for flood protection measures at a local level to protect households and seek approval for the Council to pursue an application for grant funding to benefit appropriate South Cambridgeshire residents and their properties.
2. This is not a key decision.

#### Background

3. Following on from the Pitt Review and the Government's *Making Space for Water* strategy, the Government (via Defra) has made available a total of 5 Million pounds in grant funding to promote the use of household-level flood protection and resilience measures for both fluvial and/or surface water run off. The scheme does not include protection from sewer flooding, which is the responsibility of the water companies. The grants are aimed at properties where flooding occurs frequently and other flood management solutions are not economically, environmentally or technical viable. The grant funding also aims to encourage the supply of expert, independent flood risk mitigation surveys and to stimulate the market for flood protection and resilience products.
4. Successful Local Authority applicants will be offered funding to provide independent, professional surveys that will assess the risk of flooding for individual properties in high-risk areas and recommend ways of mitigating that risk. In addition they will also be funded to subsidise the costs of implementing appropriate measures. Local Authorities will deliver the scheme in partnership with the Environment Agency.

#### Considerations

5. The £5M that has been made available to Local Authorities on a national basis will be split into two phases. The "pathfinder" phase, which makes available £2M, requires applications to be submitted by 25 March 2009, with the second phase of £3M being available for application in the autumn of 2009. However, some conditions and eligibility criteria are attached to this funding and therefore work is required to identify properties that would qualify for funding under the scheme. South Cambridgeshire District Council may be able to access some of this funding to offer flood protection to appropriate properties within its district and seeks approval to submit such an application.
6. However, it must be recognised that whilst the district is subject to some flooding problems, there are many Local Authority areas such as Gloucester, Hull and Nottingham to name but a few that are likely to be much further up the priority scale to access the limited funding available. Realistically, the "pathfinder phase" of the

funding will be over subscribed and therefore, the Council should look to obtain funding in the second round of applications in the autumn.

7. One element of the overall funding process is to promote engagement with the local community on flooding issues and encourage Local Authorities to work with communities to identify properties in need of flood protection measures and to encourage community self-help schemes. The Council has in the past liaised with parish councils and other residents groups on the issue of flooding in some villages where flooding has, and still is an infrequent yet continuing possible occurrence such as the brook that runs through Elsworth. By providing evidence of this type of community engagement as part of the funding application, the Council will be able to strengthen the case for it's funding application.
8. Another route to demonstrate communication and engagement would also be to utilise the *South Cambs Magazine* and provide an article in the Summer edition promoting the Government funding scheme. This article would provide information and guidance to residents on the grants scheme and request those who feel their properties would qualify for funding, to submit documentary evidence (insurance claims, photographs etc) to the Council of flooding events that have affected their properties, which can then be utilised by the Council to qualify the case for the funding application.
9. In addition to this consultation, it is suggested that each Parish Council and Local Member is contacted to provide further evidence that will assist the Council in making its application.
10. Timescales to submit applications for funding in the "Pathfinder" phase are now very tight (25 March 2009) however, to ensure that the Council remains eligible to submit an application in the second round of funding, the Council Safety Advisor has already submitted an "expression of interest" application as detailed under the guidance issued by Defra.
11. If the Council is successful in its application, a more developed approach to community involvement is likely to be required.

### Options

12. By agreeing to the recommendation within this report the Council will be able to apply for potential funding from the Government to provide flood risk management measures to individual properties, which are eligible.
13. Whilst it is by no way guaranteed that the application would be successful due to the potential demand from around the country to obtain a share of this grant funding, failure to submit an application may expose the Council to public criticism from residents who may have benefited from the funding and the wider community.

### Implications

14.	Financial	Defra hopes that Local Authorities will look to find further contributions to add to the money that they provide, i.e. financial contributions from participating householders.
	Legal	None
	Staffing	Consultation and application within existing resources.
	Risk Management	None
	Equal Opportunities	None

## Consultations

15. The Council Safety Advisor has attended an application workshop delivered by Defra to provide Local Authorities with guidance on how to make applications for funding under the grant scheme.
16. Historically, the Council has consulted and engaged with various parish and residents groups on flooding issues.

## Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

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| 17. | <b>Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future</b>                                                                                                                          |
|     | Partnership working with the Environment Agency is a key component of the scheme.                                                                                                                                                      |
|     | <b>Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community</b>                                                                                                                                 |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|     | <b>Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work</b>                                                                                                                   |
|     | The recommendations contained within this report would contribute to the Council's second Aim, which states "We are committed to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for you and your family". |

## Conclusions/Summary

18. Whilst there is a significant amount of money available within this grant fund scheme, it should be emphasised that the £5M will not go too far when divided up across the nation. It is also fair to say that compared to many, South Cambridgeshire has not suffered to anywhere near the same extent as other parts of the country in the past. However, there are properties that are at risk from flooding and as a responsible Local Authority, the Council should make every effort to secure a share of the grant scheme, if possible.

## Recommendations

19. It is recommended that
  - (a) the Portfolio Holder endorses the proposal that the Council should apply to obtain funding for property-level survey work and appropriate property protection and resilience measures under the Government's grant scheme,
  - (b) to enhance the application for funding, the Council should utilise the *South Cambs Magazine* as one method of communication to demonstrate community engagement regarding flooding issues and obtain evidence of flooding from residents that have historically been affected by river or surface water flooding, and
  - (c) all Parish Councils and Local Members are contacted to provide further evidence to assist the Council in its application.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Government grants for household-level flood risk mitigation.

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