

## **APPLICATION BY THATCHAM FLOOD FORUM FOR THREE GRANTS FOR THE REMAINING FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEMES IN THE SWMP**

### **The Request**

Three separate Grants of £10,000 each to be used by Thatcham Flood Forum exclusively on each of the three remaining schemes within the adopted Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP). These grants to be designated as Local Contributions within the WBC business cases to the Environment Agency to support the allocation of construction funds for each scheme (estimated to be c.£2.5M in total). The timeline is planned to be one scheme completed and paid for over each of the next three financial years, commencing 2021/22. Disbursement would be made at the certified completion of each scheme.

### **The Context and Need**

Members will be familiar with the devastating flood event in July 2007 when around 1200 homes were flooded and at least 3000 residents were made homeless. The cause was a massive storm lasting 3 hours resulting in catastrophic floodwater cascading off the hillsides to the North of the town. The sewers were overwhelmed, lives put at risk, the station flooded and the emergency services response compromised.

The SWMP was the most tangible result of the multi agency response. Thatcham was one of only 6 sites in England that had such a plan developed by the EA. This was adopted in 2010 by the EA and WBC. It called for a ring of stormwater retention reservoirs to be constructed in an arc around the northern perimeter together with holding lagoons through the town to provide a safe flow route for other flows. To date, three major reservoirs have been completed and the flow route through East Thatcham is now in place. This has cost c.£8.5m. Nearly 1000 homes will gain significant protection from these and some 127 million litres of stormwater will be held back. There remain a further 270 homes to be protected by the final three smaller schemes and a further 30 million litres of water capacity to be created.

The Grants are needed to enable WBC to build a business case to the EA for the construction costs of the remaining schemes. Since late 2014, all flood defence schemes have had to be supported by “local contributions” before any business case can be considered. This was not the case prior to that when the Cold Ash and Tull Way reservoir funds were obtained. To enable the construction of the Dunston Park reservoir, and the eastern flow route schemes at Dunston Green and through the school playing fields to Agricola Way, the Flood Forum, through the Funding Committee, raised £100K. This included £20,000 from the Town Council.

The remaining schemes are essential to create the integrity of the flood defences for the town as a whole. They cover areas in North Thatcham to the west of Northfield Road and parts of the Rivers estate, in East Thatcham for part of Siege Cross and in South Thatcham centered around Paynesdown Road where some 190 homes are at risk. Each of these schemes need proportionately greater “local contributions” as they protect fewer homes than the larger schemes.

### **Summary**

These Grants will provide a solid basis as enabling funding for the business cases that need EA approval and for external funding. Design work is already funded and in progress. The Town Council has been very active in its support of the Flood Forum and the previous defence schemes. One last push will finally ensure that the Town is protected as uniformly as possible.

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