**Flooding and its management**

**Local Flood Risk Management Strategy**

Hampshire County Council is responsible for managing local flood risk and co-ordinating the activities of other flood risk management authorities dealing with flooding arising from Ground water, surface water and ‘ordinary water courses’ (the latter being all water courses not designated “main rivers” which are managed by the Environment Agency). The County Council has adopted a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) for Hampshire. This Strategy was prepared in partnership with other flood risk management authorities and subject to public consultation. It recognises the nature and extent of flood risk in the Bourne Valley.

**St Mary Bourne Technical Steering Group**

Also, in recognition of the specific problems being experienced by residents of St Mary Bourne, the County Council has spent the past year chairing the ‘St Mary Bourne Technical Steering Group’ which comprises representatives from Southern Water, the Environment Agency, and the County, District and Parish Councils. This group has now published a Infiltration Reduction Plan (IRP) for the village building on work Southern Water has done on the ground tankering and over-pumping and sealing sewers in the village.

This has taken longer than anticipated due to the nature and extent of the recent flooding and also because this is a first-of-a-kind approach to managing groundwater flood risk and sewer infiltration. The various flood risk partners wanted to get the St Mary Bourne plan right as it will be used as a template for future Infiltration Reduction Plans in Southern Water’s area and beyond. It is not just dealing with the flooding but the added difficulties of perceived problems of pollution and environmental/ecological/legal implications often associated with over-pumping.

**Groundwater Management Plan**

The County Council is also producing a Groundwater Management Plan (GWMP) looking primarily at groundwater flood risk across the central Hampshire chalk catchment. The issue of groundwater flooding is far more complex to model, manage and address than other forms of surface water or fluvial flooding.

 A draft of this plan was published for consultation before Christmas but will have to be reviewed once information from the current flood events has been collected to ensure the measures proposed to manage and address the flood risk are sound and robust.

**Funding**

The preparation of the GWMP has been the catalyst for the County Council to produce a number of project mandates bidding for funding from Government to address the highest flood risk areas across the County, including St Mary Bourne. There has been press coverage recently about the way that funding regime operates and the priority it gives to large urban areas at the expense of smaller, more rural settlements. But HCC is doing what it can, within the confines of the system in which it is required to operate, and is looking to secure the funding needed to continue tackling the flooding problems in St Mary Bourne.

**Self Help**

Both the LFRMS and the GWMP also include information on actions that individual groups, communities, households and landowners can take to manage and mitigate local flood risk and to protect their properties from flooding. The County Council, or any other agency, working alone will not be able to solve St Mary Bourne’s groundwater flooding problems. But, working together in the ways indicated above should be a step in the right direction and is the best chance there is of securing the funding needed.

 March 2014