EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The River Thames scheme has been in development for many years but the flooding in 2014 has meant that there is now a sense of urgency both locally and in central government. There has been progress across a range of initiatives as summarised in this report. However, there remains a funding gap in both the costs to complete the feasibility studies and the construction costs. There is work on-going to try and address the shortfall but in order to complete the feasibility aspects of the scheme the Local Authorities along the stretch of River between Maidenhead and Teddington are being asked to contribute.

RECOMMENDED: THAT CABINET

CONFIRMS ITS SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RIVER THAMES SCHEME AND THE MAKING OF A FUNDING CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE FEASIBILITY STUDY IN THE AMOUNT OF £12,920 PER YEAR FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS TO BE MET FROM THE NEW HOMES BONUS.

REPORT:

1. The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on progress with the River Thames Scheme and to seek agreement to a contribution requested by the River Thames Scheme Board towards feasibility costs.

Background

2. Following the floods in 2012, The Environment Agency has been leading on the development of what is called the River Thames Scheme. The intention of the scheme is to reduce flood risk in communities between Datchet and Teddington. This stretch of river has the largest area of developed floodplain in England without flood defences.

3. The initial work was carried out in 2009 as a part of the then Lower Thames flood risk management strategy which was finalised after consultation with other public bodies, businesses and residents. The scheme consists of:
   - a new flood channel
   - improvements to 3 of the existing Thames weirs
   - installation of property level products for up to 1,200 homes (to make them more resistant to floods)
• the development of local Community Resilience plans
• improved flood incident response plans

4. The Environment Agency is the lead agency working on the scheme and has established:
• A Sponsoring Group which consist of the Leaders from all 7 local authorities along this stretch of river and representatives from DEFRA, The Treasury and Thames Water
• A Programme Board of senior officers from the 7 local authorities and other public bodies to oversee the development of the scheme
• Working Groups including planning and finance.

5. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee last received updates on the River Thames Scheme in January 2012 and in July 2014

Scheme Updates

Flood Channels and Weirs

6. There are a series of initiatives currently being worked on:
• The Strategic Outline Case is being reworked with an update of the projected costs
• Site investigation works are taking place at the weirs and along the line of the proposed channel
• The benefits assessment is being worked to ascertain not only the benefit to flooded or threatened properties but also the economic costs of flooding.
• Possible options to meet the current funding gap including discussion with affected local businesses, the Local Enterprise Partnership, etc. are being explored.

7. A draft project plan has been devised. The key dates are:
• Commence construction of weirs: 2017
• Commence construction of channel: 2020
• Scheme completion: 2025

From an Elmbridge perspective the works that will have the major effect on our area, i.e. the weirs, have been brought forward. Therefore the Borough will see the benefit from the scheme at an earlier date than previously estimated.

Community Resilience

8. The Environment Agency are leading on a piece of work aimed at:
• getting a better understanding of those communities in the flood zone
• helping and encouraging those communities to develop their own flood plans
• recruiting community resilience volunteers in each community as a point of contact, someone who could disseminate information and keep an eye on the vulnerable members of that community. This is especially important in those areas where the community is cut off by flood water
• promoting the use of Property Protection measures
Council Officers are working in partnership with the EA and have already been in touch with a number of communities along the river.

**Major Flood Protocol**

9. The major flood protocol is nearing completion. Its aim is to provide stronger links between the various incident response plans. It will enable a coordinated response, at a strategic level, to a major cross-boundary flood event on the River Thames between Maidenhead and Teddington. This won't have a direct effect on the operation of the Council’s emergency control centre but it will ensure that resources especially those of the military can be moved quickly to those places at the most risk.

**Financial implications:**

As mentioned previously there is currently a funding gap in the scheme. Part of the gap relates to the feasibility work that is required to develop the Business Plan. The Environment Agency asked Council Leaders to consider providing funding to at least meet the gap in the feasibility study funding. Following discussions about a fair basis for sharing contributions the following was devised:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Percentage Share</th>
<th>Surrey County Council Contribution £</th>
<th>Contribution of other Partners net of Surrey Contribution (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runnymede</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>267,600</td>
<td>84,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelthorne</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>194,230</td>
<td>49,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmbridge</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>38,170</td>
<td>12,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBW&amp;M</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>284,610</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>46,650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>£500,000</td>
<td>£500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The basis and weighting for the calculation is
- Cost of works within the local council area 50%
- Properties at 1 in 100 flood risk benefiting from reduced risk post scheme 50%

The Council is therefore asked to agree a contribution of £12,920 per year for the next 5 years to be met from the New Homes Bonus.

The funding has already been agreed by the other authorities and it ensures that all the feasibility and development work can be completed.

**Environmental/Sustainability Implications:**
The funding of the feasibility study ensures that the full environmental impact assessment can be carried out.
Legal implications: None

Equality Implications: None

Risk Implications: The funding is not refundable and therefore there is a risk if the scheme does not either gain approval or the funding gap is not met and therefore the scheme does not progress.

Community Safety Implications: None

Principal Consultees: None

Background papers: None

Enclosures/Appendices: Appendix 1 – RTS Infographic

Contact details: Ray Lee, Strategic Director, 01372 474700, rlee@elmbridge.gov.uk