

**Report to Councillor Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for  
Environment and Climate Change**

**Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund Applications -  
September 2021**

**Report by Director for Highways, Transport and Planning**

**Electoral division(s): Hurstpierpoint & Bolney, Broadbridge, Fontwell,  
Midhurst**

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**Summary**

The purpose of Operation Watershed is to support people in their local communities who want to work with the County Council to become more prepared for, or to reduce the risk of, flooding. Local groups are encouraged to apply for funding to finance schemes and projects of all sizes as a way of achieving this.

£0.704m is allocated for Operation Watershed 2021/22 – 2022/23 in the Capital Programme agreed by Full Council in February 2021, including carry forward from previous years. The allocation for 2021/22 is £0.300m. In this period five full applications have been received and evaluated totalling £158,879.31 and are set out in Appendix A.

**Recommendation:**

- (1) The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change approves the applications from the community groups or parish councils set out in Appendix A of the report.

**Proposal**

**1 Background and context**

- 1.1. The purpose of Operation Watershed is to support people in their local communities who want to work with the County Council to become more prepared for floods and help reduce the likelihood of highways or neighbouring land flooding.
- 1.2. Local groups are encouraged to apply for capital funding to finance schemes and projects of all sizes as a way of achieving this. £300,000 has been allocated in the 2021/22 capital programme to the 'Operation Watershed Active Communities Fund'.
- 1.3. The funding is open to communities who are willing to develop, support and sustain partnerships. Bringing together local people, businesses and landowners can help to minimise the risk of local flooding. There are now many examples of those who suffer from the effects of flooding, and those responsible for

maintaining a huge network of drainage systems and ditches, working together to agree and implement the best local solution.

- 1.4. The required demonstrable criteria for applications to be successful from April 2018 comprise the following three tests (a-c):
  - (a) Tackle a recognised surface or ground water flood risk
  - (b) Meet at least one of the following elements in its technical scope:
    - Provide new infrastructure installations or build
    - Make material change improvements to existing infrastructure
    - Increase the drainage capacity of existing infrastructure
    - Provision of assets for community groups usage to protect their local area
  - (c) Evidence 'Community Commitment' to deliver the project including all and any future maintenance
- 1.5. Officers will work with local members, parish representatives and other appropriate community leads to understand local pressures and concerns and help ensure that any proposed funding bids demonstrate a long-term community benefit.
- 1.6. In this period (from 1 April 2021) five full applications have been received and evaluated as meeting the required standard totalling £158,879.31 and are set out in Appendix A.

## **2 Proposal details**

- 2.1. Details of grant funding for flood risk mitigation projects against applications from the community groups and parish councils are set out in Appendix A.

## **3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)**

- 3.1 The County Council could undertake all of the work. However, in many cases local communities are best placed to carry out smaller scale works to either assess the flood risk or reduce the risk of local flooding. In some cases, the County Council has already undertaken larger scale flood alleviation works and Operation Watershed funding can contribute towards maintenance costs.

## **4 Consultation, engagement and advice**

- 4.1 The applications listed in Appendix A are promoted by the local communities and supported by the respective local Member for that community.
- 4.2 All applications have been considered by the Operation Watershed Steering Group, comprising the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue and programme leads assigned by the Heads of Service, following the evaluation of the project proposals against an established and agreed matrix including technical evaluation and "value for money" assessment.

## 5 Finance

### 5.1 Revenue consequences

There are no revenue implications regarding this proposal

### 5.2 Capital consequences

£0.704m is allocated for Operation Watershed 2021/22 – 2022/23 in the Capital Programme agreed by County Council in February 2021, including carry forward from previous years, and is funded by WSCC Corporate Funding. The allocation for 2021/22 is £300,000.

	Year 1 2018/19 £m	Year 2 2019/20 £m	Year 3 2020/21 £m	Year 4 2021/22 £m	Year 5 2022/23 £m	Total £m
Capital budget	0.342	0.088	0.366	0.300	0.404	1.500
Applications previously Approved	0.342	0.088	0.366	-	-	0.796
Remaining budget	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.141	0.404	0.545
Applications for Approval				0.159		0.159

5.3 The applications recommended for approval in this Decision Report represent allocation of monies from available funds. It is anticipated that the total in year budget allocation will be awarded within this financial year.

<b>Table 2</b>		
Description	Number	Value (Capital)
Applications for approval September 2021	05	£158,879.31
<b>Approved Available Funds 2021/22</b>		£300,000.00
<b>Remaining Available Funds</b>		£141,120.69

5.4 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the cost represents good value**

Funding community groups and parish councils is considered to be an effective and efficient means of alleviating local flooding problems in their area.

Rigorous evaluation of all applications has been undertaken against the published Evaluation Scorecard by the project team in consultation with officers with key experience in the functions of Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Management, Community Development, Community Resilience and Highways.

(b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered** Not applicable

(c) **Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact**

There are no Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact implications arising from funding these applications

## 6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
There is a risk that the funding does not cover all the anticipated costs of a project and community groups bear the risk of under-budgeting.	WSCC working closely with officers and the local Member to identify potential problems before any funding is allocated.
Under spending on projects has to be returned to the County Council or utilised to deliver further works.	WSCC works in partnership with community groups to agree approach on project by project basis.

## 7 Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1 The West Sussex Corporate Plan 2021-2025 sets out the priorities for the council over the next four years and the ambitious outcomes for people who live and work in West Sussex.
- 7.2 The plan focuses on four priorities, all of which are underpinned by a cross-cutting theme of tackling climate change:
- Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations
  - A sustainable and prosperous economy
  - Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential
  - Making the best use of resources
- 7.3 Operation Watershed is an initiative that fits with the 'Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential' corporate priority.
- 7.4 The panel considering any application will be alert to the need to consider any equality implications arising from the bid or the way the money is to be used if indicated in the bid information. There are no identifiable impacts arising from the applications relating to obligations contained in the Equality Act 2010. The applications will support communities to address local flooding issues and do not have a disproportionate impact on individuals with protected characteristics.
- 7.5 Supports development of community groups actively involved in resilience and flood awareness and preparedness.
- 7.6 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from funding these applications.

### **Matt Davey**

Director of Highways, Transport & Planning

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Table of grant applications for approval and supporting application forms

## **Background papers**

None

## Appendix A

The following applications are recommended for approval:

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Community Group or Parish Council</b>	<b>Brief Description of Project</b>	<b>£ Requested</b>
8001	Fulking Parish Council	Clappers Lane & Edburton Road	£25,957.80
8002	Slindfold Parish Council	Hayes Lane Highways Drainage	£32,157.72
8003	Slindon Parish Council	Slindon Pond	£62,104.92
8004	Trotton with Chithurst PC	Trotton Bridge flood relief	£31,155.05
8005	Bolney Parish Council	Paynesfield Drainage Works	£7,503.82
		<b>Total Funding Requests</b>	<b>£158,879.31</b>