

Full Council

Report Title:	Emergency Flood Alleviation Works / Spend on Cuttle Brook
Meeting Date:	5 March 2024
Contact Officer:	Mandy Sturdy – Town Clerk Andrea Oughton – Operations Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform The Council retrospectively of emergency works commissioned at a value greater than the Clerk's maximum delegate spend of £5,000, due to start on the Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve prior to the Full Council Meeting on 5 March 2024.
2. To invite comment on a suggested increase to the Clerk's delegated spending authority from £5,000 to £10,000 for any one purchase order from May 2024 after the Annual Meeting and within the annual review of the Delegations Policy.

Action Required

3. To **note** and retrospectively **approve** the works commissioned to Cuttle Brook water courses.
4. To **note** further costs are likely during the 2024/25 Budget.
5. To **consider** increasing the Clerk's delegated allowance for emergency works and / or services.

Background

6. Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve is the property of Thame Town Council and is generally managed by the Cuttle Brook volunteers in partnership with the Town Council's Maintenance Team.
7. Our understanding is that whilst Cuttle Brook itself is an ordinary watercourse and as such is the responsibility of the Lead Flood Authority (OCC); The ditches in the Cuttle Brook are the responsibility of the land owner, in this case Thame Town Council.
8. There is a useful [link](#) explain responsibilities.
9. Following high levels of flooding during the past 4 months which included the flooding of a property adjacent to the nature reserve, the Operations Manager has been working with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Engineers; They have been able to scope works that are required in the short term¹ whilst working on longer term plan for flood prevention.
10. Some elements of this work are time critical, primarily to ensure the works are completed before the nesting season. To meet these deadlines the Operations Manager obtained 4 quotations for

¹ Attached

the works scoped by the specialists. The Clerk has awarded the preferred supplier the contract to the value of **£5,941** to enable works to start the week commencing March 4.

11. **It was Noted as CLR on 20 February that remedial works were required but the extent and time critical elements were not known at that time.**
12. **At P&R on 27 February, a resolution was passed to allow the Clerk to spend up to £10K on this project with a recommendation to Full Council for any works in addition to that to be considered at the meeting of the Full Council on March 5.**
13. The available funding for Cuttle Brook maintenance:
14. 2023 / 24 Budget Code 201 – 4036 - £858
15. 2023 / 24 358 Ear Marked Reserve - £13,397
16. 2024 / 25 Budget Code 201 – 4036 - £6,000
17. Once more details are available of the additional medium- and long-term flood alleviation works required the Council will be advised of further costs. It should be noted that some of these works will be paid for by other responsible bodies; although The Town Council are likely to incur further costs.

Standing Order 25 – Delegation of Urgent and Routine Matters

18. 25.0 There shall be delegated to the Town Clerk the authority to act in respect of any function of the Council on a matter which in their opinion does not admit of delay. This delegated authority shall be exercised in consultation with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee.
19. 25.3 Each exercise of delegated authority under this Standing Order shall be reported for information to the next meeting of the committee or sub-committee within whose terms of reference the particular function lies and thence to Council.

Finance Regulations

20. 1.13 Council must approve any grant or single commitment in excess of £5,000
21. 4.5 Town Clerk has authority up to £5k

Resource Appraisal

22. EMR 348 – Total £13,397

Risk Assessment

- Works could be delayed if funding not authorised with potential impact to residents and the wildlife.
- With all costs rising, a £5K could limit progress in key projects.
- All spend above £5K should still be reported to ensure transparency.

Recommendation

- i) To approve spend of £5,941 on this element of the project.**
- ii) To authorise the Clerk to approve further spend up to the maximum available within EMR for ongoing flood alleviation works in 2024/25.**
- iii) To comment on the suggestion to increase the delegated financial authority of the Clerk to £10,000 for a single project which would then be noted at the next Council or Committee meeting as per Standing Order 25.3. A formal proposal would be brought to council formally within the annual review of the Delegations Policy.**