

Minutes of a **Simultaneous Meetings of Suffolk Coastal's Scrutiny Committee and Waveney's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House** on **Thursday 25 October 2018** at **6.30pm**

**Suffolk Coastal District Council Members present:**

P Dunnett (Chairman), S Bird, S Burroughes, P Coleman, S Geater, G Harding, M Jones, G Lynch, S Mower

**Waveney District Council Members present:**

A Cackett (Chairman), D Beavan, L Coulam, T Gandy, L Gooch, P Light, J Murray, K Robinson, C Topping, M Vigo di Gallidoro

**Other Members present:**

D Ritchie, A Smith

**Officers present:**

K Abbott (Democratic Services Business Manager), N Khan (Strategic Director), B Parker (Head of Coastal Partnership East), P Ridley (Head of Planning and Coastal Management)

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Prior to the start of the meeting, Councillor Dunnett and Councillor Cackett, the respective Chairmen of Suffolk Coastal District Council's (SCDC) Scrutiny Committee and Waveney District Council's (WDC) Overview and Scrutiny Committee, welcomed all Members and Officers to the meeting.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Suffolk Coastal District Council

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Block, Councillor Deacon and Councillor Hedgley. Councillor Jones substituted for Councillor Hedgley.

Waveney District Council

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Webb, Councillor Smith and Councillor Springall.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Suffolk Coastal District Council

There were no declarations of interest.

## Waveney District Council

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Adoption of Protocol for Simultaneous Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee of Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Waveney District Council**

Members were in receipt of a Protocol for Simultaneous Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee of Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Waveney District Council. The Protocol provided a brief background and covered the Purpose, Chairmanship, Location of Meetings and Governance Arrangements.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote

#### **RESOLVED by Suffolk Coastal's Scrutiny Committee**

That the Protocol be adopted.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote

#### **RESOLVED by Waveney's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

That the Protocol be adopted.

### **4. A Joint Review of Coastal Partnership East's Future Plans for the Suffolk Coast, its Existing Projects and Works**

The Meetings received report **REP1866** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management (WDC) and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Coastal Management (SCDC). The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management (WDC).

The report provided an introduction to Coastal Partnership East, which brought together coastal management expertise from four local authorities, including Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, under the Local Government Act 1972 (Section 113 agreement). The report also described how Coastal Partnership East influenced national policy through, for example, its role on the Local Government Association's Coastal Special Interest Group and by providing evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Regeneration of Coastal Towns and Communities. The report also described the staffing arrangements across the Partnership and how staff resources were prioritised according to levels of risk and, for example, the need to respond to incidents and related recovery stages. The report also stated that the creation of Coastal Partnership East had enabled additional capacity to be funded by the Regional Flood and Coast Committee, at no cost to Suffolk Coastal or Waveney District Councils. The report further detailed the work undertaken to date along the 173 km of coastline in Norfolk and Suffolk which it was directly responsible for 92km from Holkham in North Norfolk to Landguard Point, Felixstowe. In addition, the report detailed the future works the Partnership planned including, for example, in Suffolk Coastal, further investment in the repair and replacement of sea defences in Felixstowe, completion of the technical input required for the Sizewell area (including the development of Sizewell C, the landing of additional off-shore windfarm power cables and two

new inter-continental power connections), the management and adaptation to a changing coastline at, for example, Thorpeness and Slaughden, and a long-term resolution for East Lane, Bawdsey. The future works planned for Waveney included, for example, the development and delivery of an innovative approach to North Corton, Benacre Levels at Kessingland, North Southwold and Southwold Harbour as well as the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project. The current ten-year capital investment plan identified c£11m capital investment within the existing Suffolk Coastal District area and c£19m within the existing Waveney District area in addition to excluding £63m for the Lowestoft project.

The Head of Coastal Partnership East delivered a detailed presentation which, as well as emphasising the main areas and issues detailed within the Committees' report, referred to:

- The 173km of open coastline which the Partnership was directly responsible for, 92km of which were under the remit of local authorities.
- The repair and maintenance of c1000 assets, such as access points, groynes, revetments, promenades, seawalls, beaches and rock armour
- The creation of the Partnership to address the previous fragmentation of staff expertise, to achieve economies of scale and enable improved funding opportunities. The employment of staff within each partner Council, through Section 113 agreements, had also facilitated a more flexible approach and supported the creation of apprenticeships
- The Partnership's three year Business Plan (2017/18 to 2020/21) to provide its strategic direction, identify partnership working, and inform its stakeholders of its role and functions
- The Partnership's Annual Action Plan which had four key strands – Knowing Our Coast; Delivering for Communities; Capacity and Capability; and Finance and Funding.
- The Partnership's ambitious ten-year capital investment plan
- The current major projects including other than those in East Suffolk at Bacton, Great Yarmouth, Broadlands and Hemsby
- Examples of the Partnerships' leadership in innovative projects and solutions through the statement of a common approach by the partner local authorities, a dynamic purchasing agreement and negotiating position on contracts, a graphic information system which included the development of an app to aid asset management
- A copy of the Partnership's second Annual Report was tabled and this further detailed how the team's structure had been embedded, the strengthening of the management team through the addition of two coastal managers and a coastal engineering manager, and the recruitment of two apprentices, a graduate and an intern

The Cabinet Member for Coastal Management (SCDC) highlighted the distinction between coastal management and coastal protection; the former, he said, was vastly more proactive and he welcomed the formation of a dynamic Partnership which was large enough to have a positive impact on the delivery of a lasting future for the coast. The Cabinet Member also outlined the role of the Local Government Association's Special Interest Group which brought together more than 60 coastal local authorities and, as well as enabling the sharing of knowledge, lobbied central Government on coastal issues of specific interest. The Cabinet Member also referred to the Partnership's lead role on a number of national issues including coastal adaptation, capacity development, marine management licensing, partnership working between local authorities, and long-term funding of capital and revenue works. The Partnership had also facilitated a workshop at the Flood and Coast Conference which had provided feedback to the Environment Agency on some of the difficulties faced by coastal local authorities related to funding, policy and procedure.

*The Chairman of Suffolk Coastal's Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman of Waveney's Overview and Scrutiny Committee invited the members to ask questions, alternately, on the report and its accompanying presentation.*

A member of the Waveney Committee asked about the staffing capacity of Coastal Partnership East and the current recruitment to vacant posts. The Head of Coastal Partnership East said an interview process for the advertised posts would be undertaken in the next two to three weeks. He described the roles as providing an excellent opportunity to develop expertise and attain professional qualifications. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management (WDC) added that the Partnership offered significant career progression opportunities because of the scale of its major projects.

A member of the Suffolk Coastal Committee said that the report stated that £63m had been identified for the development and delivery of the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project, but did not provide specific costs for other projects in other locations. She asked if these costs were available and how the required investments would be achieved. The Head of Coastal Partnership East referred to the ten-year capital investment plan which had identified investments of £11m (SCDC) and £19m (WDC). He said that this would be achieved by government funding, grants and financing schemes with any 'gap' in funding would be filled by bringing in other approaches including the sharing of resources. The Cabinet Member for Coastal Management (SCDC) advised that the Partnership's Coastal Strategic Funding Manager sought new methods of funding; in addition, he said, the LGAs Special Interest Group was also exploring partnership funding opportunities including tax relief for monies spent on coastal defences.

A member of the Waveney Committee welcomed the Partnership's work with academic institutions and asked about funds from the Coastal Communities Fund. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management (WDC) said the Coastal Communities Fund did not provide finance for coastal management or defences; however, it did provide allocations to enable the regeneration of assets to make best use of them, for example, for tourism etc. and referred to the Ness Point Project.

A member of the Suffolk Coastal Committee, with reference to investment decisions around coastal erosion issues, asked about the criteria used to decide which areas to protect and which areas to leave to retreat naturally. The Head of Coastal Partnership East replied that a Shoreline Management Plan was in place which provided the strategy for managing flood and erosion risk for a particular stretch of coastline, over short, medium and long-term periods including realignments to address the rate of change; he also referred to public consultations on such schemes and the wish to help coastal communities have additional options for solutions. A member of the Waveney Committee asked how the decision to consult was made and how its efficacy was managed. The Head of Coastal Partnership East said consultations were undertaken by the Partnership's Coastal Manager who, as an experienced communications and engagement specialist, worked to ensure a rigorous process which reviewed all feedback and reflected the responses in the identification of solutions.

A member of the Waveney Committee referred to work around the Potters Resort and asked about what levels of support had been provided, particularly to any homes under threat. The Head of Partnership East briefly outlined the different methods to slow the recession of the coastline.

Another member of the Waveney Committee referred to erosion in and around Southwold and to the broken wall at Eastern Bavants. The Head of Coastal Partnership East said that the sea wall was not an asset of the Partnership; however, it was working with the Environment Agency to identify a solution. The Cabinet Member for Coastal Management (SCDC) said that assets along the coastline were the responsibility of Coastal Partnership East, the Environment Agency, the Ministry of Defence, Ports and the nuclear power station etc. He added that the assets were, as a principle, allocated according to danger of erosion (Coastal Partnership East) or flooding (Environment Agency).

A member of the Waveney Committee suggested that the work of Coastal Partnership East needed to be advertised more widely; she asked how Councillors could be more involved in advising residents of its work. The Head of Coastal Partnership East said that he would welcome the opportunity to speak to Councillors in more depth; he referred to the Partnership's annual Report, regular newsletters and asked that any suggestions for additional promotion opportunities be sent to him direct.

Another member of the Waveney Committee raised environmental concerns about a specific location; the Head of Coastal Partnership East undertook to speak with the Councillor, in more detail, outside of the meeting.

A member of the Suffolk Coastal Committee asked for some additional detail on the management of the beach at Felixstowe. The Cabinet Member for Coastal Management (SCDC) said that traditionally the beach at Felixstowe had been well-managed by wooden groynes. He continued to state that the modern approach differed in that the use of higher and wider rock groynes had led to a more volatile beach, however, he considered the approach to work well. The Cabinet Member (SCDC) also stated that, with regard to the adaptation of vulnerable sites, it was important to understand that such adaptations, needed to be of sufficient value to justify use of public monies. The Head of Coastal Partnership East added that such adaptations proved to a difficult and challenging area because it required a decision to invest, or not, from the public purse in an asset with no long term future.

Another member of the Suffolk Coastal Committee commented that the beach at Thorpeness was continually eroding and asked what options were being explored for the location. The Head of Coastal Partnership East said it was important for it to be part of the local community's plans and to support these if at all possible.

A member of the Waveney District Council asked about Coastal Partnership East's involvement in the management of flooding at the Broads, particularly where these fell within or close to the Waveney district. The Head of Coastal Partnership East explained that the Partnership sat on the Broads Future Initiative but, whilst it engaged and assisted, its primary focus remained its priorities along the coast.

There being no further questions or matters raised for debate, the Chairman of the Suffolk Coastal Committee and the Chairman of the Waveney Committee thanked the Cabinet Members and Officers for their report, presentation and responses to the matters raised.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote

**RESOLVED by Suffolk Coastal's Scrutiny Committee**

1. That report (REP 1866) be noted and that the importance of Coastal Partnership East's work be recognised
2. That the principle of additional investment in resources to deliver coastal management be supported, subject to the usual processes to request resources

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote

**RESOLVED by Waveney's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

1. That report (REP 1866) be noted and that the importance of Coastal Partnership East's work be recognised
2. That the principle of additional investment in resources to deliver coastal management be supported, subject to the usual processes to request resources

The Meeting concluded at 8.16pm.