



Lewes District Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Scrutiny Committee – 4 March 2014

79 Flooding in Lewes District

The Chair advised that a request had been submitted by a member of the Scrutiny Committee to consider flooding in Lewes District. This followed a discussion at Full Council on 26 February 2014 on the same subject. It was agreed by full Council at its meeting of 26 February that the Council set aside the following:

- A sum of £50,000 (including on-costs and operational budget) for a fixed term post of a Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer be set into the budget for each of next two financial years period 2014-15 and 2015-16. This was to be funded from the budget for Service Priorities and the commitment to be reviewed in October 2015.
- A capital budget of £350,000 be allocated from the second call on capital receipts generated from the Council's 49 sites regeneration project. This was to be used for pump priming flooding and drainage projects. (Cabinet had already agreed that the first call was to repay the loan for the Agile Working project)
- A further capital budget of £100,000 from the same source for development with adjacent authorities, of local measures to reduce the peak flow through the catchments in East Sussex and for the implementation of small schemes which fell outside of the funding schemes of the Environment Agency but which could be demonstrated to have a valuable return for the District
- A budget of £30,000 for the investigation of the vulnerability of business and residential property to wind and storm damage and to develop an action plan that business and residents can use to minimise damage to their properties. This would be funded from the budget for Service Priorities
- A sum of £30,000 to investigate the potential damage to infrastructure from slope failure, outside of failures affecting with roads and railways themselves. This would also be funded from the

budget for Service Priorities.

It was proposed that these funds would be ring-fenced for the proposed use, and any unused allocation could be transferred into the following financial year. The capital budget would be activated upon the banking of receipts from the regeneration project.

The Committee discussed in some detail how the proposals could be supervised by an advisory group, membership of which could include Lindsay Frost (previous Director of Planning at the Council), Tom Crossett (previously a senior scientist at Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food), a local hydraulics engineer, Tim Bartlett (Principal Environmental Health Officer at the Council), a Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer, a Cabinet member from the Council and Councillor P F Gardiner.

A discussion followed, and the Committee advised that the suggested monitoring of cliffs from Seaford Head to Telscombe should be welcomed by Cabinet as part of the slope stability project, being complementary to the very refined offshore laser data collection by the British Geological Society, as lower technology evaluation might reveal possible failures in advance of collapse.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Committee agreed that working with adjacent boroughs would enhance the opportunities for the Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer, and that local measures to reduce peak flow would also benefit from across-border consultation and much was to be gained from contact other organisations already involved in flood protection and river management.

The level at which the Flood and Coastal Risk Engineer would be appointed was discussed, but Councillors advised the proposed advisory group should define the level of this post. The proposal to develop a local action plan to show how to minimise wind and storm damage was welcomed by Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee advised that the wealth of local knowledge concerning flooding held by the public should be used. This would help to refine the Environment's Agency's flood maps, and would be a good cooperative venture for the Council within the District. It was noted that some preliminary work would have to be done to avoid raising expectations of a complete solution to all flooding problems. It added that work undertaken in other parts of the country would assist this work, and that the mobilising of local people to help themselves ('crowd sourcing') was a challenging but worthwhile development.

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed the contact already made by Councillor P F Gardiner to a local landowner (Gus Christie of Glyndebourne), to Rupert Clubb, Director of Economy, Transport and Environment at East Sussex County Council, and to potential members of the advisory Group, Lindsay Frost and Tom Crossett.

Recommended:

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| <p>79.1 That Cabinet be requested to support fully the Scrutiny Committee's commitment and comments to ensure the delivery of the work to improve flood defences;</p> | SCO |
| <p>79.2 That Cabinet be requested to approve the establishment of an expert advisory group to help interact with outside bodies and supplement existing skills and to oversee the use of the proposed funding for flood alleviation projects, flow reduction, review of wind and storm damage, and slope failure, including cliff failure; and</p> | SCO |
| <p>79.3 That Cabinet be requested to keep the Scrutiny Committee fully informed of any work being undertaken in the prevention of flooding within Lewes District by means of an oral report be made to Cabinet at approximately 6 month intervals with an annual report to Scrutiny Committee, then Cabinet.</p> | SCO |