

Meeting of the Council
25 February 2016
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET
(Minutes 59 and 61)

Details of proposed amendments received from Councillor Osborne

General Fund Revenue Budget 2016/2017 Amendments:

1. I MOVE that up to £50,000 be ring fenced to assist the current privately owned business trading from land owned and leased by LDC to relocate within the Lewes District. This can be funded from the economic regeneration reserve.

The Council and Santon have received planning permission for the development on North Street Quarter. LDC owns approximately 35% of the site, which houses well established businesses. The Council is currently looking to end leases to allow the development to progress.

We do not want to see these important business move out of the District or to cease to operate, and are therefore asking the Council to consider providing financial assistance to help relocate them elsewhere within the District.

2. I MOVE THAT £50,000 is allocated from reserves for the development and implementation of an extension to private sector leasing scheme in Lewes District; This is an invest to save proposal.

LDC is consistently using temporary accommodation to house those in it has a statutory requirement to do so. This includes families with children, the vulnerable, those with mental health issues some that have faced violence in the home. Currently there are around 50 families in temporary homes including flats, hotels and B & B's. a few are in bed and breakfast housing in Eastbourne and a some 10 of these are in self-contained bed and breakfast, also in Eastbourne . This is because there is a lack of hotel accommodation in the District. The council has long term leases (3 years) on 11 private houses in the district to provide temporary accommodation (Private Sector Leasing). It is also expected that there will be increasing demands placed on the council for housing for those in urgent need. Specialist support is needed to assess and plan for future demand, as well as fulfil current demand in district. A robust business case to extend private sector leasing, designing a leasing package or number of packages which is attractive to landlords and a programme of implementation is work needed to assess whether the council can better meet its statutory duties to house those in desperate need.

£50k will allow the recruitment of specialist support to develop and implement a scheme.

Details of proposed amendment received from Councillor Gardiner

3. I MOVE THAT £396,000 be added to the Council's General Fund Capital Programme over a minimum of 2 years: (£209,000 in 2016/17 and £187,000 in 2017/18) to be financed from the repatriated ring-fenced Environment Agency Levy in the Council's general fund revenue budget.

Background

The last few months have seen many parts of this district under water. This has happened despite the fact that the track of the recent series of storms has passed 200 miles to the west of us. We have been fortunate in this, but as councillors we cannot depend on luck.

In the long term we have to deal seriously with climate change, which I trust no one in this chamber denies any longer.

In the short term, we have to do three things in concert, as none will be successful without the others:

1 Build protective barriers to stop flooding where possible loss of life and property dictate. We now have proposals to provide protection for much of Lewes and Newhaven. These defences may need raising in time because these have been designed to deal with a historical data set on rainfall and water levels which no longer hold true. However we can certainly prolong their lives by cutting the peak water flow.

2 Control the erosion of our cliff faces. I will not speak further about this as we have almost completed a proposal on this

3 Reduce the peak flow through the river catchment.

This is already under way, but as will be explained below, funding good schemes is at a premium.

We commend to you the work of the Adur and Ouse Rivers Trust (OART) and of the Sussex Flow Initiative, hosted by the Sussex Wildlife Trust. They are registered charities and members of the National Rivers Trust. Their work on the Ouse and Adur catchment areas, affords protection to many across the LDC area, and in Wealden and Adur. It extends far beyond the towns of Lewes and Newhaven, and this proposal will also look to support work in villages and in the countryside where water control is vital.

As far as the impact on flooding is concerned OART work is largely about influencing the in-channel river through

- altering the hydrology through slowing flows, and elongation of channels
- increasing in-channel capacity and
- reconnecting the river with its floodplain to increase floodplain storage.

The Sussex Flow initiative focuses more on

- flood management through tree and hedge planting
- retention ponds and
- contour bunds and leaky walls

All these procedures are now becoming popular via the national press.

It is estimated that the works already undertaken have reduced the peak flow rate down the Ouse by a measurable, though small amount, and this work needs more significant support, and a series of schemes is outlined below.

Of course the sooner one starts work on fundamental changes to our catchment, the sooner it can take effect. Even quick-growing trees take time to have an impact, and we may need them in ten years' time. But to plant woodland one needs a proper economic balance not just quick growing trees.

The current position

As you will know it is all too easy for good schemes to fall between possible funding bodies and never see the light of day.

OART and the Sussex Flow Initiative have a number of projects planned but not executed, which would over time reduce the peak downstream flows. As our catchment is not at this time high on the Environment Agency priority list, and the individual schemes are generally small, they are unlikely to be fully funded if at all. Some schemes will have their flood modelling and evaluation carried out using EA monies, but they will not be implemented by EA, and others will remain on the shelf. There are a number of 'shovel ready' schemes which have either received EA approval, or do not require major EA evaluation, which can be carried out during the dry (!) summer 2016 season or during the planting seasons over the following dormant period. Other schemes can be brought forward for summer 2017, with preparation work during 2016/2017.

Not only is there difficulty in accessing EA flood monies, which are (rightly) concentrated elsewhere at the present time, but Forestry Commission Grants will cease to be available after the next planting season and are intended for large planting schemes. The Woodland Trust provides trees for minimum orders of 500 trees, and this requires the mobilisation of a large number of tree planters. Yet on a short catchment such as the River Ouse, an accumulation of small schemes (each with 50-200 trees) can have a major impact, and these smaller schemes are more acceptable to landowners, but harder to fund. There are also a large number of known sites where small coppices of trees and hedging can make an impact, and on some sites the farmers and landowners have already been approached and are already convinced of the value, though they are not in a position to fund them.

There is also an army of volunteers and schoolchildren keen to plant trees, who appear during the planting season - October/November to February/March. (For example a volunteer force will plant about 6000 trees on the River Adur at Twineham over this winter). Both OART and Sussex Flow Initiative have capable people able to project-manage schemes, and able to diagnose and review potential sites, though this ability may need augmenting.

As suggested above, some localised surface water flooding will also require work away from the rivers themselves in order to provide local protection for villages. Planting trees on areas such as the downland scarp slopes or other sites within the SDNP area will have to be negotiated with the National Park as well as landowners, but they may not be averse to this if we plant near the foot of the slope, where many woodland areas already exist.

Maximizing benefit

As a District Council we must seek to maximise the benefit of any capital works, and the schemes below have many knock-on effects. We are fortunate that we can maximise the benefits of monies put into localised schemes in two areas: optimising schemes through OART and IST, and consequent environmental benefits

Optimisation of effort and effect

- i) We have two experienced local charities with officers already employed in this type of work, and capable of supervising schemes on the LDC's behalf. We can set up arrangements for passing funds to these bodies for execution of schemes which we will agree.

- ii) There is a veritable army of people willing to plant trees at the drop of a hat and at no expense (bar the supervision and insurance of their activity) including school groups, University of Brighton Ecology Group as well as concerned adults
- iii) Much work has already been completed on several schemes and remaining schemes mentioned below have been through a preliminary evaluation
- iv) There is known to be much goodwill amongst landowners and farmers towards cooperation with charitable organisations that we can feed into. Others involved with the project will see the work associated with charitable organisations which will itself have benefits in terms of goodwill etc.

Environmental and other benefits to LDC and its residents

- v) Some of the funding proposed can be used to lever in funds from other sources, where either matched-funding or pump-priming funds are needed.
- vi) Many schemes provide an educational opportunity for LDC residents and the possible development of self-help groups for future schemes beyond 2018, and a budget is proposed for public inclusion and education. The involvement of schoolchildren is especially important.
- vii) We can use hedge and woodland planting placed for flood reduction purposes to create 'environmental corridors' mentioned in our LDF, but hard to fund or achieve on their own, and which, while a positive LDF policy, has no funding at present
- viii) Water quality may be result from the operation of the schemes due to silt removal
- ix) Potentially a higher extraction rate will be possible as the peak flows are spread over a longer period.
- x) The schemes are a practical, positive and visible good that the LDC can itself achieve for many of its residents, and which will be seen as a positive worthwhile act by the LDC, adding to its reputation

Outline of Proposed schemes

Year 1 (2016/17)

. LDC internal officer costs -scoping of project, programme supervision, preparation of feedback 6 monthly reports to Cabinet, etc. in year 1 **£5,000**

☒ _On the ground delivery of the Anchor Floodplain and Clayhill Pond projects to include tree and hedgerow planting. **£47,250**

☒ _Develop projects at Isfield, Sheffield Park, Buxted Park and two on the Bevern Stream to assess feasibility, benefits and true cost of each: **£72,500**

☒ _Develop Woody Debris Dam Project – **£7,000**

☒ _Deliver three small wood planting schemes and 1km of hedgerow – **£6,500**

☒ _Develop evidence base for future work through NFM Modelling and sponsoring of student projects– **£43,000**

☒ _Host three education/awareness events at pre-determined locations discussed and agreed with LDC (e.g. Ringmer, Wivelsfield, Kingston) **£3,000**

☒ _Deliver three research based delivery plans for sub-catchments identified as priorities for flood mitigation and river enhancement projects including landowner liaison and "quick win" natural flood management projects for each – **£12,000**

☒ _ Potential to expand SFI project to urban areas looking at promotion of SUDs and good water management in towns – Employment of Project Officer for two days per week for two years
£13,000

Following this strategy, by the end of year one we would have, subject to no unforeseen circumstances, delivered two flood alleviation projects, three landowner engagement/education workshops, increased the evidence base for future work, developed a woody debris project for delivery in year 2, delivered three sub-catchment project opportunity documents including project maps and developed a minimum of two further schemes including true costs to be discussed with LDC to agree priorities to take into year two. It is likely that the above process will highlight further, currently unknown opportunities which would be investigated and discussed with LDC in conjunction with the four highlighted above. Opportunities for matched funding etc. would be investigated

Total cost estimate for year one £209,000.

Year 2 (2017/18)

. LDC internal officer costs - programme supervision, preparation of feedback reports, report to Council etc. in year 1
£2,000

☒ _ Deliver a minimum of four to five further flood alleviation schemes as agreed with LDC in year 1, these are likely to consist of those projects developed in year one, but may also include other projects which develop through the activities listed above –
£116,500

☒ _ Deliver two further workshop/education events in locations to be decided in conjunction with LDC based on current priorities –
£2,000

☒ _ Deliver woody debris project developed in year 1 –
£17,500

☒ _ Deliver additional pond creation project for water attenuation –
£12,000

☒ _ Deliver 3 additional research based delivery plans for sub-catchments identified as priorities for flood mitigation and river enhancement projects including landowner liaison and “quick win” natural flood management projects for each –
£12,000

☒ _ Deliver an additional five small tree planting schemes and 2km of hedgerow –
£12,000

☒ _ Continuation of urban work began in year 1 – Employment of Officer for two days per week for two years –
£13,000

Total cost of project delivery in year 2 estimated at £187,000.

Total budget over two years estimated at £396,000

Note:

A project summary document has been prepared by officers of *Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust* and *Sussex Flow Initiative* for consideration by LDC which is circulated separately.