

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>10 July 2023</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Presentation from Blue Heart Initiative</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Simon Russell, Head of Democratic Services</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<b>To provide context to the request of the Full Council at its meeting on the 22 February 2023.</b>
<b>Officer recommendation(s):</b>	<p><b>1) To note the report and consider the presentation from the Blue Heart Project; and</b></p> <p><b>2) To decide whether there are areas or issues highlighted where further scrutiny is required or where further support can be provided.</b></p>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	<b>To fulfil the Committee’s role in reflecting the views of the public and looking in depth at issues of concern in the Borough.</b>
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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 In its role as a provider of public scrutiny the Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to look outward and to amplify the voices and concerns of the public. The Committee is able to do this by requesting that representatives from organisations and other stakeholders attend meetings and talk to the Committee about their work.

The area highlighted in this report, and one that the Council feels is impacting on the health and wellbeing of its residents and the environment, is the detrimental effect of regular discharge of wastewater into the Borough’s coastal areas, the level of water quality, and the work being done to respond to the issue. Representatives from the Blue Heart Project have been invited to talk to the Committee about the Project and the work being done to mitigate the effects of flooding in Eastbourne.

## **2 Background**

2.1 At the meeting of the Full Council on the 22 February 2023, a motion in relation to holding Southern Water to account for sewage discharges in the sea was debated and the resolution included the following:

'This Council invites the project team from the local Blue Heart initiative to speak to members of the Council's Scrutiny Committee to present their progress on managing rainwater runoff, so important to our sea bathing water quality outcomes'.

- 2.2 The Blue Heart Project is led by East Sussex County Council and aims, over a six-year period (initiated in 2021) to mitigate the impact caused by climate change, using technology to manage and monitor water levels in Eastbourne (and south Wealden). The Project recognises that the interaction between the various organisations that manage flood risk is complicated and includes the public sewer network, as well as rivers, tidal areas and ground and surface water.

The Project is being delivered in partnership with the following stakeholders:

- Environment Agency
- Pevensey and Cuckmere Water Level Management Board
- Eastbourne Borough Council
- Wealden District Council
- Southern Water

### **3 Outcomes**

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to listen to representatives from the Blue Heart Project, discuss the issue further and decide whether there are areas where the Council can provide support or where further scrutiny is needed.

### **4 Financial appraisal**

- 4.1 Blue Heart is a project that will provide an understanding of the local water catchment in Eastbourne and south Wealden. The project will use technology to manage and monitor water levels in these areas to mitigate the impact of flooding caused by climate change. East Sussex County Council has been successful as one of 25 project areas to secure funds under Defra's £150 million innovation fund in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council and other agencies. However, at this time there are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

### **5 Legal implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

### **6 Risk management implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct risk implications as a result of this report.

### **7 Equality analysis**

- 7.1 There are no direct equality issues as a result of this report.

## **8 Environmental sustainability implications**

- 8.1 The report provides context to the request from Full Council for a presentation by Blue Heart Project representatives to the Scrutiny Committee. The Project is based around measuring and mitigating the impact of climate change on the environment.

## **9 Background papers**

[The Blue Heart project | East Sussex County Council](#)