

Subject:	Coastal Defence Strategy – Brighton Marina to River Adur		
Date of Meeting:	2 May 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director for Environment, Development and Housing		
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Ward(s) affected:	South Portslade, Wish, Westbourne, Central Hove, Brunswick & Adelaide, Regency, Queen's Park, East Brighton, Rottingdean Coastal.		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 It is essential that the council has a risk-based management strategy for coast defence in order to ensure that the city's coastline is not adversely affected by coastal erosion and sea flooding. Such strategies are encouraged by the government department DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), and funded through the Environment Agency.
- 1.2 The preparation of a draft strategy, known formally as the 'Brighton Marina to River Adur - Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy', began last year with the gathering of information and data. It is being carried out in partnership with Worthing & Adur Councils. A further informal information gathering exercise is currently underway, which will help inform and shape the development of proposed management options.
- 1.3 Various options are available for the management of coastal risks over the next 100 years (the period of time that the Environment Agency requires the long-term strategy to be planned for) and therefore the public should be consulted on a long list of such options for protecting the city's coastline.
- 1.4 The city council is also participating in a separate study being led by Lewes District Council for the section of the coast between Brighton Marina and Newhaven, which includes Rottingdean. One of the primary risks that will the council will be considering for this section of coast is the proximity of the A259 to the cliff edge. This area does differ significantly from the Adur to Marina section in that it is a cliffed coastline and the majority of it is defended. Work on the existing strategy study (Marina - Saltdean and Saltdean - Newhaven) will therefore require revision and a scoping exercise is underway. A fuller study is expected to begin during 2013/14, subject to funding being secured by Lewes District Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee authorises officers to undertake consultation on a number of management options for coastal defences within the 3 defined sections of the coast between Brighton Marina and the River Adur as set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report. .
- 2.2 That the Committee requests that the results of the consultation should be reported back to the Committee in order that a preferred option for the defence of this section of the city's coast can be considered and agreed.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The City Council is a coast protection authority taking its powers from the Coast Protection Act 1949. The Act defines coast protection as the prevention of erosion and encroachment by the sea and allows authorities to apply to the Secretary of State for funding towards the cost of schemes and studies.
- 3.2 Strategies are one stage in the process of establishing a business case for funding towards the building of coast defences. Initially a regional Shoreline Management Plan [SMP] is prepared which sets policies for coast defence. For Brighton & Hove, the Selsey Bill to Beachy Head SMP has set a policy of holding the currently defended line. The SMP and its policies were adopted by the council's Environment Committee on 14 September 2006, and part of the SMP's action plan is to prepare coastal strategies.
- 3.3 The previous strategy for this section of coast was approved for submission to DEFRA by the council's Environment Committee on 12th June 2003. However, DEFRA was unable to approve it owing to changes in governance and the guidance for the preparation of such strategies. It has taken some time to secure new funding to review the previous work under the new guidance. Approval to fund the current strategy was finally received from the Environment Agency in August 2011 and following a tender process, consulting engineers Halcrow have been retained to advise the council.
- 3.4 During the last 12 months, a detailed examination of the coast and previous work done has been undertaken, and information and data have been collated, ranging from the conservation value of areas of the coast to predictions of climate change and sea level rise. A number of technical reports have been prepared by Halcrow to assist in the development of the management strategy. A page on the Council's website has been set up where the reports can be viewed and comments made.
- 3.5 The development of the strategy involves assessing a range of management options from doing nothing at all to defend the coast to large engineering schemes. All these options must be technically, environmentally and economically justifiable so that the final option can be successfully presented to the Environment Agency for funding once they have approved the strategy.

- 3.6 For the purposes of the study the coast is divided into 3 sections – the locked section of Shoreham Port; the coast between the mouth of the River Adur and Brighton Marina; and Brighton Marina itself. A long list of options for the management of these 3 sections has been developed and those that will form the basis of the consultation are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3.7 There are 5 generic options:
1. *No active intervention*: abandoning the defences and undertaking no further maintenance or repair.
 2. *Do minimum*: only undertaking work where there is a breach in the seawall or a physical collapse of part of the defences.
 3. *Maintain*: keeping things as they are and not taking any account of climate change. This would result in increasing risks over time as the standard of defence would decline.
 4. *Sustain*: constructing new defences where necessary to reflect sea level rise and so keeping pace with change and maintaining the standard of defence.
 5. *Improve*: construct new defences to increase erosion and flood protection over and above what is necessary to keep pace with climate change.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A Communications Plan has been one of the first reports to be prepared when work began on the strategy. It is available on the council's website and contains details of the groups and stakeholders who will be contacted in order to assist in gathering information and data to assist in developing the management strategy. Before Easter this year, a newsletter was issued to help inform this work and all councillors were informed of its publication. It includes an outline of the study area and copies have been placed in Members' Rooms.
- 4.2 A consultation brochure is being prepared and each section of coast will be represented with a range of possible options outlined for the 5 generic categories described above. The project's Engagement and Communication Plan identifies the council and external consultees that have been, and will continue to be, involved in the consultation for the options and the Strategic Environmental Assessment [SEA]. These include Parish Councils, MPs, councillors, local resident and interest groups and members of the public. The consultation is planned to take place between May and July 2013, and will involve published and on-line material and public exhibitions. The results will be assessed and reported back to Committee in order that a preferred option can be considered and agreed by February 2014.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Work on the preparation of the strategy will be 100% grant-aided by DEFRA through the Environment Agency. The cost of any work that is not grant eligible (such as some elements of the consultation process) will be met from the council's coast protection revenue budget.

- 5.2 Any coast defence schemes that may be necessary for the implementation of the preferred management strategy will be submitted to the Environment Agency for grant aid once it has approved the strategy.
- 5.3 Future works would not be 100% grant-aided. A calculation will be made on the percentage of grant the preferred option would be likely to attract, and any balance required would have to be found locally. This calculation would be made in line with prevailing DEFRA policy at the time. Given the high cost of some coast defence schemes this policy of 'partnership funding' can jeopardise the implementation of schemes where the availability of local funding is limited.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates

Date: 10/04/2013

Legal Implications:

- 5.4 The Council takes its coast defence powers from the Coast Protection Act 1949. The Act confers permissive powers on coast protection authorities such as Brighton & Hove. This means that the Council has the power to take the action set out in the report but there is no legal requirement for the council to defend the coast nor any right to defence by occupiers of the coastal zone or commercial interests, as there is in some European countries.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 17 April 2013

Equalities Implications:

- 5.5 There are no direct equalities implications at this stage. All consultation material will comply with the council's guidance and standards.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.6 The latest climate change estimates published by DEFRA are used in developing the management strategy's options. The project is also supported and informed by a Strategic Environmental assessment [SEA].

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.7 There are no implications for crime and disorder.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.8 There are no direct risk implications at this stage in the strategy's development. However, it is not possible to remove all risks from the coastal zone and the basis of any coast defence strategy will be to manage risks, and this will be reflected in the options presented for consultation.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.9 The use of the city's beaches and seafront for recreation, relaxation and amenity should not be underestimated and, although difficult to quantify, it complements the economic value that commercial and other activities on the seafront have for the city. For example, data taken from a permanent counter on the Undercliff

Walk at the Marina showed a total 2-way flow of pedestrians and cycles of over 14,000 in February this year.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.10 The preparation of the draft Coastal Defence Strategy will also inform and support the development of the council's Seafront Strategy. Although the SMP is based on the next 100 years, it will ensure that as far as possible it reflects the aspirations of local interests.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 A number of options for coast defence will be developed for each of the 3 sections of coast. These will subsequently be consulted on.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 In order to assist in raising awareness and understanding of the Coastal Defence Strategy, it is necessary to seek permission to consult on possible options for management. Consultation at various stages in the development of a strategy is also recommended in the Environment Agency's guidance.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Long list of options for consultation

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Information leaflet – published March 2013.

Background Documents

1. Technical reports – 2012 (including Strategic Environmental Assessment [SEA] and Coastal Processes Report)
2. Stakeholder Engagement Plan and SEA Communication Plan - 2013

