

Simultaneous Meeting of Suffolk Coastal District Council’s Scrutiny Committee and Waveney District Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 25 October 2018

A JOINT REVIEW OF COASTAL PARTNERSHIP EAST’S FUTURE PLANS FOR THE SUFFOLK COAST, ITS EXISTING PROJECTS AND WORKS (REP1866)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Coastal Partnership East (CPE) brings together the coastal management expertise from four local authorities (including SCDC and WDC) into a single team through the Local Government Act 1974 Section 113 agreement. This has been operational since 1st April 2016.
2. CPE delivers a wide range of coastal management activities focussing on either protecting communities or finding new and innovative ways for them to adapt to coastal change.
3. CPE is a national exemplar of local authorities working together and has an ambitious programme of work over the next 10 years.
4. It is also working at a national level with government, Environment Agency and others to influence policy and find practical solutions for vulnerable communities along the Suffolk coast.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	<p>SCDC: Aldeburgh, Deben, Felixstowe North, Felixstowe East, Felixstowe South, Felixstowe West, Kirton, Leiston, Martlesham, Melton, Nacton and Purdis Farm, Orford and Eyke, The Trimleys, Wenhashton and Westleton, Woodbridge.</p> <p>Waveney: Gunton and Corton, Harbour, Kessingland, Kirkley, Pakefield, Southwold and Reydon, Wrentham</p>
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Cabinet Members:	Cllr Andy Smith (SCDC) Cllr David Ritchie (WDC)
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Supporting Officer:	<p>Bill Parker Head of Coastal Partnership East 01394 444553 bill.parker@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</p>
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1 INTRODUCTION TO COASTAL PARTNERSHIP EAST

- 1.1 Coastal Partnership East (CPE) brings together the coastal management expertise from four local authorities into a single team through the Local Government Act 1974 Section 113 agreement. The Maritime Local Authorities (MLAs) of Great Yarmouth Borough with North Norfolk, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils face significant, diverse but also common challenges of a dynamic coastline. The individual authorities lacked staff resilience, challenges in recruitment, career progression and had expertise fragmented between individual authorities.
- 1.2 However, the demands for management of coastal change, from coast protection to adaptation, far out-stripped the resources available. Responding proactively to this situation and seizing the opportunity, a joint Norfolk and Suffolk coastal shared services team was established in April 2016 as CPE.
- 1.3 MLAs have powers under the 1949 Coast Protection Act for coastlines vulnerable to coastal erosion whereas the Environment Agency has powers for areas of potential flooding. Beyond the legal responsibilities, the Suffolk and Norfolk MLAs have a highly developed working relationship with the other Risk Management Authorities such as the Environment Agency, County Councils and Internal Drainage Boards. CPE also works in a wider context of coastal management with Estuary and Coastal Partnerships, vulnerable coastal communities and is a key partner in the highly regarded and now well-established Suffolk Coast Forum.
- 1.4 CPE is therefore directly responsible for 92km of the 173km of coastline in Norfolk and Suffolk, from Holkham in North Norfolk to Landguard Point in Felixstowe. There are approximately 352,000 people who live in the direct coastal zone and many more that work on and visit our coast. The Norfolk and Suffolk coast are of recreational, environmental and cultural importance but it is also home to industry (energy, ports and logistics, digital, food and drink and creative sector) agriculture and tourism. In addition, a significant number of second and holiday homes are situated in our coastal towns and villages.
- 1.5 Whilst some areas of the Norfolk and Suffolk coast can be affluent, the urban coastal towns of Gt Yarmouth, Lowestoft and South Felixstowe are recognised as areas of regeneration, requiring inward investment.
- 1.6 SCDC and WDC along with the other partner authorities own and maintain significant coast defence assets. These by their very nature located in the hostile coastal environment and require frequent and ongoing maintenance. We need to invest in improving erosion and flood defences (where appropriate) to ensure that our coastal communities are adequately protected through capital works.
- 1.7 The change from a coast protection to coastal management approach has evolved over the past 15 years. CPE actively looks to support individuals and businesses (e.g. at Easton Bavents) where it is not always appropriate to defend our coastline for; economic, coastal process or practical reasons. CPE has been working hard to develop policy at both a local and national level as well as delivering practical assistance to those affected. This has included the innovative Statement of Common Group for Coastal Zone Planning signed by the 6 Local Planning Authorities on the Norfolk and Suffolk coast (BCKLWN, NNDC, BA, GYBC, WDC, SCDC) which has been submitted as part of the evidence base for the Waveney Local Plan that is currently with the Inspector. This has also been endorsed by the Environment Agency and is also being considered by the Marine Maritime Organisation.

- 1.8 The demographic of the communities served by CPE is diverse and our challenge is to make sure that the benefits of our partnership are communicated in a way which is clearly understood. We will ensure that our communications are planned, targeted and appropriate, enabling our communities to work with us and to be involved in the outcome. To achieve this adequately skilled and professional resource needs to be in place.
- 1.9 The team have developed a Vision, Aim and Strategic Objectives for CPE (see Appendix A).

2 INFLUENCING NATIONAL POLICY

- 2.1 CPE provides the secretariat for the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group 'SIG'. Under the Chairmanship of Cllr Andy Smith, the group is now recognised as the leading voice for local authorities on coastal issues. It now has 66 active local authority members (increased from 50 in the last 6 years) and for example has presented evidence to and will facilitate a workshop for the House of Lords Select Committee on Regeneration of Coastal Towns and Communities (31st October).
- 2.2 The lead role at the SIG has enabled CPE to actively engage directly with Ministers, Defra, MHCLG, HM Treasury and senior Directors at the Environment Agency (EA), Marine Management Organisation, The Crown Estate and others.
- 2.3 The on-going work championing the coast and coastal adaptation policy by the CPE team is materially influencing national strategy, policy and funding approaches which will bring direct benefit to the communities along the Suffolk coast.
- 2.4 Tangible benefit of working on a national basis included recognition for the SIG's role in lobbying for the change in corporate tax rules to include contributions to flood and coast defences becoming a taxable allowance provided there is also Flood Defence and Coastal Erosion Grant in Aid funding applicable. This provides an incentive for private investment into essential infrastructure.

3 HOW DO STAFF WORK ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIP?

- 3.1 The CPE team works across the Partnership's area prioritising staff resources based on the level of risk and need in principle to be "border blind".
- 3.2 The personnel under the leadership of the CPE Head of Coastal Management are structured into three teams; Coastal Engineering delivering maintenance and improvements to coast defences and two Coastal Management teams (North and South) delivering community engagement, project funding and coastal adaptation (see Appendix B).
- 3.3 The coastal engineering team tends to be more geographically focused with the Suffolk engineers based in Lowestoft. However, the Coastal Engineering Manager works across Norfolk and Suffolk and can draw upon other resource as required, for example in the case of incident response and recovery.
- 3.4 The team members line managed by the Coastal Manager (South) are employed by Suffolk Coastal District Council. They provide support to the Partnership by identifying and securing additional partnership funding and providing communications, planning and delivery across the range of work delivered. They also identify opportunities for cross partnership working with other Risk Management Authorities such as the Internal Drainage Boards through the Water Management Alliance and with partners such as the Crown Estate, bringing in additional revenue to support the Partnership's work and reduce the burden to Council's budget. In addition, this team plan, prepare and deliver the Suffolk Coast Forum Conference.
- 3.5 The creation of CPE has enabled additional capacity to be funded by the Regional Flood and Coast Committee (at no cost to SCDC / WDC). Kellie Fisher works 3 days a week for the EA and

2 days a week for CPE. This has provided significant benefits of better integration with the EA and made a material difference to CPE and coastal communities.

- 3.6 Ongoing career development for staff is a key part of the ethos of CPE. Team members have been actively encouraged to attain professional qualifications.
- 3.7 Opportunities for staff new to coastal management have also been actively encouraged. In the last 2 years CPE have supported 2 apprentices, a summer placement student, a Foundation year student from the Environment Agency national scheme, enabling them all to contribute to the work of CPE but also develop professionally. In addition, CPE has also sponsored a PhD student at Cranfield University bringing the understanding of the opportunities of big data into coastal management. He now has a fully funded NERC sponsorship to work embedded in CPE for 4 months next year.

4 WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE ON SUFFOLK COAST

4.1 The development of a single Coastal Management Team for SCDC and WDC was established in 2012. The learning especially regarding the vulnerability and lack of resilience (following the delivery of the Central Felixstowe and Lowestoft South Beach schemes) of the team, together with the challenges in recruitment led to the creation of CPE to include NNDC and GYBC on 1st April 2016.

4.2 In the last 2 years the following has been delivered by CPE:

- The Gorleston to Lowestoft Strategy
- North Corton Shoreline Management Plan policy review
- Delivery of and operation of the Lowestoft temporary defences in event of tidal surge
- Completion of phase 1 coastal adaptation plan at Easton Bavents
- Development of beach safety approach following the fatality at Thorpeness
- Completion of the Brackenbury footpath
- Ongoing repairs and maintenance following the 'Beast from the East'
- The development of an innovative Dynamic Purchasing System has led to new repairs and maintenance contractors being appointed for both WDC and SCDC delivering better value for money.
- The Statement of Common Ground for Coastal Zone Planning
- Delivery of ~ £14m of external funding for projects and maintenance

4.3 Work already initiated and in progress on major projects include:

- Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project
- Benacre Levels re-alignment
- Easton Bavents coastal adaptation scheme
- North Southwold initial assessment study, Southwold Harbour fender repair and Southwold Harbour Study.
- Sizewell C Coastal processes and defences
- Development of a sustainable approach for Thorpeness
- SMP policy reviews for Slaughden and Bawdsey

- Development of the Collector App for asset inspectors

5 FUTURE WORKS PLANNED FOR THE SUFFOLK COAST

- 5.1 The challenges faced specifically in Suffolk over the next few years include for example; SCDC: further investment into the repair and replacement of sea defences in Felixstowe, completion of the technical input required for the Sizewell area (including EDF Sizewell C development, the landing of additional offshore windfarm power cables and two new inter-continental power connections), the management of and adaptation to a changing coastline, in particular at Thorpeness and Slaughden, and resolution of a long term solution for East Lane Bawdsey. The current 10-year capital investment plan identifies more than £11m of investment within the existing Suffolk Coastal District area.
- 5.2 WDC: The development and delivery of the following schemes besides the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project (£63m) include: the innovative new approach to North Corton, schemes already under development Benacre Levels at Kessingland, North Southwold and Southwold Harbour. The current 10-year capital investment plan identifies more than £19m of investment within the existing Waveney Coastal District area.

6 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?

- 6.1 “The coast is the golden thread which runs through the coastal economy in Suffolk.” This was a statement made recently by Mark Pendlington, Executive Director of Anglian Water and outgoing Chair of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Our Business Plan sets out a vision for the development of tourism, economic growth and arts and culture. It refers to our spectacular coast and acknowledges the need for the management of this long and eroding or floodable coastline. Managing our coast effectively, and this could mean natural coast management such as cliff top realignment or adaptation of coastal businesses or communities, just as it could mean the construction and maintenance of hard defences, is extremely important in supporting the defined outcomes in our business plan.
- 6.2 In September 2012 a paper was published “Does living by the coast improve health and wellbeing” (Wheeler, B.W. et al Sept 2012 Health and Place). It concluded that “good health is more prevalent the closer one lives to the coast”. The East Suffolk Business Plan sets out the ambition to have ‘healthy and engaged people’ and ‘people who feel included and proud of where they live’. As above it also recognises that erosion and flood risk reduces the economic potential of key growth areas. To address these and to ensure that coastal management supports the delivery of the East Suffolk Business Plan we need to ensure that we have the right resource: a resource which is properly skilled, feels valued and is committed to supporting the delivery of actions on the coast which achieve the aims of the Council and of the Partnership.
- 6.3 The CPE 3-year business plan (2017/18 to 2020/21 see appendix D) and annual action plans have been developed from the East Suffolk Business Plan and the other partner local authority plans.
- 6.4 The East Suffolk Business Plan actions include:
- ES07 Supporting Communities to develop innovative approaches, including ‘enabling development’ to help fund major estuary and coast protection works. (Enabling Communities) – ongoing work sharing knowledge of innovative work being developed by the team.
 - ES23 Integrate Coastal Management expertise with other local authorities to ensure the most effective delivery (Financial Self-Sufficiency) – Complete – see case study:

<http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Your-Council/Business-Plan/Case-studies/Coastal-Partnership-East-case-study.pdf>

- ES Develop with academic institutions, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and other centres of excellence across Suffolk and Norfolk, an integrated and progressive approach to coastal management. (Economic Growth; Financial Self-Sufficiency). Now working with a wide range of academic institutions within and beyond Norfolk and Suffolk. Bringing the best knowledge to Suffolk to deliver the best information to help management decisions.
- ES25 Maintain a long term and adaptive approach to managing the coast – adopting innovative approaches in areas vulnerable to erosion and climate change. (Enabling Communities; Economic Growth; Financial Self-Sufficiency) – Working with Universities, government, Environment Agency and other organisations this is work in progress
- W06 Complete the Lowestoft Flood Protection measures, including a tidal gate. (Economic Growth) – Progressing with the Outline Business Case and Transport Works Act Order. Works ‘on the ground’ should start in 2019 and be completed by 2023.

7 GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 CPE is an equitable partnership between the four Authorities and is overseen by a formal governance structure and terms of reference. The Board (which meets 4 times a year) provides strategic direction for the management of the Partnership. It consists of an appointed Member representative from each council in the Partnership. Board members include Cllr Andy Smith (SCDC) and Cllr David Ritchie (WDC).
- 7.2 Supporting the Board is the Operational Officer Group (which also meets 4 times a year) provides operational guidance to the Partnership Manager and considers staffing matters and holds the Partnership Manager to account for delivery on their respective areas. It is made up of senior officers representing each local authority and the Partnership Manager. OOG members include Nick Khan, Philip Ridley and Bill Parker (Partnership Manager).
- 7.3 The transition to East Suffolk will have implications for the governance of CPE. The proposal to be tabled at the next CPE Board meeting is for each of the three authorities to have representation from 2 Members and to be quorate must include at least 1 member from each authority. This is currently being finalised.
- 7.4 The partnership enables resources to be managed more effectively and with a high degree of efficiency resulting in more positive and sustainable outcomes for our communities in the long-term. There is an additional benefit of being able to resource critical specialist roles needed to influence and engage with regional and national bodies and source significant funds from both government and private sector sources.
- 7.5 The benefit of this approach to cross authority partnership working can clearly be demonstrated for improved resilience, greater capacity especially for specialist roles such as funding, and the ability to recruit but less tangibly the scale of CPE enables Suffolk (and Norfolk) to be a significant voice amongst our partners and government that will bring benefits to the communities along our coastline.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Investment into managing the coast is by its very nature “lumpy” and long term, both for upfront preparation for investment and actual capital works. The ability to flex staff across four authorities enables best use of resource capacity and continuity.
- 8.2 The Partnership Manager costs are shared equally between all four authorities and the Coastal Engineering Manager between NNDC and SCDC / WDC.

- 8.3 The cost of the other staff currently employed by Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils incurred by CPE are currently shared 50/50 with Waveney District Council. The cost of other staff within CPE is borne by NNDC and GYBC.
- 8.4 All capital and maintenance costs within Suffolk Coastal are funded either by Suffolk Coastal or external funding not by any other authority.
- 8.5 Central Government investment for capital works is now based on a partnership funding approach requiring a combination of public and private investment. Investors in our coast need to be identified and the return on investment defined. Our business plan refers to erosion and flood risk reducing the economic potential of key growth areas. CPE's role is to challenge that perception and to identify benefit which will support coastal management: to work with businesses to identify potential for growth linked to good and appropriate coastal management. Case studies for this, such as Felixstowe, have demonstrated locally and nationally, that this proves the case for investment. Working with evidence, we equally plan to reduce the burden on Council's budget: identifying areas for rechargeable services, for example with organisations like The Crown Estates.
- 8.6 The current level of revenue (repairs and maintenance) and capital budgets for 2018/19 are:
- SCDC Revenue - £150k
 - WDC Revenue - £145k
 - WDC Capital - £200k
- 8.7 The transition to East Suffolk Council will of course combine two existing budget elements yielding a clearer, more direct relationship between the budget and the mix of roles supported and the outcomes delivered in East Suffolk.

9 OTHER KEY ISSUES

- 9.1 The need for works on the Suffolk coast has identified an ambitious capital investment plan. Funding for these works is dependent on a Partnership Funding model that requires finding private investment. Our capacity to deliver this is recognised as a significant bottleneck. Discussions with the Water Management Alliance on sharing posts to undertake this work are underway to spread the cost. The opportunity to leverage in significant levels of funding may require consideration of additional pump priming investment from SCDC / WDC in future.
- 9.2 This report has been prepared having taken into account the results of an Equality Impact Assessment, a Sustainability Impact Assessment and a Partnership Impact Assessment.

10 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 10.1 CPE is one of the very few partnership models of local authorities working together along a significant stretch of coastline. Other authorities are either working individually or in loose agreements. CPE is seen as an exemplar across the country.
- 10.2 The only realistic other option is to return to individual authority-based teams. The Operational Officer Group reviewed the role, function and funding of CPE. It was agreed that this model should continue as the best way forward.

11 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 To ensure that the Suffolk Coastal Scrutiny Committee and the Waveney District Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the opportunity to review governance arrangements, performance and the future direction of Coastal Partnership East.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the simultaneous SCDC Scrutiny and WDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report, support the CPE team and recognise the importance of the work to SCDC and WDC.
2. That the Committee support the principle of additional investment in resources to deliver coastal management subject to usual request for resources processes.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	CPE Vision, Aims and Strategic Objectives
Appendix B	CPE Structure Chart
Appendix C	CPE 2 nd Annual Report
Appendix D	CPE 3-year Business Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE