

Friday, 2 February 2024

FLOOD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

A meeting of the Flood Management Strategy Task and Finish Group was held on Tuesday, 18 June 2024 online via Teams.

PRESENT Councillors C Cawley, M Fairley, J Joy, B Hunt, D Powlay, V Rider, P Thomson, and P Salvin.

OFFICIALS R Asadi, L Hall, N Hill, C Fraser, and A Lynch-Brown

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Smith.

2. STRUCTURE OF MEETING

Officers outlined the structure of the initial meeting and members were invited to come forward with their ideas on progressing the work on the group to address the strategy.

The timeframe of the group was set for three months, and it was explained that the Terms of Reference would be developed and agreed by the group.

Members were reminded that the recommendations must be achievable and made considering current resource limitations.

Members were asked to nominate a Chair and agree the frequency of meetings.

Officers shared the policy and strategy document and asked members to provide recommendations that would inform the development of the next strategy. There were multiple strands to be covered as well as duties and responsibilities.

Members were advised that the strategy would need to conform to government requirements.

3. LOCAL ISSUES

Members gave initial feedback reflecting issues that had impacted areas within the borough and their wards.

A member commented that there were issues with the number of gully suckers being generally available. Officers advised that an initiative was being introduced to make use of AI to determine the frequency of works

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and better target areas in a timely manner. A member expressed an interest in how prioritisation was determined.

A member asked about the cost of AI. Officers advised that it was in budget and carrying out a survey will determine silt levels that will support AI data and ongoing data collection to discover other issues such as grass cutting and autumn leaf fall. Once the AI data has been analysed the approach can link with the sweeper programme. This proactive, joined up approach has been communicated with the Neighbourhoods Team.

A member asked if the council was working closely with the Environment Agency to keep becks clear and better access for members to the duty officer. Officers advised that there becomes a hierarchy of problem to prioritise when there are heavy rainfall events. The volume of calls can be significant, and it is important to use the call centre to accurately record and respond to issues.

A member asked about issues where council land and private land border. Officers advised work with other council departments would be needed to make progress in these areas.

A member highlighted the varied geography within the borough and the need for a proactive approach looking at new strategies. Officers advised that 80% of the borough is combined drainage. The Lead Local Flood Authority has among its duties a requirement for private landowners to hold back water to prevent the system being overwhelmed. New developments must build a separate system and work continues with Northumbrian Water.

A member asked about the Teesworks flood barrier, and another member suggested that it would be useful to have sight of the Teesworks flood strategy.

A member stressed the need for a strategy timetable review process and offset arrangements in place for developers. There was also a need to look at reed beds, coastal erosion, and existing design challenges such as Cat Nab car park. Officers advised that the Environment Agency governs sea issues and shoreline management. Cat Nab can be tide locked at times and there is a draft beach management plan although the impact from winter storms continued to be felt.

A member suggested the need to plan for river reed beds and ongoing issues with Eston Hills run off and a strategy to assist cleaning the water.

4. **CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

Councillor Thomson nominated Councillor Joy as Chair and Councillor Hunt as Vice Chair. The group unanimously agreed.

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5. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be scheduled to take place in three weeks and every three weeks thereafter. The scope of the group and Terms of Reference would be brought forward for members to consider.