

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 OCTOBER 2023

COUNCILLOR SANDRA SQUIRE - CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & COASTAL

For the period 24 August to 06 October 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

I recently chaired a meeting of the Wash East Coast Management Strategy Stakeholder Group. At this meeting there was an update on the current and future work on the shoreline management plan.

The shoreline management plan & WECMS (Wash East Coast Management Strategy) remains with the policy of hold the line until 2025.

Regular monitoring by the Environment Agency shows movement of the shingle ridge. This means that a technical report is being carried out by Jacobs, which will report back in spring 2024. This report will help progress to a solution but until the report is complete we cannot say what the next steps would be. The technical report will also evaluate the beach recharge. Beach levels are currently stable and the annual beach recycling work will continue. Funding is in place to continue this going forward.

The Environment Agency are engaging with owners of properties situated behind the shingle ridge as some have excavated the top and side of the ridge. This reduces the integrity and weakens the ridge and level of flood protection it provides. EA officers are in the area and will continue to monitor and engage with homeowners.

The borough council has supported the Environment Agency as the lead organisation on this, who have the power to enforce, by distributing a Living with the Shingle Ridge newsletter to residents in the area along with the annual local sea defences newsletter which was delivered in August. An additional newsletter is planned to be sent to all residents with properties in that area in the next few weeks. Both the council and the EA have taken a very proactive approach to contacting residents and businesses locally and will continue to do so.

If councillors would like a detailed briefing, this can be arranged if requested.

Last month I attended the LGA Coastal SIG Field Trip and AGM in Skegness, which was well attended by councillors and officers from other coastal councils including our North Norfolk neighbours. We spent 3 days touring round various sites including the Boston Flood Barrier, the Hobhole Pumping Station and the North Sea Observatory. At the AGM I was honoured to be nominated and voted in as the Member Champion for Coastal Water Quality for the LGA Coastal SIG. This means working closely with the LGA SIG officers and other councils to help improve our coastal water quality. It was extremely useful to be able to discuss coastal matters with other councils so that we can share ideas and support each other.

The Coastal SIG's water quality group have responded to the Government consultation on unlimited fines for polluters stating that we agree with unlimited fines for the worst polluters and that incentive will only exist where the fines are significantly more than the cost of complying with the law. They are also recommending that Local Authorities receive some of the income from the fines to support those who are directly impacted as a result of pollution events. We are also joining the call for there to be a dedicated Minister for the Coast, which I feel would be particularly important for West Norfolk.

There have been some issues in certain areas with bins not being collected during road closures and residents not being informed. We are working on ways to keep residents informed in advance of any issues being caused by road closures in future. I will update council when I have more information.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Meetings scheduled for later this month include the Marine & Coastal Partnerships Forum and the Heacham Bathing Water Quality meeting.

I am also looking at potentially forming a group to look at how we can encourage more natural flood management, particularly around our precious chalk streams and to see what potential there is to work with outside partners for some river restoration. This is very early days and I will update council when I know more.

We are also working on a campaign to increase food waste collection levels across the borough, that will include working with schools. While this is being designed and planned out, I would encourage everyone to use their food waste bins. The carbon footprint is much lower to send food waste to be processed by anaerobic digester rather than by incineration with your residual waste. Remember you can use any bag for your food waste.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Various Portfolio briefings

Cabinet Briefings

RSPB Beach Clean Snettisham to Heacham

LGA Coastal SIG Water Quality Meeting

LGA Coastal SIG Field Trip & AGM (3 days)

Joint Labour/IP meeting

Wash East Coast Management Strategy Stakeholders Group

Corporate Strategy Meetings

Cabinet

Additional Council Meeting

Joint Waste Contract Review & Development Board Meeting