



Norfolk County Council

Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 22 November 2023
at 10am at County Hall Norwich**

Present:

Cllr Steve Morphew (Chair)
Cllr Daniel Elmer (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lesley Bambridge
Cllr Phillip Duigan
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Tom FitzPatrick
Cllr Keith Kiddie
Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris
Cllr Ed Maxfield
Cllr Jamie Osborn
Cllr Brian Watkins

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Robert Savage for Cllr Carl Annison

Also Present:

Hollie Adams	Committee Officer
Cllr James Bensly	Local Member for East Flegg, Chair of the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee, Chair of Coastal Partnership East
Grahame Bygrave	Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Henry Cator	Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation
Kat Hulatt	Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Joel Hull	Assistant Director of Waste and Water Management
Mark Ogden	Flood and Water Manager
Peter Randall	Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager
Paul Seaman	Head of Operations, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service
Laine Tisdall	Committee Officer
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
Cllr Martin Wilby	Local Member for East Depwade

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Carl Annison substituted by Cllr Robert Savage.

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meetings held on 18 October and 31 October 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 Cllr Brian Long declared an “other” interest as he was the chairman of the King’s Lynn Internal Drainage Board, which was a paid position.

4. Public Question Time

- 4.1 Three substantive and supplementary questions were received, from Linda Adcock, Tom Read and Paul Smith. The responses are appended to this set of minutes at Appendix A.

5. Local Member Issues/Questions

- 5.1 No local member questions were received.

6 Call In

- 6.1 The Committee noted that there were no call-in items at this meeting

7 Review of Norfolk Flood Prevention Activity

- 7.1 The Committee received the annexed report (7).
- 7.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste introduced the report, which provided an outline of the Council’s statutory role as the Lead Local Flood Authority for Norfolk, as well as its status and responsibility as a Risk Management Authority for flooding in its statutory role as a Highway Authority. The report also outlined the opportunities and implications for the Council that would arise from the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, relating to sustainable drainage. Schedule 3 had been implemented in Wales but not in England as of 2023.
- 7.3 The Cabinet Member praised the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, and the Highways teams and their contractors for their efforts during the recent storms. The Cabinet Member remarked that there were reports in the media recently that 2023 was likely to be the hottest on record for many years, and that efforts to limit climate change to a 1.5 degree increase in global temperatures was likely going to be missed. This illustrated the urgency of implementing policies and plans, such as the Norfolk Climate Strategy, to mitigate the effects of climate change in Norfolk.
- 7.4 The Chair welcomed Henry Cator, Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA), who endorsed the report from the Cabinet Member regarding the implementation of Schedule 3 and commented that the recent flooding in North Norfolk was unprecedented. It affected not only property but the physical and mental health of residents. Norfolk was sat at the frontline of climate change, and it was important to develop a strategic approach to the issues faced by the county. Discussions had taken place between the NSFA and

agencies such as the National Infrastructure Commission and the Environment Agency for representatives to visit Norfolk to see what work had been undertaken locally, while illustrating the multi-sector approach to the issue.

- 7.5 Officers provided an outline of the response to Storm Babet. The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service had a robust system in place to plan for flood response in Norfolk, which also provided resiliency in affected areas. A response was being planned up to a week before the storm struck, utilising information from partners such as the Met Office and the internal Flood Tactical Advisor. Officers remarked that extreme weather events placed a large demand on the Service. Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Service had a statutory duty to respond to emergencies, however flood response was not a bespoke statutory duty. The Service had to operate within the remit of its own operational activities, subject to funding levels.
- 7.6 The Chair introduced Cllr Martin Wilby, the Local Member for East Depwade, who provided further context relating to his division. Waveney Valley was affected by significant flooding over Christmas 2020, which had caused adverse effects to the mental health of residents in these areas. With the advent of Storm Babet, residents expected a similar detrimental outcome, as the ground was saturated due to recent rainfall. The Local Member highlighted the village of Brockdish, where 16 properties were severely damaged during the 2020 floods. Due to the geography of the area, water levels rose rapidly at the time. In the aftermath of the flooding, the NSFA and the Council liaised to implement a solution for Brockdish, which involved dams to slow the water rate entering the village. As a result, when Storm Babet occurred the water level did not rise as high, and only one property was known to be flooded. Work had also been undertaken on the A143 which also had a positive impact. The Local Member thanked the agencies and everyone involved in the schemes for their work, which had improved quality of life in South Norfolk villages.
- 7.7 The following points were discussed and noted.
- A Committee Member asked how much of an impact the delay in implementing Schedule 3 had on the Council's ability to deal with excess surface water. Officers confirmed that the delay had resulted in more surface water entering sewers, causing storm drains to overflow. Measures to address water runoff would be put in place if Schedule 3 went ahead, which would reduce pressure on the sewer system. The Council's role was as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), where developers would consult the Council on major developments. This allowed the Council to put forward its views relating to sustainable drainage.
 - A Committee Member asked if the Council had prepared to take on additional responsibilities if the government gave the green light for Schedule 3 in England, and whether there was a timescale in place for this. Officers stated the following any guidance being issued by government (timescales unknown), they could provide members of the committee an appropriate briefing should Schedule 3 be implemented. The Council would work with neighbouring local authorities and national professional networks to prepare accordingly.

- Committee Members asked what lessons had been learned from Storm Babet and recent flooding events on the A47 over the past few months, and if plans were in place to prepare vital network infrastructure for extreme weather events. Officers confirmed due to Storm Babet the Council had signed a memorandum of understanding with the government, which would then enable funding for improvements to be made to the properties of affected homeowners, improving their resiliency to flooding.
- A Committee Member affirmed his support for Schedule 3 and provided rainfall figures in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk district since January 2023. The figures revealed there were large variances in rainfall compared to the historical average in the area. The Committee Member expressed concern that the current drainage infrastructure would not cope and stressed that the Council should push for further action from the government to deal with the issue of water runoff caused by new developments. Officers provided context relating to the Council's role as an LLFA and stated figures in the report underlined the scope of the Council's involvement. There had been a trend towards using natural flood management techniques, which may have been considered unfamiliar at meetings from a decade ago. The Council was looking to obtain funding from DEFRA to support natural solutions. The Chair asked for clarity regarding statutory consultation and how much notice was taken of the Council's requests by developers. Officers stated that if the Council was unhappy with the proposed drainage infrastructure in planning applications, an objection would be made. However, teams were unable (as there is no statutory duty) to monitor if the new builds were built and maintained to the standards set out in the planning application.
- A Committee Member queried if a topline figure was known for the aftercare of sustainable drainage infrastructure and what was being done to manage long-term risks. Officers stated funding was sourced by developers under criteria set out by the government, which would then deliver sustainable drainage infrastructure and the relevant aftercare. There were risks based around the criteria being adequate to deliver the infrastructure and aftercare, along with climate change affecting the weather. The Council would need to address various new risks under this strategy. The Committee Member asked if excess costs would be passed down to the Council after a certain time period. Officers stated there were risks associated with the criteria not being broad enough to tackle the impact of climate change. Some schemes could be active for over 25 years, and it was not yet determined where the costs would be passed down to. If Schedule 3 came up for consultation, officers would encourage the Council to put in a robust response as the criteria that could be set would influence any future costs. The Committee Member requested clarity as to how robust the response would be. Officers clarified the Council's response would state no additional costs could be taken on and that it would be inappropriate for a local authority to take on costs which should be fully funded by a developer under Schedule 3. A response could not be drafted until the consultation document was available from the government. Officers reassured the Committee that the Council was continuing to work with developers to cover the cost of future infrastructure maintenance. There had been no change to this process. The Chair asked if the

process covered roads, as developers would construct the roads before the Council adopted them. Officers confirmed this was the case.

- Committee Members queried the flooding incidents recorded in the report and asked if intervention was prioritised based on the number of incidents in a district, the frequency of incidents, or the severity of incidents. Nearly 30% of incidents were recorded in the South Norfolk district, with a further 20% in Breckland. Concern was expressed that there had been flooding in divisions which had previously never had such incidents. Officers stated the LLFA would undertake investigations into instances of flooding, which would identify recommendations and remedial work for partners to conduct. Climate change was affecting weather patterns, meaning flooding was affecting both usual areas and new areas of the county. Flash flooding was witnessed in Norwich city and parts of Waveney Valley. High intensity weather events could be highly localised. Officers stressed that coastal flooding from the North Sea also had to be considered.
- A Committee Member stated that page 9 of the report mentioned 30 new officers would be required if Schedule 3 was implemented, and asked how these would be recruited given a shortage of skilled professionals in Norfolk. Officers expressed hopes that the implementation would be phased in over a time period, which would enable the Council to recruit and train new officers through a variety of courses or apprenticeships. Phasing in Schedule 3 in stages would hopefully allow the team to be built up and strengthened over time. It was acknowledged that such a recruitment plan would be difficult given the national shortage of workers, but it would form part of a strategy to make Norfolk attractive to skilled professionals. The Committee Member stated young people taking GCSEs and A-Levels in Norfolk should be made aware of these positions when they become available, which was seconded by The Chair. Officers confirmed discussions were taking place, and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste stated he was happy to follow this up further. A long-term strategy and training programme was required.
- A Committee Member stated he was personally impacted by the 2020 floods in South Norfolk and endorsed the statement made by the Local Member for East Depwade. Flooding occurred in Long Stratton, the cause of which was linked to a riparian drain and an Anglian Water drain. The landowner had since agreed to monitor and repair the riparian drain when required, as had Anglian Water for their own infrastructure, which had a beneficial effect on water levels since 2020. The Committee Member asked what powers the Council held to monitor contractors and landowners to ensure drainage infrastructure was maintained, and whether enforcement action could be taken. Officers confirmed guidance was available online for landowners and their responsibilities. Discussions had taken place with local resident associations to monitor drainage infrastructure in their areas. The district councils in South Norfolk and Broadland had recently employed officers to advise residents about general maintenance and the options available to them. If lack of maintenance was causing regular flooding events, there was a legal option which could be taken if necessary. The Council was liaising with parish councils to highlight issues with drainage infrastructure and push for remedial work. The next stage of the process was to work with internal drainage boards across the council to create a

toolkit for local parishes and town councils. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste stated the NSFA had identified postcodes at risk of flooding to make it easier to communicate to residents in these areas to keep drains and ditches clear. This was an ongoing process. Committee Members asked what timescale the Council was working towards equipping parish councils with the tools to tackle such issues. The Cabinet Member stated that communication with parish councils had to be improved and he was happy to take this forward.

- A Committee Member stated work had been successfully carried out by the Council and landowners to alleviate flooding on the River Wensum, which involved clearing culverts and repairing walls. Rivers in Norfolk historically used to be wider, however they were narrowed in the 18th and 19th century to speed up water flow for commercial activities. There had been new developments which were built on land which was formerly part of the river. The Committee Member asked officers if there was scope to widen rivers within Norfolk or to reinstate attenuation ponds and flood meadows to deal with water runoff, as at present runoff was sitting on road surfaces and unsuitable areas of land. Officers stated that any such actions required a bespoke understanding of each affected area before speeding up or slowing down water flow. It was the role of the LLFA to make judgement calls on new developments, with proposals scrutinised and objected to if they do not meet the standards set out by the Council. The Committee Member stated consideration should be given to implementing flood meadows as a way of holding excess water runoff, as this would reinstate a historical solution.
- A Committee Member mentioned that a village in his district was subject to the tranche of investigations set out by the NSFA, which proved the combined approach worked. In this village, surface water was seeping up from the ground, which had the effect of pushing septic tanks and manhole covers above ground, exposing raw sewage. This was caused by storm water entering the drainage system. Properties were affected by raw sewage. The first tranche helped solved these issues. The Committee Members asked if officers had a broad idea of the timescale for Schedule 3 and whether it was based on experience garnered from the Welsh Government's implementation. Officers stated the report gave a blow-by-blow account of how Schedule 3 was written on the statute books. Insight from the Welsh Government's implementation would be used to ensure implementation in England was conducted in the most appropriate way. It was hoped that a phased induction would take place.
- A Committee Member expressed concern regarding Anglian Water, explaining that he had personally experiencing flooding of his property earlier this year. The root cause was the water company's pumps being unable to pump the required volume of water. There were three new developments planned in Necton which appeared to have had little or no investigatory works carried out as to where water runoff was going. Anglian Water had agreed to upgrade pumps in the village; however it was a large capital cost for the company. If Schedule 3 had been implemented in England as planned in 2010, many issues could have been resolved in the meantime. The Chair remarked that Anglian Water had attended a previous Scrutiny Committee meeting regarding surface water, and confirmed representatives from the company were due to attend a further Scrutiny Committee meeting in March 2024.

- A Committee Member remarked that nature did not pay attention to legislation or deadlines. The Committee Member asked officers whether strategies should be put in place to mitigate the effect of one-in-a-thousand-year storms or maintain the current strategies. The cessation of building on flood plains or insisting that new builds are climate resistant may be other options that could be taken. Officers confirmed that new developments had to take extreme weather events into account. There had to be renewed focus on the maintenance of all aspects of the water infrastructure in Norfolk.
- Committee Members asked if there was a follow-up process following a flood report to ensure recommendations are followed and not just acting as a tick-box exercise. Officers confirmed that flood reports were public documents published online. All recommendations in the reports were entered into a scheduled programme of works, which was prioritised by the number of properties affected by an event. This was monitored by the NSFA to ensure the recommendations were being met.
- A Committee Member queried as to what preventative measures the Council had in place for future extreme weather events. Officers confirmed a flood reserve of £1.5m a year had been set for the next four years. Funding to support schemes was also available from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, which was set up by the Environment Agency in 2010. Direct government funding was also made available in the wake of Storm Babet to help affected property owners. An application had been made to DEFRA to secure funding towards natural flood management solutions, and further sources of funding were being identified by officers. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste commented that environment agencies in the country faced a £30.8m shortfall in flood prevention funding according to the media, and that he would follow this up at a Flood Alliance meeting later this week. An officer confirmed the Highways Department spent approximately £3m a year on proactive maintenance of the Council's drainage assets. However, many ditches in Norfolk were the responsibility of landowners and the Council worked alongside them to ensure they were maintained. Enforcement powers were used as a last resort.
- A Committee Member asked what enforcement powers the Council hold as a highways authority to oblige landlords to engage with the process. Officers confirmed the Highways Department held enforcement powers and it would work with landowners to highlight where action was required. Enforcement was used as an option of last resort.
- A Committee Member commented that the NSFA had attended Scrutiny Committee meetings in the recent past, where it was highlighted approximately £80m in funding was required for the programme of preventative works. The Committee Member asked officers how much of the funding was in place, and whether the topline figure could rise given the effects of climate change in Norfolk. Officers stated the £80m figure included a road scheme at Welney Washes which took up a large proportion of the fund. Other schemes included in the £80m figure were listed at Appendix A of the report. Many of the schemes involved focused solutions to improve drainage at parts of the highway network. Officers stated the funding figure was not fixed and would naturally evolve due to circumstances and future events. Progress would be determined on a case-by-case basis. The NSFA delivered thousands of schemes per

year which improved drainage maintenance on the highways network. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste confirmed the funding figure was flexible.

- A Committee Member asked if beavers were being considered as a natural solution. Officers confirmed a location in Norfolk had been visited to determine if beavers could be introduced there. However, it would need to be considered as part of a national strategy and to ensure that beavers played a role in the right area of the county.
- A Committee Member remarked that districts with drainage boards in operation appeared to be in a better place to manage water levels. The Land Drainage Act 1930 had provision to charge developers for impermeable areas and the increase in water runoff they create locally. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 should have had provisions to charge developers, however this was not in the final paper. The Council should push to get the most appropriate agencies in place to manage this issue.

7.8 RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Committee:

1. **Reviewed** the information relating to the extent of the County Council's response to the flooding associated with Storm Babet.
2. **Noted and commented** on the expected timeframe for the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the associated risks for staffing requirements.
3. **Noted** the risk around long-term costs for aftercare of approved sustainable drainage systems and the associated increase in the County Council's assets that would relate to the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
4. **Supported** the approach that the County Council would submit a robust response to the expected consultation by Government on the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

- 7.8.1 A Committee Member asked for clarity regarding recommendation 3 and queried whether a recommendation could go to Cabinet for inclusion in the Council's risk register or whether another report into long-term risks could come back to the Scrutiny Committee. The Chair stated that many long-term costs were the responsibility of 36 separate organisations rather than the Council. A report from the NSFA could be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

8 Coastal Matters

- 8.1 The Scrutiny Committee received the annexed report (8).

- 8.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste introduced the report to the Scrutiny Committee, which clarified the roles and responsibilities of organisations in relation to

coastal erosion and flooding. In Norfolk the main lead roles for coastal erosion and flooding were fulfilled by the Environment Agency and district councils. The report also highlighted the Council's involvement with those organisations and processes.

8.3 The Chair introduced James Bensly, the Local Member for East Flegg, Chair of the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee, and Chair of Coastal Partnership East, who provided context relating to his division. The issue of coastal erosion in Hemsby had generated significant media coverage, with homeowners in the area having to move their properties back from the cliff edge. Previously the properties had many metres of cliff before the sea was reached. The issue had taken its toll on the mental health of residents who were close to the cliff edge. Due to circumstances some residents are unable to relocate to other areas of the county. The Local Member stressed that the government needed to offer help and support for affected homeowners, which would safeguard coastal communities. Experiences with the local lifeboat crew in Hemsby had factored into the analysis of the issue. Approximately 1,000 homes in Norfolk could be lost to coastal erosion in the next few years. There was 107 miles of coastline to maintain and cost benefits had to be evaluated. The Local Member remarked that coastlines in The Netherlands faced the same issue due to the volumes of water contained in the Dutch Channel and North Sea, however they appeared to have an effective coastal management programme which perhaps could be emulated in Norfolk.

8.4 The following points were discussed and noted:

- A Committee Member recalled the December 2013 tidal surge which severely affected Norfolk and commented that the surge was considered a one-in-fifty-year event back in 2013, but subsequently similar surges were expected almost every year at present. The cliffs in Norfolk were formed of clay, gravel and sand, materials which were not considered durable. The Committee Member stated this issue was not just localised to Norfolk. The Netherlands considered coastal erosion to be a national issue as 45% of their landmass could be lost if their sea defences were allowed to be breached. There was a perception that coastal erosion only affected people resident on the coast, however it would also affect food production and people's livelihoods. Via the Coastal Pathfinder programme in 2011, the government compensated homeowners in Happisburgh up to 40% of the value of their homes. Under this scheme, approximately 15 houses near to the cliff edge were bought and demolished, with the homeowners encouraged to apply for planning permission further inland to remain part of the community. The Committee Member stated the Coastal Pathfinder scheme had since ceased and that the Council should consider working with other affected districts to push for a similar settlement from the government. In any case government funding would be required, which the Council and other local authorities would administer.
- Committee Members queried what role the Scrutiny Committee could provide in this scenario and asked whether the Environment Agency should be invited to a future meeting to understand what solutions could be implemented with the limited resources available to them. The Local Member for East Flegg stated it was his intention to bring wider awareness to the issue of coastal erosion in Norfolk. If the coastlines were not maintained this would negatively affect the tourism industry in

Norfolk. The Local Member commented that, in his capacity as Chair of the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee, his committee would liaise with the Scrutiny Committee and officers to form a policy approach as soon as possible. A Committee Member stated that coastal erosion would worsen due to sea levels rising and extreme weather events increasing in frequency. A strategy to deal and adapt to climate change in Norfolk was urgently required. The Chair mentioned climate change was an issue which cut across several different sectors and policies would need to be developed forthwith. The Scrutiny Committee would constructively liaise with the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, and officers to ensure this developed. The Chair remarked that nature did not recognise deadlines set out by the Council, and thus the work would need to be undertaken as soon as possible.

- A Committee Member stated that his division in North Norfolk was also affected by coastal erosion. The entire local coastline, from The Wash to Hopton-on-Sea and beyond to Suffolk was at risk due to climate change. North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) and Coastal Partnership East had formed a commitment over the past couple of years to exchange ideas and make a difference to affected communities on the North Norfolk coast. There was a significant level of community engagement locally on this issue, which helped coastal management in this area. The Committee Member commented that Walcott parish, thought to be one of the most deprived parishes in Norfolk, was severely affected by the December 2013 tidal surge. Residents in this area had very little in the way of resources to manage the issue and recover from the effects of the surge. Programmes to mitigate the effects of coastal erosion required support from the government to cover the risk burden. The Committee Member stated that a settlement which was financially sustainable but gave support to affected communities in North Norfolk would be welcomed, and praised the recommendations laid out in the report.
- A Committee Member highlighted shoreline management plans which were mentioned in the report at Section 9. There were high level documents which set out coastal management policies, with multiple plans in place covering the Norfolk coastline. The current plans were the second generation of shoreline management, containing revisions endorsed by Norfolk County Council and district councils in 2010, covering a 15-year period up to 2025. Further revisions were to be expected with the deadline to agree a third-generation plan approaching. The Committee Member stated the plans outlined which grants and Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) funding was available to provide coastal solutions. If the policy stated that an area had “no active intervention”, this would mean no action was being taken by authorities, with erosion allowed to continue unchecked and sea defences no longer maintained. The Committee Member stressed that if the upcoming revisions did not include extra policies to prevent and manage coastal erosion in Norfolk, the Council should reject the plans, on the basis this would put residents in Norfolk at risk, along with decimating the tourism industry within the county. An officer confirmed the revision process to the plans would take the same shape as that in 2010, with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs involved. A national refresh of shoreline management plans was due to take

place, with officers currently scrutinising Plan No.5, covering the North Norfolk coast. The Council needed to be poised to consider any revisions or amendments to the shoreline management plans, but that there had to be a bespoke understanding of how climate change would affect Norfolk before any response to the plans could be made. The Local Member for East Flegg remarked that funding coming in from North Sea industries should be ringfenced to deliver solutions for coastal communities in Norfolk. A Committee Member stated that the Council owed a duty towards coastal communities to provide solutions to protect their property. Any changes to the shoreline management plans must be closely scrutinised, however the Treasury often based its level of funding on the number of properties in an affected area, and this view should be strongly resisted by the Council. The Chair asked if businesses in affected areas were considered too. The Local Member for East Flegg commented that it was only based on the number of properties.

- A Committee Member thanked officers for being involved with the revisions to shoreline management plans and stressed that local members also had to be included in the process. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste mentioned that a presentation took place at a recent Strategic Flood Alliance meeting, which illustrated what the Norfolk coastline could look like if sea levels rose. The map showed sea inclusion potentially over the entire King's Lynn area stretching as far as Peterborough. The Cabinet Member queried officers at the meeting as to what the Council's position towards coastal management should be. The Council's position had to be clear to local members and the public, as no progress could be made on policies to deliver solutions towards coastal erosion otherwise.

8.5 RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Committee:

1. **Reviewed** and **commented** on the information relating to responsibilities for flooding and coastal erosion.
2. **Considered** and **suggested** that support was given by the County Council to the campaign for a dedicated Minister for the Coast and the associated 'pledge for the coast' initiative. The Committee **agreed** to make a recommendation to Cabinet.
3. **Suggested** that, as a priority, the issue of coastal erosion and flooding was considered in further detail by Infrastructure and Development Select Committee so that an approach for further assessment by Scrutiny Committee could be established.

9. Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

- 9.1. The Scrutiny Committee received the report which set out the current forward work plan for the Committee.

9.2 The following point was raised and discussed.

- A Committee Member asked for an update regarding scrutiny of the Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS). An officer confirmed information was being collated, which would then be distributed to members. Discussions would then take place with The Chair and Committee Members to find the optimum way to include this subject on the Forward Work Programme.

9.3 **RESOLVED**

The Scrutiny Committee **noted** the current forward work programme and **discussed** potential further items for future consideration.

The meeting concluded at 12:48

Cllr Steve Morphew, Chair



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Scrutiny Committee 22 November 2023**4. Public Questions****4.1.1 Substantive question from Linda Adcock:**

There are many factors which are causing coastal erosion is the council looking at the effects of inland development with the land being built on, new road networks hard surface areas like drives ways etc this water will cut through sandy cliff areas making them unstable also run off into rivers causing flooding, as a development near to us causes floodings. Reference to the high street in Sheringham when surface water helped to collapse the main drain & the land slip at Cromer in the past years the lack of river maintenance & blocked road drains with no holding areas for surface water.

4.1.2 Response from the Chair:

There are multiple organisations and authorities with interests and different responsibilities for aspects of coastal erosion and flooding, as explained in a report to this Scrutiny Committee meeting. This split of roles requires a partnership approach to ensuring that the varying powers of the organisations involved, and the sources of funding that they have access to, are brought together in the most effective way to deal with the increasingly pressing challenges faced by our communities and coastline.

There are many contributory and changing factors that affect coastal erosion and flooding. When it comes to new developments, the local planning authority is responsible for making decisions, and where a development is of a significant scale then the local planning authority will also consult with the County Council in its role as a Lead Local Flood Authority, this is so that its view of the approach to surface water for a given development can be taken in to account before a decision is made.

4.1.3 Supplementary question from Linda Adcock:

Offshore development, has the council done any studies on the effects of wind farms, turbines & drilling into the sea bed & the effects these items have on tidal changes which a very recent report mentioned a river being blocked caused by a sand shift after a wind farm was put in place.

4.1.4 Response from the Chair:

Considerations such as this around offshore developments do not feature in the County Council's responsibilities. The lead body for regulating offshore activities is the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) but where the Council is a statutory consultee, it will raise concerns and considerations as appropriate.

4.2.1 Substantive question from Tom Reed:

There are many reasons for North Sea coastal erosion on east coast, occurring over millions of years, the least being 'global warming'. (See Prof Judith Curry). Could you please tell us if there has been research into effects of removal in 1980s by the government of the day, selling millions of tons of seabed which was the outer sand bar, to Holland. Sea action moves the sand, natural effect on coastal erosion being to replenish the outer sand bar back to its original state. The effects could be cause of beach at Gorleston being completely washed away at one time & at Kessingland the coast increased.

4.2.2 Response from the Chair:

There are multiple causes for coastal erosion, including considerations around geology, hydrogeology, isostatic rebound, extreme tidal conditions and changes in sea levels. When it comes to a strategic overview, this role is for the Environment Agency and not the County Council, however as there are multiple organisations and authorities with interests and different responsibilities for aspects of coastal erosion and flooding, this requires a partnership approach to ensuring that the varying powers of the organisations involved are brought together in the most effective manner when considerations are given to proposed developments.

4.2.3 Supplementary question from Tom Reed:

Is the Committee aware of any studies on the effects of the offshore wind farms on our coastline? Wouldn't anything blocking the normal flow of water be likely to have some effect, possibly detrimental.

4.2.4 Response from the Chair:

Considerations such as this around offshore developments do not feature in the County Council's responsibilities. The lead body for regulating offshore activities is the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) but where the Council is a statutory consultee, it will raise concerns and considerations as appropriate.

4.3.1 Substantive question from Paul Smith:

Has the Committee considered the effect of the moon on coastal erosion? Currently the moon is closer to the earth than it has been for 284 years which, in turn with planet alignments, is effecting all weather patterns. The moon is pulling magma, causing earthquakes, volcanic activity, changing the jet stream, tilting the earth affecting the north & south poles, causing large amount of rainfall over land causing flooding.

4.3.2 Response from the Chair:

Although the gravity effects of the moon has an influence on tides on Earth, it is widely understood to be the case that the moon's relative position to Earth is not the main factor affecting coastal erosion.

4.3.3 Supplementary question from Paul Smith:

Are elected members familiar with the research of Professor Judith Curry & Professor William Happer, academics who carefully identify the difference between CO₂ and pollution?

4.3.4 Response from the Chair:

Although it is appreciated that there is a wide range of views on climate change, globally and nationally policy and understanding is driven by peer review of the science involved and establishment of consensus.