

**Report To:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016

**Lead Member / Officer:** Lead Member for Public Realm / Head of Highways and Environmental Services

**Report Author:** Flood Risk Manager

**Title:** Denbighshire's Flood Risk Management Strategy

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**1. What is the report about?**

The Wales Audit Office recently issued a national report entitled: Coastal Flood and Erosion Risk Management in Wales. This report has implications for the council. It therefore feels timely to brief Members about these implications, and to provide an update on our local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider whether the Council is discharging its responsibilities as a Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Authority and carrying out the measures and objectives set out in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That the Committee considers whether the Council is discharging its responsibilities as a Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Authority and carrying out the measures and objectives set out in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

**4. Report details**

**4.1 Wales Audit Office Report**

On 21<sup>st</sup> July 2016 the Auditor General for Wales published a report of his review of coastal flood and erosion risk management in Wales (link to website: <https://www.wao.gov.uk/news/welsh-government-making-progress-manage-increasing-coastal-flood-and-erosion-risks>) . The report is included as Appendix1, but the main points of interest to the Council are as follows:

- The report deals specifically with coastal flood and erosion risk, although some of the themes discussed are common to all sources of flood risk.
- A lack of capacity within WG and councils has delayed progress (in implementing the national and local strategies) and threatens to undermine the long-term approach to managing the risks of coastal flooding and erosion.
- The report refers to the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policy of managed realignment (or retreat), which made headline news in 2014 due to issues at Fairbourne, Gwynedd. This is of particular relevance to the Council because the

SMP policy for Denbighshire's coast between Prestatyn and the county boundary with Flintshire is 'managed realignment'.

- The report refers to the Welsh Government's Coastal Risk Management Programme from 2018/19 to 2020/21, which involves 75% WG grant funding (borrowed by the local authority and paid back by WG over, say, a 25 year period through the Revenue Support Grant) and 25% council funding.
- The report recommends better integration of coastal flood and erosion risk management at a strategic level, with reference to new planning, environment and community wellbeing legislation.
- The report makes reference to 'landscaping', which could provide a long term and sustainable approach to managing coastal flood risk in Denbighshire. The Council has built up a good working relationship with The Crown Estate in that regard and is working in partnership with Flintshire County Council to develop a coastal strategy between Barkby Beach and Point of Ayr, which will consider Landscaping as one of a range of options to manage coastal flood risk.

#### **4.2 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy**

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014 the Minister for Natural Resources formally approved Denbighshire's Flood Risk Management Strategy. The strategy is at the centre of the Council's activities to manage flood risk in the county. The strategy identifies 31 measures and good progress has been made in delivering the majority of these. However, there are some activities where progress has been slower than anticipated, largely due to a lack of resource and the need to prioritise certain activities, for instance, flood investigations. A progress update is included as Appendix 2.

#### **4.3 Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Schemes**

The Council has been successful in obtaining Welsh Government support for the progression of several flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes.

##### **(i) East Rhyl Coastal Defence Scheme**

The Welsh Government provided grant funding for the Council to appoint JBA Consulting to carry out a project appraisal study to identify a preferred option to reduce coastal flood risk at east Rhyl. The JBA report recommended that an offshore breakwater be taken forward as the preferred option. However, the economic appraisal carried out as part of the study showed that there were other options with similar costs and benefits. In light of this, WG has asked the Council to carry out a sediment transport study which will identify the long term impacts on beach erosion of the various options. This will ensure that the option taken forward is cost effective and sustainable and, most importantly, grant eligible. The report showed that the scheme could cost as much as £22 million, although this included an element of 'optimism bias'. A more realistic figure is probably in the order of £15 million, of which the Council will be required to contribute 25%

The Council has engaged a design and build contractor, Balfour Beatty, through the Scape national procurement framework and a design commission has been awarded to JBA. As part of that commission, JBA will be working with the Council to develop a communication strategy which will ensure that an appropriate, consistent level of public engagement is maintained throughout the remainder of the project.

The East Rhyl scheme has involved some advanced works on Rhyl Golf Course, with the support of WG grant funding. This work will provide protection against a 1 in 50 year storm and should be complete by April 2017 at a cost of around £800,000.

**(ii) Rhyl Yacht Club Wall**

The Council has been successful in applying for WG grant to carry out a project appraisal study to identify a preferred option to upgrade or replace this asset, which should also reduce flood risk in the area at risk. The scheme forms part of WG's Coastal Risk Management Programme, which should enable construction work to start in 2018.

**(iii) St Asaph Flood Risk Management Scheme**

The Council has received WG approval for this scheme to advance to the design and development phase. Because this scheme is adjacent to the River Elwy (main river), and in light of NRW's ongoing scheme in St Asaph, the Council is working in partnership with NRW and will use NRW's consultant to progress the design. This will provide some efficiencies and will ensure that the two schemes are compatible.

**(iv) Dyserth and Llanbedr DC Flood Risk Management Schemes**

The Council has received WG approval for these schemes to proceed to the design and development phase. A design and build contractor (Balfour Beatty) has been appointed through the Scape framework and a consultant team (Opus/Waterco) has also been appointed.

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Flooding has the potential to cause severe and prolonged disruption to the communities it affects. Understanding and managing local flood risk supports the Council's priority to develop the local economy.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

There will be costs involved, mainly staff costs, in carrying out the objectives and measures identified in the Flood Risk Management Strategy. However, far more substantial levels of funding will be required to support the grant match funding element of the flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

Flood risk management by its very nature has an overall positive impact. However, the Council's approach to flood risk management will ensure that opportunities are explored to maximise those positive impacts.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

Consultation on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy took place with the Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and again on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014. A full public consultation on the draft Strategy was subsequently carried out. Cabinet was consulted prior to the submission of the Strategy for Ministerial approval. An information brief was provided to the Strategic Investment Group on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016, which outlined the Council's proposals for schemes at Dyserth and Llanbedr DC.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The report sets out a useful summary of schemes and funding sources, primarily from external grant. Some schemes require a match-funding element from the council. The most substantial is in relation to the East Rhyl scheme, however a proportion of this has already been included in the Council's current Capital Plan. The position will need to be reviewed through via the usual approval processes once the scheme costs are firmed up.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

The main risk associated with local flood risk management, including the management of coastal erosion, is due to the potential lack of resource, whether that be financial support, including grant aid, or members of staff (this was alluded to in the Wales Audit Office report). The Council has maintained a steady commitment to funding capital flood and coastal projects over the last 13 years, but revenue funding has reduced significantly and there is currently a reliance on WG grant to support the salary of the flood risk team (2.4 members of staff). It is important that the Council acknowledges the risk that WG funding could be withdrawn and this would result in a funding shortfall of around £90k per annum.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

Flood Risk Regulations (1999), Flood and Water Management Act (2010).