

**A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT BOARD
WAS HELD ON 1 MARCH 2023**

Councillors Westerby, Mrs Cully, Johnston, Miss Kelly, Maynard, Mrs Morgan and Jessop
(Substituting for Mrs Huggins)

Part II

41. STOKES BAY EAST SEAWALL REPLACEMENT PROJECT AND STUDIES.

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Streetscene updating Members on the Stokes Bay East Seawall Replacement Project and longer term option appraisal and design study.

Officers advised that there were two key parts to the project, the first of which is to replace the damaged part of the seafront. A detailed design and planning and consents are all in place but a check of the budget highlighted an increase in the forecast cost, due to inflation of construction materials and works. There is a resulting funding gap which will need to be closed through grants from HCC or Local Levy etc. The second piece of work is to look longer term, and get ahead of these issues. It was hoped that in the Autumn a better concept of what future defences might look like, could be communicated to Members.

Members were advised that local levy is focused on projects which sit outside the normal grant aid funding route, so there was optimism surrounding the bid as the project fits the criteria well.

Members advised the officers that whilst in principle they supported the work, Gosport were in no position to offer any additional funding, and were concerned that inaction would cause a major problem possibly putting the homes at risk in the long term.

Officers explained that the “Hold the Line” policy still stood, but may not be sustainable into the future if funding does not keep pace with climate change.

In answer to a Member’s question, Officers explained that the future plans would start with a long listing exercise, identifying every possible option, including the use of groynes, which then is reduced to two options, to address maintenance and aspirational requirements. At this point the heritage aspects would be addressed and might allow for regeneration funding bids. The aspirational project needs to be more than just a sea defence.

RESOLVED: That the board noted:

1. The Stokes Bay East Seawall Replacement Project has a significant funding gap that needs to be closed prior to construction procurement. A Planning Application and marine Licence will continue to be progressed.
2. The longer term Stokes bay Feasibility Study is appraising options for the sea defences in the wider bay and is expected to be completed in Autumn 2023

42. CONSTRUCTION OF FLOOD DEFENCE STRUCTURES AT FORTON

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Streetscene updating members on progress with the Forton coastal defence scheme since the update in January 2023 and setting out the next stages for project delivery.

Officers introduced the report by reminding the Members that they had asked to see more details of the project to date, with a breakdown of the monies spent. The annex to the report shows a breakdown per year of the activity to show where and when the money has been spent.

In answer to a Members question Officers explained that over the 5 years of the project, money had been spent to to develop the project from options appraisal stage, through detailed design to the construction stage. This budget had been affected by Covid and rises in inflation, and without these rises, there may have been a surplus in the budget. Officers explained that the recent events increased construction costs due to inflation and would have likely exceeded the forecasted allowances in the business case. Therefore the project was paused on site.

Officers advised Members that the Forton scheme had certainty on the way forward and that is beneficial for the potential success of the Levy bid which has recently been submitted.

Members were advised that planning permissions would likely have to be renewed as it was unlikely that work would start before January 2024 due to, amongst other reasons, overwintering birds which restrict main construction works to an April to September window in any one year.

In answer to a question regarding the presence of badgers at the site, Officers advised that the consultant had completed the initial survey, and had advised over the potential relocation of the sett. This was a Southampton based organisation that were under contract but only paid if asked to carry out more tasks. Officers agreed to try again to contact the local specialist who Members felt would have more local knowledge, and be a less expensive option. It was agreed that there was nothing to be gained from attempting to relocate the sett now if there is a workable solution to construct the defence without disturbing the sett and which is legal requirement to consider. Any removal of badgers, carries risks that the sett area could be reoccupied later.

In answer to a Member's question Officers advised that the college were understanding of the delays, and had not to date raised any concerns, but would welcome knowing future updates.

Officers agreed to bring another progress report to the next meeting and update on the amounts spent.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted that this report provided further project details as requested at the previous Community and Environment Board held on 10 January 2023.

43. CONSTRUCTION OF FLOOD DEFENCE STRUCTURES AT ALVERSTOKE

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Streetscene updating members on the Alverstoke coastal defence scheme since the update in January 2023 and sets out the next stages for the project.

Officers advised Members that the Alverstoke scheme was buildable but much more high risk than Forton due to the cable issue. Another contractor had been engaged to advise on working around the cables, but advised that whilst there was a solution but it was likely high cost and a safety concern. It also appears technically possible to move the cables but that would require the consent of the landowners, and potentially require compensation payments.

Officers advised Members that work is ongoing to evaluate delivery options for the scheme and review the scheme cost. Once concluded, it was agreed to bring a report to Board in which the available options for the way ahead were laid out, with costings, risks and worse case scenarios. As with the Forton scheme, Officers agreed to bring another progress report to the next meeting and update on the amounts spent.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted that this report provided further project details as requested at the previous Community and Environment Board held on 10 January 2023

44. ANY OTHER ITEMS

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 7.07 pm