

EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION FORM

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: Councillor Elizabeth Grey

KEY DECISION: NO

PORTFOLIO AREA: Environment and Climate Change

PORTFOLIOS AFFECTED: Environment and Climate Change

WARDS AFFECTED: Hoylake and Meols

SUBJECT: Hoylake Beach Management

1.0 RECOMMENDATION:

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change is requested to:

1. Consider the contents of this report and the accompanying Natural England report.
2. Agree to the pausing of vegetative beach management works, including the spraying of herbicide and mechanical raking on Hoylake Beach whilst full independent environmental and scientific studies and stakeholder engagement by a suitably qualified provider are undertaken. This will determine the long-term strategy for the management of Hoylake Beach and will include local communities and the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI)
3. Approve ongoing engagement and dialogue and with local stakeholders and other statutory bodies including Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation in relation to the provision of overall beach management and the identification and agreement of (if appropriate, in accordance with the findings of any ecological survey, and consented by Natural England) a designated "amenity beach" area.
4. Approve the continuation of the removal of windblown sand from against the sea wall as and when it accumulates. This does not constitute vegetation maintenance.

2.0 REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 2.1 The management of the beach is a complex, sensitive and important issue. In determining a long-term Beach Management Plan, the Council needs to be considerate of both the current and future ecological, environmental and economic factors, together with how coastal evolution and climate changes could affect Wirral's shoreline. The accompanying report is written following the receipt of commissioned advice from Natural England in their capacity as the regulator. A copy of the advice provided by natural England accompanies the report.

- 2.2 The report from Natural England highlights several key, critically important considerations that the Council needs to evaluate before deciding whether it is appropriate to continue with its historic and existing program of beach management. It recognises the development of the Hoylake coast including its designation as an SSSI, factors influencing the growth of vegetation and the associated control of vegetation, wider values and opportunities, issues for consideration within a wider Beach management Plan and suggestions for the way forward.
- 2.3 There is a real and current risk that existing management practices associated with the coastline are working against, natural evolutionary processes that could eventually create an environment resilient to rises in sea and tidal levels, that conserves coastal systems and associated habitats and biodiversity. Existing practices are no longer consistent with the views and advice from Natural England.
- 2.4 Also, there is increasing public concern surrounding the existing beach management practices. The Council's treatment of Hoylake beach with Glyphosate (a herbicide used to treat vegetation growth that is increasingly being associated with having carcinogenic properties) in August 2019 caused significant local and national complaints and negative media coverage. Such a level of reaction was not seen in previous years. Pausing activity is also consistent with Wirral Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and also the Council approved motion – 'Glyphosate Free Wirral' to reduce the use of the chemical herbicide Glyphosate throughout the borough.
- 2.5 Consequently, a pause in beach management works is appropriate, whilst the Council considers the way forward by which to address public concern, evaluate Natural England advice and preserve Hoylake's status as a nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), International Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar Wetland site.

3.0 STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

- 3.1 The recommendations are made further to legal advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been completed. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

4.0 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

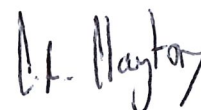
- 4.1 There are no declarations of interest.


Signed:



Executive Member: Cllr Elizabeth Grey

Signed:



Date: 13 March 2020 Also present:  Andy McCann	Deputy Chief Officer: Colin Clayton (Assistant Director, Community Services) Date: 13 March 2020
Date of Senior Policy Team Meeting(s):	

A list of background papers on this issue is held with:

1. Report to November Environment O&S Committee November 2019
2. Natural England Advice to Wirral Council Regarding Beach Management – 02 March 2020

Contact Officer: Colin Clayton, Assistant Director Community Services
 Date: 13th March 2020

Date of Publication:

Date of Expiry of Call-In Period:

