

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 4 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

WIRRAL COASTAL STRATEGY AND ACCEPTANCE OF ENVIRONMENT AGENCY GRANT

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Wirral Coastal Strategy which will provide the business case for the management of the Wirral coastline in accordance with the policies in the adopted Shoreline Management Plan (SMP).
- 1.2 Members are asked to approve acceptance of Environment Agency grant to undertake the Wirral Coastal Strategy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the policies in the Shoreline Management Plan from Great Orme to Southport which relate to Wirral were adopted by Cabinet on 2nd September 2010. The Shoreline Management Plan is a high-level document which sets out policies based on broad assessments of coastal processes and also broad assessment of flood and coastal erosion risks and benefits.
- 2.2 It is recognised by the Environment Agency (EA) that further, more detailed study is required to build on the broad assessments made in the SMP in order to develop a robust business case for delivery of the SMP policies. This further study, a coastal strategy, will be undertaken in line with current Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Guidance to determine, where future investment is required at the coast, provide the business case for grant-in-aid for that investment and also provide a timescale for delivering the SMP policies.
- 2.3 A scoping exercise (Wirral Coastal Viability Study (WCVS)) has already been undertaken to determine whether there was sufficient understanding at the appropriate level of detail of the coastal processes affecting Wirral and the level of confidence in the estimates made regarding flood and coastal erosion risk.
- 2.4 The WCVS acknowledged that whilst there is a good level of data and knowledge relating to the Wirral coast, the improvements made to coastal defences during the past 40 years have generally been undertaken in isolation in response to specific local problems, without the benefit of a strategic approach. The study concluded that there is now a requirement to undertake a strategic review of flood and coastal erosion risk management, utilising recent work carried out to better understand coastal processes at Wirral and to look for opportunities to maximise the benefits from future coastal defence improvements. This will be done by identifying areas where a strategic approach can be implemented, either by carrying out works in parallel, or by tying into other developments in the coastal zone such as regeneration works.
- 2.5 Based on this need an approach was made to the EA, who now administer grant-in-aid for flood and coastal erosion risk management, for funding to undertake a Wirral Coastal Strategy. The approach was successful and the EA have approved £208,000 grant to carry out the Wirral Coastal Strategy during 2010/11 and 2011/12.

3.0 WIRRAL COASTAL STRATEGY

3.1 Whilst the Wirral Coastal Viability Study concluded that a detailed assessment of the Wirral coast was required, it did carry out in part an assessment of the existing business case that is used to inform the EA's medium term plan for future capital investment. The WCVS identified 4 priority areas which it recommended should be the focus of the Wirral Coastal Strategy. These areas are:

- West Kirby Flood Reduction Scheme
- Hoylake and Meols Sea Wall
- Wallasey Embankment Reinforcement
- Kings Parade Flood Alleviation

The Coastal Strategy will firstly confirm the level of flood and coastal erosion risk at these (and other) locations and then confirm the business case for investment in these areas. The Coastal Strategy will also identify opportunities for working in partnership with regeneration proposals in the same areas. By doing this the strategy will deliver a sustainable plan of management actions that meet current economic, social and environmental criteria.

3.2 With the exception of a small length between Rock Ferry and Seacombe, the whole of the Wirral Coast is of International Importance for Nature Conservation. The Shoreline Management Plan assessed the likely impact of the proposed policies on the environment through its Strategic Environmental Assessment. A requirement of the Wirral Coastal Strategy will be to develop the Strategic Environmental Assessment to ensure that any actions undertaken in delivering the SMP policies do not produce adverse environmental impacts or where impacts are identified they are appropriately mitigated in line with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

3.3 The Coastal Strategy will also link in with other strategic initiatives in the region such as:

- Tidal Dee Flood Risk Strategy
- Mersey Coastal Park Strategy
- Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Water Framework Directive
- Wirral Local Development Framework

to ensure that actions delivered through the Wirral Coastal Strategy are in line with these other strategic initiatives.

3.4 Additionally the Wirral Coastal Strategy will aim to deliver the local actions identified in the Shoreline Management Plan, which are required to inform the review of the SMP in the next 10 years. The coastal strategy is an ideal vehicle for taking these actions forward and the outputs from the local studies will help to inform not only the next SMP review but also the strategy itself.

3.5 The Wirral Coastal Strategy will have outputs which will progress future capital investment in Wirral's coastal defences. Project Appraisal Reports (PARs) will be produced for each area where the business case is robust enough to justify future works. Submission of these Project Appraisal Reports to the Environment Agency will be the basis of the applications for grant aid for those projects already identified on the EA's Medium Term Plan. Successful progression of the PARs will allow the EA to give financial and technical approval to the works and approval for grant aid.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Wirral Coastal Strategy is estimated to cost £208,000. An application for 100% grant funding has been approved by the Environment Agency.

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any future staffing requirements to deliver the Shoreline Management Plan policies through the Coastal Strategy will be entirely funded from Environment Agency Grant-in- Aid.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken in 2008 for the delivery of the coastal defence service. The assessment found that coastal defence policy provides positive benefits to all by ensuring access to the coast by reducing the risk of erosion and flooding.

7.0 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS/IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no implications under this heading.

8.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no implications under this heading.

9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 In order to comply with Habitats Regulations the Wirral Coastal Strategy will develop the Strategic Environmental Assessment which forms part of the Shoreline Management Plan. In addition an appropriate assessment will be undertaken as part of the Wirral Coastal Strategy to assess the impacts on European designated habitats.

10.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Planning Policy Statement 25 Supplement "Development and Coastal Change" identifies Shoreline Management Plans as forming an important element of the evidence base for Local Development Frameworks. The Policy recommendations from the SMP and their delivery through the Wirral Coastal Strategy will therefore need to be taken into account in formulating the policies in Wirral's Core Strategy.

10.2 The PPS 25 supplement also indicates that Planning applications in areas subject to coastal change should be subject to an assessment of the vulnerability of the proposed development to coastal change and any impact on coastal change.

11.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no implications under this heading.

12.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no implications under this heading.

13.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications under this heading.

14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 This report has relevance for all Wards, but with particular relevance to coastal Wards.

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 The following papers have been used in the preparation of this report:

- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Appraisal Guidance, Environment Agency, March 2010
- Adoption Of The Shoreline Management Plan, Cabinet 2nd September 2010
- Wirral Coastal Viability Study Volume 1 : Main Report, AECOM, March 2010

16.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 Cabinet is requested to :

- (1) Approve acceptance of the Environment Agency grant in the sum of £208k;
- (2) Approve the production of the Wirral Coastal Strategy as described in this report;
- (3) Increase the Technical Services Capital programme by £208,000 to undertake the relevant study.

DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR
TECHNICAL SERVICES