



Minutes of the meeting of the **Public Facing Environment Panel** held in Committee Rooms, East Pallant House on Monday 29 January 2024 at 9.30 am

Members Present: Mr J Brown (Chairman), Ms H Desai, Mr S Johnson and Mr T Young

Members not present: Mrs H Burton, Mr M Chilton and Mr C Todhunter

In attendance by invitation:

Officers present all items: Mrs F Baker (Democratic Services Officer), Mr T Day (Environmental Strategy Manager), Miss M de Silva Puttick (Democratic Services Officer), Mr A Frost (Director of Planning and Environment) and Ms A Stevens (Divisional Manager for Environmental Protection)

1 **Chairman's Announcements**

Cllr Brown welcomed members - and members of the public - to the first public-facing Env Panel. He explained that there is no legal requirement for panels to exist, but Chichester District Council uses them to debate issues and to make recommendations. They are advisory in nature.

Apologies were received from Cllr Burton, Cllr Chilton and Cllr Todhunter.

2 **Declaration of Interests**

Cllr Johnson declared that he is a member of the Harbour Conservancy Board.

3 **Biodiversity Duty - Initial Consideration**

Mr Day explained that there is an enhancement on existing duties to report back on biodiversity, and to agree policies by 2026. There is a new national system to identify relevant policies and to take Natural England's work into account. He added that enhanced duty does not come with enhanced power, and that there should be an emphasis on partnership to secure sources of funding, without imposing on landowners. Mr Day stated that there is no additional funding from the government or any guarantee of ongoing funding. He explained that flood management co-benefits with biodiversity management.

Cllr Brown reiterated that this document is about scoping the work, not yet detailing solutions.

Cllr Young asked if there is an overlap between strategic wildlife and Coastal Partners' work. He explained that residents understand the relationship between flooding and biodiversity, and asked who is responsible for flood protection.

Cllr Brown clarified that West Sussex County Council is the responsible flood authority and noted his aim to continue to look to find resolutions to flooding.

Ms Box explained that there is a need to incorporate rivers into coastal plans and that Coastal Partners focuses specifically on the coast. More stakeholders and partnerships are getting involved.

Cllr Johnson stated the importance of strategic wildlife corridors and gathering numbers on species.

The Panel then voted on the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

4 Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan

Cllr Brown outlined that current policies on coastal protection are out of date - climate change means that there is need to think differently about sea defences, to include the public in plans, to think about protection of people and property and increase the resilience of natural environment. They're both important objectives. They can complement each other, but there is also the potential for conflict if it is not made an inclusive process.

Mr Stratton outlined that Coastal Partners is a risk management authority that focuses primarily on coastal erosion. He added that Environment Agency home protection proportionality means that funding allocation techniques have not yet caught up with current issues.

Ms Box introduced her report by stating that Chichester Harbour is an important site for wildlife. Habitats are currently being squeezed across both the Chichester District and Havant area and are currently in a process of degradation. Two erosion management strategies have been created, but there is no strategy plan from Emsworth to East Head. She confirmed that people and places are at the heart of strategy coordination and by 2030, the organisation hopes to strengthen the resilience of communities against flood degradation. Communities and stakeholders participate in these strategies. £1.4 million of Environment Agency funding has been sought to develop plans managed by Coastal Partners and Havant Borough Council over the next three years. This includes encouraging locals to get involved. Some risks and challenges are to be expected, including the fact that other financial contributions may be required, and there is a need to manage expectations, as not everyone can be protected. She added that embracing adaptation in its many forms should be encouraged. The balance between communities and the environment is equally weighted, with a focus on the interactions between communities and nature and bringing communities on board. She then explained that the project would need approval from the Environment Agency Large Project Review Group. Although the response is unknown so far feedback has been positive.

Mr Holder wished to note that in the next one hundred years sea levels are expected to rise by up to a metre. He reiterated the struggles with funding and regulations.

Cllr Johnson gave support to the project being progressed.

The Panel then voted on the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

5 Environment Panel Work Plan

The Panel noted the workplan.

6 Late Items

Minutes from the meeting held Wednesday 29 November 2023 were approved.

7 Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the date of the next meeting is Monday 4 March 2024 at 9.30am in East Pallant House Committee Rooms.

The meeting ended at 10.32 am

CHAIRMAN

Date: