

Chichester District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 July 2023

Coastal Partners Update

1. Contacts

Report Author

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the committee notes the completion of the project to join Coastal Partners in order to provide coastal and land drainage services and the associated transfer of the Council's staff and provides any comments.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Phase 1 of the project involved Cabinet in March 2021 approving the Council entering into an Inter Authority Agreement with four Hampshire Local Authorities (Havant, Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport), collectively known as "Coastal Partners", for the delivery of the Council's coastal and land drainage engineering service. £57,000 was approved from reserves to be paid into the Coastal Partners project fund for risk mitigation. Phase 1 was completed by June 2022.
- 3.2 Phase 2 of the project involved Cabinet in October 2022, approving the TUPE Transfer of two staff to Havant Borough Council, the host authority for Coastal Partners. Through the agreement, Coastal Partners staff (including our transferred staff) deliver the Council's work requirements and priorities. Phase 2 was completed by 31 March 2023.
- 3.3 As part of the joint working agreement, each local authority within Coastal Partners pays an annual percentage share of the total cost of providing the collective services. This is based on resource requirements (salary, equipment, professional service) to deliver each local authority's service priorities. Chichester District Council's apportioned cost is 24% of the total, which is comparable to Havant Council, with Portsmouth City Council's share being 30% and Gosport and Fareham Council's being 11%.
- 3.4 The partnerships priorities are agreed by each local authority submitting a work plan, from which the Member and Client Officer Management Boards, on which each local authority is represented, set the annual priorities and budgets.
- 3.5 The Council retains governance over coastal/land drainage policy and budget decisions and the maintenance and repair budget and capital grants remain with the Council.

3.6 Each local authority contributes to the Coastal Partners Project Fund for risk mitigation. To be able to benefit from this fund on an equitable basis, Chichester Council was required to make a one-off contribution of £57,000.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 4.1 Stage 1 – Since joining Coastal Partners, officers consider that service delivery continues to a very high standard with the annual “business as usual” work completed, in addition to two capital projects also completed in 2022/23. Business as usual includes work such as delivery of the Beach Management Plan, asset monitoring, routine repair and maintenance, land drainage and coastal service requests and planning consultations. Enhanced service resilience, which was one of the main drivers for joining Coastal Partners, has been achieved and can be illustrated by Coastal Partners using a wide range of expertise to support the capital projects; delivery of £440k of emergency repairs to defences in Selsey in Spring 2023. Coastal Partners staff supported the development of the repair options, the business case for Grant in Aid to be secured for this scheme from the Environment Agency and onsite monitoring of contract delivery. Coastal Partners staff resources and experience has also been widely employed to deliver the feasibility study for the potential capital scheme for coastal protection at Selsey. Coastal Partners will continue to steer the next steps of the potential Selsey scheme and a report to Cabinet on the next steps is due in Autumn 2023. Without Coastal Partners support, these capital works would have required additional staffing resource and/or technical input from external engineering consultants.
- 4.2 On joining Coastal Partners, term contracts with consultant engineers for engineering advice and an out of hours service were ceased and this work is now fulfilled by Coastal Partners. There remains a Service Level Agreement with WSCC and Arun Council for Ordinary Watercourse Consenting. However the work plan with Coastal Partners for 2023/24 includes a project to review the OWC work in terms of the legal arrangement with WSCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority, the legal relationship between Chichester Council and/or Coastal Partners with WSCC and potentially with Arun Council, in how this work is delivered going forward.
- 4.3 The Coastal Partners Project Fund (see para 3.6 above) has been sufficient to meet any costs to date without the need to refer back to the client authorities and the risk arising from the liability of any net costs of the partnership (at 24%), remains low given Coastal Partners has a capital programme of £286m over the next 10 years.
- 4.4 Stage 2 – the TUPE transfer of staff was successfully completed on time to the satisfaction of both staff and Coastal Partners. The staff now employed by Havant Borough Council, the host authority for the partnership, remain on the delivery of Chichester Council’s workplan. This arrangement is likely to continue unless the staff opt to become involved in other Coastal Partners work for their own professional development or they are promoted to other roles.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 That the Council’s Client Manager (Divisional Manager for Environment and Health Protection) and Board Member (Cabinet Member for Environmental Strategy)

monitors the partnership arrangements and the delivery of the annual work plan via the respective quarterly board meetings. Budgets are also monitored by the Council's finance service with year-end surplus or shortfalls reported to the Council's s151 Officer.

6 Resource and Legal Implications

- 6.1 Year 1 appeared initially to have a shortfall in budget of £10k due to the need to continue with Arun Council for ordinary watercourse consenting (OWC) expertise, however by end of year this shortfall was covered. Although the OWC work with Arun Council is continuing for year 2, the Council's percentage share has been covered within existing budgets. The current project concerning consenting in land drainage will resolve any budget implications going forward.
- 6.2 Legal, human resources and financial resources support were key to both stages of the project.
- 6.3 There has been complexity in securing approvals across all five local authorities in a timely way and this delayed stage 1 of the project to some extent.

7 Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 7.1 The community are unlikely to notice any difference in the delivery of the service, particularly as the Chichester engineers remain involved in the delivery of Chichester services.
- 7.2 There is a risk that the annual percentage share payable by the Council to Coastal Partners may change in future. However, it is calculated on the immediate and foreseeable work plan and includes the potential capital scheme at Selsey
- 7.3 Another risk is possible failure by Coastal Partners to deliver the Council's work plan in a timely manner due to other priorities. However, project delivery is based on risk of flooding/erosion and there are effective officer and member monitoring arrangements in place within the Coastal Partners governance structure.

8. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
If you tick "Yes", list your impact assessment as a background paper in paragraph 13 and explain any major risks in paragraph 9		
	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		X
Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation		X
Human Rights and Equality Impact		X
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing		X
Other (please specify)		X

9. Appendices

None

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 Cabinet Report, Coastal and Land Drainage Service, 02 Mar 2021
- Cabinet Report, Phase 2 of Coastal Partners Project: TUPE Transfer of Staff, 10 Oct 2022