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Subject: Ratification of Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance Strategy

Report to: Environment Committee 7 March 2023

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SUBJECT MATTER

The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) was founded in 2021 after significant surface water flooding issues in December 2020 led to over 350 properties being flooded in Norfolk and 120 settlements being affected. Members include: Norfolk County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority and Highways Authority), District and Borough Councils and relevant Risk Management Authorities including the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and Coastal Partnership East. The aim of the Alliance is to improve partnership working and ensure that residents and businesses in Norfolk have confidence that flood risks are being well managed. Appended to this report is an updated NSFA Strategy for Member's consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members endorse the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance's updated Strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) was founded in 2021 after significant surface water flooding issues in December 2020 led to over 350 properties being flooded in Norfolk and 120 settlements being affected. Members include: Norfolk County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority and Highways Authority), District and Borough Councils, and relevant Risk Management Authorities including the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and Coastal Partnership East.
- 1.2.** The aim of the Alliance is to improve partnership working and ensure that residents and businesses in Norfolk have confidence that flood risks are being well managed.
- 1.3.** The first version of the NSFA Strategy was adopted by the Environment Committee on 29 September 2021, with the Strategy requiring ratification on an annual basis.
- 1.4.** The increasing focus of the Alliance is working across agencies to deliver improvements in line with agreed priorities and to secure funding to achieve that. Alongside that has been work by the Alliance to influence change on national policy, to help ensure appropriate changes to legislation are made that will more easily facilitate action to address and reduce flood risk.

2. Work to Date

- 2.1.** The NSFA has made significant progress since February 2021 by bringing together all relevant organisations across the county and focussing on priorities agreed by all partners and stakeholders:
- a) The most significant success is that a single strategic body exists that enables an integrated conversation around flooding and water resource management across thematic, functional and geographic boundaries. As a result, authorities, agencies and organisations are more aware of the pan-Norfolk risks, issues and opportunities facing our communities.
 - b) Flood advice leaflet produced and delivered to all Norfolk residents and businesses.
 - c) Creation and launch of a single telephone number for Norfolk, to take calls on flood related issues.
 - d) Closer partnership working on coastal issues between Coastal Partnership East (the coastal management team acting on behalf of North Norfolk District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council and East Suffolk Council) and Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.
 - e) Identification of 28 sites for action (in two tranches) where multi agency efforts are needed to develop and deliver solutions to flooding. Most notable for the Borough of Great Yarmouth is the work that has taken place in Gorleston, where a multi-agency approach has seen investment of over £4 million to reduce the risk of sewer flooding to local homes and properties. Work started in 2021 and has already made modifications to the sewer network on Colomb Road and installed new surface water gullies improve the surface water drainage on Burgh Road. The scheme will also modify the sewer on the High Street, lay a new sewer on Burgh Road and build a new pumping station and storm overflow tank underneath Beccles Road. This will create additional capacity in the network to take water away when it rains heavily. Works are largely complete.
 - f) Four case studies to show progress and demonstrate advances in collaborative working in reducing flood risk.
- 2.2.** The NSFA Strategy (See Appendix A) is a high-level document and the bulk of its content, and with it the strategic direction, remain largely unchanged. With the NSFA in its second year, the Strategy has been updated (with minor changes) to reflect the experiences of the last year and the lessons that have been identified which the Alliance intends to learn from. The NSFA vision remains the same, however the objectives reflect the developing maturity of the Alliance and the successful delivery of some of last year's objectives.
- 2.3.** The Strategy also sets out the guiding principles, how the Alliance operates and the need for close collaboration with strategic partners, as well as how performance will be assessed by tracking actions and tasks. Therefore, it is being recommended that our support continues to help the borough's communities continue to benefit from the high levels of commitment and benefits of genuine partnership working generated by the NSFA.

3. Next Steps

For each partner (inclusive of Great Yarmouth Borough Council) to approve the NSFA updated Strategy and in light of Lord Dannatt stepping down as Chair of the Alliance (recently succeeded by Henry Cator) continue the Council's support of the Alliance.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Aside from Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Coastal Partnership East staff time, there are no financial implications for the Borough Council.

5. Risk Implications

- 5.1. There is a risk that the commitment of partners may reduce, and that availability of funding from Norfolk County Council may not match the intent of the NSFA or the expectation of communities and stakeholders.

6. Legal Implications

Not applicable.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The partnerships formed as part of the Alliance have proved successful in delivering multiple positive benefits as covered in the report and Great Yarmouth Borough Council should continue its support.

8. Background Papers

Appendix A – Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Overall Strategy (2022)

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Existing Council Policies:	Aligns with the Corporate Plan
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	Not applicable
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Not applicable
Risk Implications:	There is a risk that commitment of partners may reduce, and that availability of funding from Norfolk County Council may not match the intent of the NSFA or the expectation of communities and stakeholders
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Allocation of funding for flood defence and mitigation schemes takes account of the deprivation of the areas

	protected. Each scheme will assess this separately as part of the project development.
Crime & Disorder:	Not applicable
Every Child Matters:	Not applicable

OVERALL STRATEGY 2022

The purpose of the constituent members of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) is to work together so that Norfolk communities and infrastructure are safer and more resilient to the risks of inland and coastal flooding and better placed to ensure adequate water supplies during droughts.

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1 Introduction

The NSFA was formed following recognition that the county-wide response to flooding and flood-related risks is incoherent and improvements are required to protect and reassure Norfolk communities. Members of the NSFA are united in their determination to work collaboratively and transparently across boundaries and structures to improve the response to flooding and increase the coherency and consistency of flood risk management. The unique selling point of the NSFA is that it represents a single point of focus and collaboration for all flood-related challenges facing the County of Norfolk. As the NSFA enters its second year it has been agreed that the strategy should be updated to reflect the experiences of the last year. We also have a campaign plan that prioritises and sequences our actions and objectives. This is at Appendix A. Our Action Plan is at Appendix B and the record of actions achieved, so far, is at Appendix C.



OUR GOALS

2 Our Vision

The NSFA will be successful through the coordinated actions of the statutory authorities from central to local government, through to commercial companies, land and property owners large and small, their communities and individuals themselves. As a result, the people of Norfolk will have a high level of confidence that flood risks are as low as reasonably practicable and are being managed within the overall context of improved water management.

3 Our Objectives

Our guiding principles are:¹

- a. Maintain a transparent, collaborative, integrated and sustainable approach to water management issues across the County of Norfolk that is applied coherently.²
- b. Provide a cooperative approach to local, regional and national funding opportunities to mitigate Norfolk's flood risks.



¹ These are distilled further into a series of actions and tasks in Annex A.

² This will include an understanding of other water management strategies and activities already in practice through other bodies and organisations.

- c. Examine how to implement whole river management best practice for inland waterways from catchment areas to the sea.
- d. Work to ensure that the planning system across the County is coherently applied and does not exacerbate the flood risks to new and existing residents and communities.
- e. Work with category one responders and other relevant bodies, so that when they are preparing and delivering their statutory or lead-agency responsibilities they will, where appropriate, collaborate through the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) to:

- I. enable the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) to compile a common flood risk picture,
- II. maintain a consolidated action plan that maps multi-agency activities and progress,
- III. ensure local flood resilience and the response to flooding events, are streamlined and cohered across the County,
- IV. achieve synchronised initiatives across Norfolk that mitigate the risk of flooding and enhance communities' local resilience, and
- V. deliver a programme of exercises to confirm NSFA effectiveness and assure progress development.³
- VI. instil an approach that increases the effectiveness of a plan-mitigate-respond-recover continuum.

- f. Enhance the confidence of Norfolk communities through regular public communications and engagement on flood risks, mitigation measures and resilience / self-reliance initiatives.
- g. Complete an Integrated Norfolk Water Management Strategy.⁴
- h. Deliver a united Norfolk view on flooding and water management issues to Central Government.
- i. The function of the NSFA becomes a business as usual (Bau) function where the strategic direction, oversight and leadership is provided by an elected leader and the LLFA.

³ We will do this in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) or the Cabinet Office, partner authorities in the region and the Emergency Planning College, in the design, training, work up and delivery of the exercise.

⁴ To include an integrated approach to resource planning that considers all potential requests for funding to develop a single and prioritised statement of desired outcomes that all can work to deliver.

OUR APPROACH

4 Our Principles

Our guiding principles are:

- a. We will work together in a collaborative and transparent manner through the statutory duties established by the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) (2004) and its supporting doctrine and guidance as well as making maximum use of Public Sector Cooperation Agreements, where appropriate.
- b. Extant statutory or lead responsibilities remain with the relevant agency.
- c. We will share information and manage knowledge intelligently.
- d. We will focus on delivering the best outcome for Norfolk communities.
- e. We will speak with one voice and communicate clearly, coherently and consistently to Norfolk communities.
- f. We will exploit pre-existing structures and multi-agency fora to reduce duplication and ensure our activities are efficient and effective.
- g. We will ensure a balanced approach – delivering quick wins and set the conditions for achieving longer-term success.
- h. We will make evidence-based decisions and anticipate future risk through collaborative analysis and data sharing.
- i. We learn from others and our own experiences and seek to identify and share 'best practice' as appropriate.

5 Strategic Collaboration – Threats and Opportunities.

It is unlikely that any single entity will be able to develop projects or solutions alone that mitigate the threats of flooding or to promote the opportunities for better water management. Collaboration (not duplication) between NSFA and Water Resources East (WRE) is essential to a coherent approach across the County of Norfolk. From a water management perspective, WRE and its strategic partners will identify opportunities in the short, medium and long-term to connect fluvial flood risk reduction with water scarcity opportunities, ideally delivering water quality benefits at the same time.

This will predominantly focus on the opportunities to capture and store flood water and make it available for use for example for irrigation, energy production and to drive environmental improvement and natural capital net gain. Key partners in this work, alongside Norfolk local authority colleagues and WRE's Norfolk Water Strategy partners (Anglian Water and The Nature Conservancy) will be landowners, internal drainage boards, local community leaders and environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO).



6 How we Function

The NSFA operates across 3 levels (using Civil Contingencies Act doctrinal definitions for each level) – Strategic, Tactical and Operational/Delivery – a schematic representation of how this will be achieved, with broad roles and responsibilities, is shown below.⁵ The NSFA recognises that member organisations and authorities have different priorities, funding arrangements, regulators and statutory obligations. It is incumbent on NSFA members to highlight to the NSFA their constraints to help the NSFA appreciate how best to work around these for the benefit of local communities. While the NSFA will determine its priorities, it accepts the need to use the statutory and funding frameworks of other bodies in order to realise these priorities. The Norfolk County Council (NCC) communications team would use this strategy and action plan to develop a proactive communications and engagement plan.



⁵ For local operational/delivery groups to be successful, there will need to be multiple (to spread the load), probably covering either the district council areas (with a number amalgamated to ensure there aren't too many groups for those of us that cover the whole of Norfolk) or Anglian Water water recycling collection areas. Discussions are underway to see if KL&WN might consider joining Coastal Partnership East and therefore remove the need for a bilateral arrangement between the NSFA and KL&WN on coastal flooding matters.

NSFA Governance & Structures (2022)

What: Provide a strategic direction, achieve quality alignment amend deliver strategic outcomes

Why: So that Norfolk communities and infrastructure are safer and more resilient to the risks of inland and coastal flooding

How: Through a shared understanding of the flood risks and a prioritised, collaborative and coordinated approach to their managing and delivering shared ownership

What: Provide coordinated tactical management, of the contribution to flood response and risk mitigation

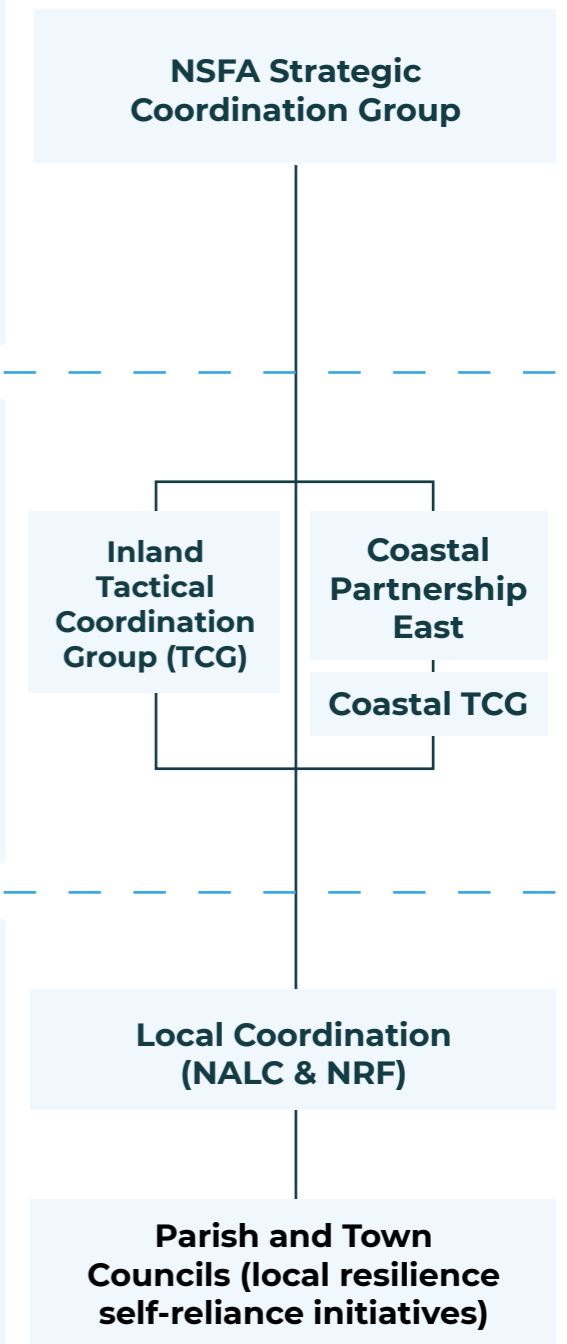
Why: To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the contribution. Deliver successful outcomes for the people of Norfolk affected by coastal and inland flooding

How: By delivering against NSFA priorities (The Coastal TCG is a constituent element of CPE)

What: Practical support and guidance against known flood risks. Provide evidence of the 'lived experience' to inform collaboration

Why: To provide local solutions that increase resilience. To ensure appropriate prioritisation of resource and effort.

How: By a risk assessed plan and prioritised programme. If initiatives involving multi-agency partners. Contributing to modelling and the multiagency risk assessment (local knowledge)



ASSESSING SUCCESS

7 What will success look like?

Achieving the stated vision will be the ultimate assessment of success for the NSFA. On our journey to achieving this vision, the NSFA will assess performance against the individual objectives (para 3), the specific actions and tasks (annex A) and our ways of working / guiding principles (Appendix B). On an annual basis (July NSFA meeting) members will be invited to affirm their commitment to the NSFA and the delivery of collaborative working in accordance with our guiding principles.

8 Universal Stakeholder Buy In.

On an annual basis – commencing in July 2021 - the stakeholders, who are the constituent members of the NSFA, will commit to work together by formally signing off the annual NSFA Overall Strategy, of which this is the first.



Partners

- Norfolk County Council
- Breckland District Council
- Broadlands District Council
- South Norfolk District Council
- North Norfolk District Council
- Norwich City Council
- Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Council
- Borough of Great Yarmouth Council
- Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
- Anglian Eastern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
- Association of Drainage Authorities
- Anglian Water
- Broads Authority
- Coastal Partnership East
- Environment Agency
- Highways Agency
- National Farmers Union
- Norfolk Resilience Forum
- Norfolk Association of Local Councils
- Water Resources East
- Water Management Alliance
- Norfolk Rivers Trust



