

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Councillor Gordon Bambridge, Executive Member for Waste and Environment

To: Cabinet – 20 September 2021

Author: Ralph Burton, Assistant Director Property & Projects

Subject: Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance - Strategy

Purpose: To provide Members with an update on the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance and endorse the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy

Recommendation(s):

Option 1 – Endorse the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance (NSFA) formed earlier in 2021 under the chairmanship of Lord Dannant. The purpose of the NSFA is for its members to work together to ensure Norfolk's communities and water infrastructure is safer and more resilient to the risks of inland and coastal flooding.
- 1.2 The NSFA was formed following recognition that the county-wide response to flooding and flood-related risks was incoherent and improvements were required to protect and reassure Norfolk communities. Therefore the members of the NSFA are seeking to work collaboratively and transparently and across boundaries and structures to improve the response of flooding and increase the coherency and consistency of flood risk.
- 1.3 The NSFA now represents a single point of focus and collaboration strategically for all flood-related challenges facing Norfolk. Success of the NSFA will be determined when there is a higher level of confidence amongst Norfolk residents (through the coordinated actions of the statutory authorities) that there is reduced fear of flooding and drought.
- 1.4 Given the increasing occurrence of flooding incidents in Breckland communities and the heightened awareness to the management of flood risk, the Council is currently represented on the NSFA by the Leader and an Executive Director.
- 1.5 **Strategy:** The NSFA members have developed an initial strategy (Appendix 1) that provides a framework for how the NSFA will operate and how it will interact with the appropriate statutory and non-statutory bodies. The strategy sets out its objectives and importantly an action plan which can be used to measure success. Members of the NSFA have been asked to approve the NSFA Strategy. Approving the strategy confirms strategic support for the objectives of the NSFA.
- 1.6 **One-Number:** There are a number of public bodies who are involved in supporting the alleviation of flooding and response to flooding when it occurs. This complex structure and knowledge of who does what was flagged early in the development of the NSFA. To give residents and businesses one clear route to seeking help, one of the early outputs of the NSFA is that it has created a single telephone number for the reporting of all for the reporting of all flooding incidences whether emergency or not. Any resident or business can now call 0344 800 8013 to quickly receive assistance. This single one-number will make sure there is a single place to report flooding and seek help. To support the launch of this single one-number the Council has created a dedicated web-page on flooding and will be instigating a communications campaign to Breckland residents and businesses to highlight the new one-number and also outline the responsibilities of land owners to support the need to keep drains and ditches well maintained before the winter months.

- 1.7 **Focused Sites:** Part of the NSFA's Strategy is a target to focus attention on a set of specific sites that require more dedicated assistance to alleviate flood risk. In the first tranche of 16 sites there were six location in Breckland which were, Watton/Saham Toney, Cranworth, Yaxham, Mattishall, Necton and Kenninghall. All of these locations in Breckland have suffered with flooding for specific reasons in those communities. The NFSA provides a focused point to obtain greater traction from the organisations involved in reducing flood risk (subject to funding availability) on these specific sites. At the time of writing this report tranche 2 is in development and further locations have been submitted in Breckland for inclusion.
- 1.8 In September 2019, the council declared a climate emergency and then set out its Sustainability Strategy in February of this year. One of the three strands of the strategy is for the council to use its powers to influence and lead positive change. It would therefore be in keeping with the council's policy position to support and promote the successful delivery of this strategy.

2.0 OPTIONS

- 2.1 Option 1: The Council endorses the NFSA strategy and the work being undertaken by the members of the NFSA to support communities in Norfolk to lessen the threat of flood risk.
- 2.2 Option 2: The Council does not endorse and support the NFSA strategy. This is not recommended as it is not in keeping with its policy position on climate change and sustainability.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council endorses the NFSA strategy and work programme outlined within it. If the Council were not to do so it would be in contradiction to the Council's policy position on sustainability and its climate emergency declaration. Positively supporting the NFSA strategy provides a strategic commitment to assist the important need to help Breckland's communities with the alleviation of flood-risk and in-time improve the infrastructure needed in the face of the environmental changes occurring.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

- 4.1 The endorsement of this strategy will support the Council's policy position on becoming a more sustainable and environmentally conscious organisation. It will also set out a proactive and unified position regarding flooding across Norfolk that is transparent to our residents.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

- 5.1.1 The themes of the NFSA strategy directly link to the Breckland Sustainability Strategy which sets out how the Council will reduce its own environmental impact, use the powers that it has to influence others across the district to lessen their impact and work with communities across the district to make positive changes.

5.2 Corporate Priorities

- 5.2.1 This strategy is directly links and supports the aims and objectives to the 'Breckland 2035' strategic theme as set out in the new corporate plan agreed by Council in July 2021.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 All wards.

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No decision

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix 1 – NFSA Strategy