

Environmental Excellence Policy Development Panel
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Annual re-ratification of Strategy for Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance

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Portfolio: Environmental Excellence, and Communities, Housing and Planning

Ward(s) Affected: All wards

Purpose of the Report:

This report presents the slightly updated Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance's Strategy for annual re-ratification, one year on from its original ratification by Cabinet. Information is provided to outline how the council and the wider Alliance is delivering against the Strategy, and against the wider needs of our communities facing potential threats of flooding.

Recommendations:

1. Environmental Excellence Policy Development Panel to recommend to Cabinet to ratify the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy 2022 as set out at Appendix 1, and to note the progress being made.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance's (NSFA) Strategy, ratified by Cabinet on 14th September 2021, requires annual re-ratification. This helps to keep high-level action to tackle flooding high on the agenda. Re-ratifying the NSFA Strategy for a further one-year period will endorse and support the approach being taken.
- 1.2 Progress is being made by the NSFA on a range of flooding actions within Broadland district and across Norfolk.
- 1.3 Local action outlined at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 is being taken across the district in collaboration with South Norfolk Council through two posts dedicated to working with local communities in flooding awareness, prevention, mitigation, preparedness.

2. Background

- 1.4 The flooding experienced across Norfolk over the Christmas and New Year 2020 caused widespread impacts. Responding agencies resources were severely stretched and there were inconsistencies in the responses in different local authority areas. Residents were confused about which agency to contact for help and what level of response they could expect.
- 1.5 Following that flooding, the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance (NSFA) was established in early 2021. Chaired by Lord Dannatt, the work of the Alliance has involved strategic lead officers and Leaders from a range of agencies involved in flood response and water management across the County. The NSFA membership includes, among others, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the Association of Drainage Authorities, the Water Management Alliance, Water Resources East, the Norfolk Resilience Forum, the Broads Authority and Norfolk's local authorities. The NSFA Strategy was considered and ratified by Cabinet on 14th September 2021. This Strategy will be presented annually for re-ratification to maintain a high profile. This re-ratification is perhaps unusual, but it is appropriate given the challenges that flooding can threaten to some of our communities, and the complexity of making improvements in flooding problem-solving and improving future prevention and mitigation.
- 1.6 There are longstanding flooding issues where ownership of and responsibilities for land, ditches and drains has been unclear. The NSFA is able to highlight these areas and drive these issues forward at a more visible level than previously. The NSFA identified lists of priority flooding sites of concern for special attention, known as Tranche 1 and Tranche 2.

3. Current position/findings

- 1.7 The NSFA has brought various agencies and interests together successfully. It originally produced a set of guiding principles, the NSFA Strategy, and Tranche 1 and 2 lists including a number of locations for focussed attention in the Broadland district. Progress has been made in a number of locations towards the aim of developing costed, funded solutions to ongoing or periodic flooding. The NSFA

was also instrumental in the establishment of Coastal Flooding and Inland Flooding tactical coordinating groups which have monitored and supported the progress of developing solutions to flooding at Tranche 1 and 2 sites. Much of the progress made would have been difficult to achieve without the focus on the NSFA and its Strategy.

- 1.8 The NSFA Board meeting in July 2022 received an annual report for the previous period of one year, an updated campaign plan and a slightly updated version of the Strategy for re-ratification in 2022.
- 1.9 The collaboration with South Norfolk Council has enhanced staffing resources to focus on flooding, (1) through a lead operational role undertaken by Flood and Water Management Officer building on a former more junior officer post, and (2) by recruiting a new practical Riparian Responsibilities Officer post that will, working with communities, promote and enforce where necessary the free-flowing condition of land drains to prevent or minimise localised surface water flooding.
- 1.10 Through these dedicated staffing resources, the aims are to:
 1. Bring strong expertise and organisational knowledge to a 'can-do' focus on flooding, closely engaging with key stakeholders and local communities.
 2. Offer sector-leading proactive service for flood prevention, mitigation, advice and support.
 3. Develop a strong action-focused profile and providing strong reassurance, planning and responses, developing a track record of results.

Key planned activities for Regulatory services and the Flood and Water Management Officer will include:

- a) Identifying and mapping flood risk threatened areas and past incidents, including surface water flooding.
- b) Prioritising higher risk flood-threatened local areas within the district for close attention, engaging with local communities and representatives.
- c) Delivering high quality planning consultation responses to maximise positive influence on flood prevention, mitigation, protection and resolution of significant issues and concerns. Doing this internally on non-major proposed new developments and working with the Lead Local Flood Authority to maximise bespoke consultation on major proposed developments.
- d) Develop and deliver flood prevention and preparedness education and advice as a phased programme of activity to equip local people and ensure responsibilities are understood and exercised.
- e) Pursuing a prioritised work programme to promote, inspect compliance with and enforce where necessary the responsibilities of riparian owners, prioritising for close attention and working through the areas of greatest risk. This will involve practical inspection and community work by a practical inspector gathering information to enable informal and formal enforcement.

- f) Enabling better local community outcomes through flooding and water management policy and funding, strategic and partnering focus, strong positive relationships with stakeholders and key partner agencies.
- g) Promoting local community resilience (flood action groups, community emergency plans, etc.).

4. Proposed action

- 1.11 As reported previously, the NSFA has proposed that, on an annual basis, member agencies are invited to reaffirm their commitment to working in the Alliance and the delivery of collaborative working in accordance with its guiding principles. As an NSFA member the Council, by ratifying each year and then adopting the Strategy into its strategic plans, helps to add weight and brings greater unity of purpose as well as coherency and consistency to bear on flooding action.
- 1.12 The NSFA Strategy has received minor updates for 2022 and is presented at Appendix 1 for ratification for a period of one year.

5. Other options

- 1.13 Cabinet could decide not to re-ratify the NSFA Strategy for a further one-year period.

6. Issues and risks

- 1.14 **Resource Implications** – The NSFA Strategy seeks to gain a consensus approach bringing new focus to member agencies' existing resources. Re-ratification of the Strategy as proposed raises no new resource implications.
- 1.15 **Legal Implications** – None.
- 1.16 **Equality Implications** – No equality implications have been identified in connection with the adoption of the NSFA Strategy.
- 1.17 **Environmental Impact** – Localised flooding has evidently become more frequent in the United Kingdom and this is expected to continue and, potentially, to worsen. The NSFA Strategy (in conjunction with other agency plans, procedures and mitigations) will assist Norfolk residents to become more resilient to flooding. If any major schemes are brought forward the Council will have a key role in environmental assessment of individual projects and schemes as necessary.
- 1.18 **Crime and Disorder** – There are no identified crime and disorder risks associated with this report.
- 1.19 **Risks** – None identified other than set out above.

7. Conclusion

- 1.20 There are strong benefits in taking a multi-agency approach through the NSFA and keeping flooding action high on the local, regional and national agenda. Re-ratifying the NSFA Strategy will for a further year endorse and support the approach being taken.

8. Recommendations

- 1.21 Environmental Excellence Policy Development Panel to recommend to Cabinet to ratify the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy 2022 as set out at Appendix 1, and to note the progress being made.

Background papers

Minutes of Cabinet meeting on 14th September 2021.