



Council
12 December 2023

WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ward(s) Affected: All

Motion on Notice

Report by the Director for Sustainability & Resources

Officer Contact Details:-

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The report before Council sets out a motion received from Councillor Claire Hunt which has been seconded by Councillor Sophie Cox.
- 1.2. Council is asked to consider and debate the motion prior to it being referred to the Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee for determination under provisions set out in paragraph 14 of the Council Procedure Rules (part 4 of the Council Constitution - Rules of Procedure).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Council is asked to debate the motion, as set out in Annex A to this report, prior to its referral to the Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee for consideration and determination.

3. Context

- 3.1 A motion on notice has been received from Councillor Claire Hunt, (attached as Annex A).
- 3.2 The content of the motion is relevant to a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties and which specifically affects the Borough.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1 Motions considered by Full Council are done so under part 14 of the Council's Procedure Rules and are debated under rules set out under part 16 of the Council Procedure Rules.
- 4.2 The Council is asked to consider, debate and determine the motion under these rules accordingly.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee will consider whether there are any financial impacts arising from the motion as appropriate.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Rules concerning motions are set out in the Council's Constitution under section 14 of the Council's Procedure Rules.

Background Papers

None.

Motion on Sustainable Marine Recovery

This Council declares an urgent need for Marine Recovery and Sustainability. We recognise that local authorities cannot solve the marine crisis alone but we can and must play our part in realising clean, healthy and productive seas, to meet our net zero targets and for all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring.

Why is this declaration needed now?

In 2019 Worthing Borough Council (WBC) declared a climate emergency and is continuing to make progress towards reducing both the Council's own carbon footprint and that of the Borough. In early 2023, the Council also declared an Ecological Emergency and is working to encourage ecological recovery in our borough, including ensuring that our biodiversity and climate strategies, such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, recognise how land and rivers connect to and impact the ocean and strive to support marine recovery through a 'source-to-sea' approach.

The Council is working with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries and developing a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity; including the local fishing industry and the vital work of Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA). WBC recognises the essential roles the sea and coast have in contributing to our climate and ecological emergency declarations, as well as the wider objectives of a resilient and sustainable economy, and the health and wellbeing of our residents. Working with Adur Council, it is leading the development of Sussex Bay - a vision for nature recovery along the whole of the Sussex coastline.

The Sussex Bay programme, supported by Esme Fairbairn Foundation, is working to connect and support remarkable projects across the Bay like the Sussex Kelp Recovery Project, Adur River Restoration and the Eastbourne-Pevensy coastal defence scheme. It is already a UK leading light in the development of new funding mechanisms that aim to place appropriate financial value on the range of vital benefits that healthy rivers and seascapes bring. A major research funding bid has been prepared working with the Universities of Sussex, Brighton and Portsmouth, and a UK-first partnership has been established with The Crown Estate, owners of the seabed. The £2.9m UKRI Resilient Coastal Communities funding bid, if successful, would support significant community engagement and participation work, helping communities connect and participate in a large-scale generational recovery of our seascape. Close partnerships have been established through Sussex Bay with a range of organisations including Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust, South Downs National Park, Environment Agency, Sussex IFCA and other coastal local authorities. Given the work that is already taking place, it's a natural next step to continue to look at how our own operations influence ocean recovery and so we are bringing forward this Motion on Sustainable Marine Recovery.

This Motion would support, reinforce and further enhance the work of Sussex Bay in important ways:

1. This Motion is about ensuring that we further embed marine recovery in our strategic decision-making, policymaking and budget-setting, at the highest levels and throughout the whole council. At its core, the motion aims to help the council and the community we serve to “think ocean” and ensure the development of the blue economy is regenerative, delivering the recovery of our seas in a holistic way, reconciling potentially competing ambitions for economic development, health and wellbeing and a healthy marine environment, foreshore and coastal defences, and reducing socio-economic inequality in our coastal communities.
2. Helping individuals develop their ocean literacy (understanding of the relationship between people and the sea) is an essential part of this motion, as is individual and collective marine citizenship (promoting and demanding marine recovery through local, national and international policy changes). Even within Worthing, there are people of all ages who don't have the opportunity or means to access and enjoy the beach - 38% of Adur & Worthing's population visit the beach less than once a month and 13% have never been to the beach.
3. Nineteen councils in England and Wales have to date declared an urgent need for ocean recovery using a locally-adapted motion. WBC should be amongst these leaders, uniting with other local authorities to present a 'stronger together', united, coordinated pressure on the central government to act quickly for the marine recovery our residents want and deserve.
4. Water quality improvement begins on land and it will require local and national action to tackle sewage pollution, chemical pollution, agricultural run-off, urban run-off, nutrient neutrality from developments, and more. This Motion asks us to join the dots, work in partnerships and with residents, and deal with pollution from every source, in policy and in practice, using innovative, scientifically-led, marine and nature-based solutions.

This Council pledges to:

1. Ensure that we are continuing to provide detailed updates on strategies, actions and the administration's projects, including Sussex Bay, set out in this motion through documents and reports at Full Council and Joint Strategic Sub-Committee.
2. Further embed marine recovery in strategic decisions, plans, budgets, procurement and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly in planning, regeneration, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate

change mitigation and adaptation requirements (including future sea-level rises), and considering sea-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.

3. Ensure that local planning supports marine recovery, working closely with the Marine Management Organisation to embed strong links between the Local Plan and the South Marine Plan to support recovery of our sea.
4. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in Worthing, including:
 - a. Promoting sustainable and equitable access to the sea through in-person and online experiences for all residents. We want to encourage all children to experience the sea and beach first-hand before leaving primary school by working with our local schools, alternate provisions and home-schooled children as well as engaging college and further education students.
 - b. Through these actions, embed understanding of the “source-to-sea approach” and how people, wherever they live, impact and are impacted by marine health.
5. Launch a Sussex Bay website to update on ocean recovery progress, signpost to marine literacy development opportunities, and marine citizenship pledges.
6. Whilst continuing to hold all polluters and regulators to account, continue to meet regularly with Southern Water, the Environment Agency, developers and other agencies to improve the water quality of our rivers and coastal waters around Worthing, benefitting nature and residents alike.
7. Write to the Government asking them to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 through the following actions:
 - a. Appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities.
 - b. Produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
 - i. Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
 - ii. Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
 - iii. Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire sea that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.

- iv. Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits of marine recovery, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.
- c. Embed ocean literacy in the national curriculum
- d. Incorporate marine commitments into the UK Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement to embed marine conservation within the UK's decarbonisation targets
- e. Within 'Levelling Up' and other economic development initiatives, focus attention on technical upskilling to support the workforce development needed to ensure a just transition to new marine natural capital opportunities
- f. Develop more integrated marine spatial planning that is fit for purpose to facilitate marine natural capital project development
- g. Develop integrated policymaking, including the consideration of the terrestrial environment in marine policymaking, to incorporate impacts and dependencies and working with coastal communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
- h. Provide enhanced guidance for local marine planning on how to manage trade-offs between production of blue foods, achieving net zero, delivering biodiversity outcomes, and improving water quality across multifunctional seascapes
- i. Ensure IFCA's have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.
- j. Provide government funding to help develop a network of 'blue natural capital labs' including facilitating uptake of emerging technologies suited to local environments, to reduce project implementation and management costs.
- k. Stop plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle.
- l. Improve the water quality of our rivers, coastal waters and sea to benefit nature and health and the wellbeing of all UK residents, including stopping the regular pollution of our rivers and seas.

Background and supporting evidence

Our sea is in a state of emergency and the communities we serve are on the frontline. The impact of the climate crisis on the sea is profound, from rising water temperatures and changes in marine chemistry, to sea level rise and increased storminess. This changes what seafood is caught locally, accelerates the erosion of our coastline, increases the risk to infrastructure and properties, and increases the risk of flooding and storm damage. Decades of irresponsible marine exploitation and pollution have led to significant levels of degradation. Water quality is an issue of great concern to residents. It is influenced by a wide range of factors, including land management, farming practices, road run-off, leachates from historical sources, pollution from shipping and individual actions, and combined sewage overflows. Marine microplastics have been found in all marine environments and in the bodies of many species, including humans and the species of fish we regularly eat.

Urgent action is needed to halt these devastating changes and recover the health of our sea to enable it to deliver the full range of benefits, including climate regulation, carbon storage in coastal and marine habitats, coastal protection, a thriving local economy, clean, safe bathing and recreation and happy, healthy coastal communities.

The UK government's 2019 Marine Strategy assessment confirms that our marine environment is not healthy. An unhealthy sea does not absorb or store carbon as effectively as a healthy one, further worsening the impacts of the climate crisis.

A healthy sea is fundamental in regulating the global climate system and is an essential ally in our fight against climate change. The sea absorbs more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system as well as absorbing around 20% of annual carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions generated by human activity.

There are many opportunities for economic development in the marine environment, but these must be harnessed in a regenerative, rather than damaging, way.

Delivering the pledges set out in this Motion would yield new jobs and opportunities, more resilient coastal economies, and happier, healthier people; as well as a cleaner, healthier and more productive natural environment. A healthy sea is an essential ally in our fight against climate change and blue carbon could play an integral role in helping us meet our net zero targets.

The original 'Motion for the Ocean' was developed by:

Dr Pamela Buchan, marine social scientist and former Plymouth City Councillor

Emily Cunningham, marine and coastal expert and formerly led the LGA Coastal Special Interest Group

and Nicola Bridge, ocean literacy specialist and Head of Advocacy and Engagement at the Ocean Conservation Trust

Councils that have passed a 'Motion for the Ocean' include

- Plymouth City Council, 22 November 2021
- Falmouth Town Council, 10 January 2022
- South Tyneside Council, 13 January 2022
- North Norfolk District Council, 9 February 2022
- North Devon Council, 23 February 2022
- Monmouthshire County Council, 3 March 2022
- Seaton with Slingley Parish Council, 16 March 2022
- Seaham Town Council, 22 March 2022
- Portsmouth City Council, 17 May 2022
- Devon County Council, 27 May 2022
- Torridge District Council, 6 June 2022
- Blandform Forum Town Council, 25 July 2022
- Teignbridge District Council, 26 July 2022
- Blackpool Council, 5 December 2022
- Isle of Wight Council, 19 July 2023
- Canterbury City Council, 20 July 2023
- North Somerset Council, 19 September 2023
- Havant Borough Council, 20 September 2023
- Newark & Sherwood District Council, 17 Oct 2023

In addition to the local Councils who have individually declared, the Local Government Association also supported the Motion for the Ocean on 29th September 2022.

Proposer - Councillor Claire Hunt
Seconder - Councillor Sophie Cox