



To:
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for
Environment Enhancement &
Infrastructure Management

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Overview & Scrutiny

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27 October 2021

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management. The letter concerns the meeting held on 6 October 2021 and the updates received regarding Flood Risk Management.

Dear Councillor Thomas,

On 6 October, the Panel met to hold discussions around Flood Risk Management. The Panel were grateful to all who attended to provide information and answer questions. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussions and to share the observations of the Panel.

You acknowledged that the issue of flooding could affect all wards at some point, highlighting that the Council is heavily reliant on Welsh Government funding to manage this issue.

You explained to us that the demand for delivery of sandbags cannot always be met, and it is especially difficult to utilise resources to deliver sandbags during times of crisis/emergency flooding, when resources are being directed to immediately deal with the flooding situation.

The Panel heard that the procurement process is underway to add new gully maintenance vehicles. Officers also explained to us that they are creating a new initiative for a reactive gully crew, aiming to quickly respond to individual flood incidents. Officers outlined aspirations to have extra staff on hand to deliver sandbags and to support critical culverts during flood incidents.

Panel Members commented on Paragraph 4.1 of the update report, regarding two full time vacancies, and queried the impact of these vacant positions. Officers acknowledged that recruitment of technical staff is an on-going challenge.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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Officers explained to us that that the increasing intensity of rainfall and downpours means there will be occasions where the current drainage system will become overwhelmed. We heard that accommodating extreme rainfall periods will be a challenge, and that preventative measures continue to be developed to mitigate flood risk.

Members commented on recent use of environmental budget allowances within individual wards to procure gully teams on an ad-hoc basis, suggesting that this become wider practice when needed.

The Panel heard that currently, the flooding of five properties is the threshold for a 'locally significant incident'. Officers explained that this figure will possibly be raised to twenty properties in line with some other authorities across Wales.

You cited the North Gower village of Crofty as an example of vast flood prevention intervention by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), explaining to us, however, that factors such as prolonged heavy rainfall, high tides and strong winds can overtop drainage systems regardless of all interventions in place. The Panel acknowledged and understood that it will not always be possible to overcome flooding events in particular circumstances.

Members questioned the latest update on the Coastal Risk Management Programme in relation to the Mumbles flood defence wall. You explained to us that public perception appears to be supportive, and that there is a general acceptance that this scheme is needed. We heard that circa £12million will be invested from Welsh Government and that evidence suggests flood risk will be reduced for over 120 properties.

Officers highlighted the relevance of nature-based solutions such as the sand dunes created at the Civic Centre site, having had a positive impact on reducing wave energy and subsequent storm flooding. The Panel heard that there is scope to mitigate flood risk through green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, such as increased tree planting to help slow water flow.

The Panel queried the Development Advice Maps in relation to Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN 15). Officers explained that the Council would need to provide defence around certain City Centre sites, with the additional requirement to take account of surface run-off risk.

Overall, the Panel were pleased to hear about the on-going work of the teams involved in all aspects of Council Flood Risk Management. We thanked all involved for their input and contributions.

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but, in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

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