

## Public Questions Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> October

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| Q1     | <p><b>Peter Grubb:</b> A proposal has been made from Friends of Shoebury Common to raise the Promenade as an equitable solution to the Sea Defence Issue. The Council report commented on the proposal as having merit but was without detail. Why were written attempts ignored or rejected to allow full discussion in particular to add detail to the area surrounding Uncle Tom's Cabin?</p>  |
| Answer | <p>The issue of access between Uncle Tom's Cabin and the raised promenade was one of a number of technical problems with the proposal which were identified by the Council's expert advisors. It was commented on because the information provided by the proposers did not clarify how it was to be achieved. It is acknowledged that officers were told that a sensible layout, which would employ gradients suitable for disabled users was possible. However, no detail of this layout was provided, formally or informally.</p> <p>The severity of this issue, among the list provided by our advisors, was of relatively minor impact. It may well have been capable of resolution and would not, alone, make the scheme impracticable. Of much more weight were issues of cost, technical problems with the form of construction proposed and the practicalities and legalities surrounding relocation of the beach huts.</p>  |
| Q2     | <p><b>Peter Grubb:</b> Has the availability of criteria meeting alternative solutions to the Sea Defence issue been formally communicated to the Environment agency in order to establish how much of the extra cost they would meet?</p>   |
| Answer | <p>Liaison between the Council and Environment Agency, formal and informal, is continuous on this and any other projects affecting flood defences. It is part of the Agency's approval process that they must be satisfied that all the options have been considered.</p> <p>The Council has explained many times in correspondence and in public meetings that, under the present funding system, the central government's contribution is calculated from, and limited by, the benefits provided by the individual scheme. Therefore, none of the additional costs of a scheme costing more than the optimum project would be provided from government sources, unless it provided additional tangible benefits. They would all have to be raised from local community sources, including in some instances, private individuals who benefit from the project.</p> <p>In practice it would probably require a significant additional capital contribution from the Council.</p> |
| Q1     | <p><b>Peter Lovett:</b> Before any decision is made, the committee are requested to allow the presentation of evidence of inaccuracies, misleading &amp; omitted facts and the missing BERA alternative scheme solution relevant to the report, before you for consideration today?</p>   |

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| Answer | This Committee is not the forum for such a presentation, and the time and resources available may not, in any case, allow resolution of any issues. If the questioner would submit details of the claimed inaccuracies etc., the Director for Place will ensure that they are investigated and resolved.  |
| Q2     | <b>Peter Lovett:</b> Would the Committee request the Council to provide the full cost breakdown for the on-going sea defence work, including beach recharge at Shoebury Common, for each option (including BERA alternative), to allow fair and accurate cost comparisons to be made?   |
| Answer | This has been considered and can be provided.   |
| Q1     | <b>Harry Chandler:</b> Will the council inform us of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many properties are currently at risk from sea flooding from the sea overtopping the current Shoebury Common defences</li> <li>• How many properties will be at risk from sea flooding in say 5 years' time from sea flooding for the same reason</li> </ul>   |
| Answer | <p>Firstly, please note that the number of properties at risk increases as the intensity of the particular flood event increases, and its probability of occurring decreases. Therefore there is not a single figure which can be quoted.</p> <p>The results of the overtopping modelling by Black &amp; Veatch are that in the present day, for a 0.5% probability (1 in 200 years) event, 237 existing residential properties and 58 commercial properties would be affected by sea flooding.</p> <p>In five years, these numbers are expected to rise to 242 residential and 59 commercial.</p> <p>In fifty years, a 1/1000 year event would affect 486 residential and commercial properties; in 100 years the number is 664. All properties included above are presently existing.</p> |
| Q2     | <b>Harry Chandler:</b> What risks does the council see: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To the area if there is no further development of the existing sea defences</li> <li>• That the proposed sea defences will cost more than estimated and build and maintain</li> <li>• That the proposed sea defences will overwhelmed by the sea within 5 years</li> </ul>   |
| Answer | If no development takes place, Black & Veatch's assessments of present day risk indicate that, at best, the wall will overtop once in 20 years (5% probability event), with, as stated above, 237 residences and 58 businesses affected as intensity rises to 1 in 200 years. These risks will increase year on year as sea level rise takes effect, and in 50 years' time the properties at risk will grow to 287 residences and 71 businesses.  |

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|        | <p>The estimates for the project include a substantial contingency of 50%, as required by the Environment Agency, and the Council is confident that the project can be delivered within the estimated budget.</p> <p>The scheme is designed to resist a 1 in 200 year event after 50 years of sea level rise. This equates to a 1 in 500 year event in the present day, so there would be a 1% risk that they would be overtopped within the first five years after construction.</p>  |
| Q1     | <p><b>Daphne Johnson:</b> Shoebury Common has been enjoyed by generations and is protected by covenants designed to ensure its uniqueness and natural beauty is preserved for the future. Amongst the clauses of the covenants is one which states that any works and repairs that might be necessary to protect the property from high tides should be executed “upon the part of the property next the sea”. Surely the Council cannot be interpreting this as a right to construct a dam right across the whole length and majority of the width of the Common itself thereby irreversibly desecrating the Common by hasty, short-sighted action.</p> <p>There are other solutions which have not been fully explored which would not involve the destruction of a place of beauty nor contravene the covenants.</p> <p>Are we to conclude that the scheme is being pushed through with haste to allow development at New Barge Pier Road to go ahead without delay and the prime motivation therefore is monetary gain? (Question in Abbreviated Form)</p> |
| Answer | <p>Only the final sentence of the submission constitutes a question, so I will confine my comments to that. The motivation for the project is entirely the protection of people and property from an existing risk of flooding. If there were no such risk the project would not be being promoted. The Government’s approach to Grant-in-Aid funding in flood and erosion risk management is now to seek partnership funding wherever possible in order to reduce the demands on the public purse and to allow a greater number of beneficial schemes to go ahead. It is entirely proper that a proposed developer should contribute substantially to a project which will enable their proposal to proceed, but the justification for the scheme does not rely on the development being implemented.</p>   |
| Q2     | <p><b>Daphne Johnson:</b> The risk of flooding at Shoebury Common is rated “low” by the Environment Agency. Additionally, Shoebury Common has the advantage of being a natural floodplain, indeed a basin, which collects any tidal flooding from the south or rainwater from the east. Raising an embankment across this floodplain would destroy its natural ability to hold and absorb water.</p> <p>The Council has every confidence that excessive rainwater flowing through Gunners’ Park can be collected in a holding reservoir; surely excessive floodwater from high tides could similarly be pumped into the holding reservoir.</p> <p>With a simple solution such as this, more time and resources could be concentrated on addressing the very real threat to those, many elderly living in the single-storey park homes, in the “significant” risk zone at East Beach. Surely this should be given the highest priority.</p>   |

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|        | <p>Why is the Council not primarily concentrating its efforts on more actively pursuing to protect its coastline at East Beach, when alternative cheaper solutions, such as a holding reservoir, could be found to the grotesque and costly embankment scheme proposed for the low risk area of Shoebury Common? (Question in Abbreviated Form)</p>   |
| Answer | <p>The ground levels at East Beach were raised in recent years to such a height as to place them out of risk of all but the most extreme flooding risk. The remaining risk in east Shoebury arises from the defences in the privately owned MoD property of New Ranges. The Council is actively pursuing discussions with the MoD, but this is a lengthy process. In contrast, the Shoebury common site is owned by the Council, and there is no difficulty of dealing with security conscious third party landowners. Also, in terms of flood areas in the Borough, south Shoebury, that is the area protected by the wall at the common, presents a high level of risk due to the low crest level of the defence wall. The quantities of water which could be involved in tidal overtopping of the defence wall dwarf the quantities which fall as rain. Because of this, the concept of a holding tank for this overtopping water is completely impracticable in practical and cost terms.</p> |