



Agenda Item Introduction

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION
Date	2 MAY 2024
Topic	BEACH MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2021-26

Background

1. In January 2021 Cabinet approved the Beach Framework Strategy. The strategy was a result of an internal audit report into the processes and procedures in place to manage water safety. The framework provided a list of all activities, with an action plan, to improve the beach environment.
2. The committee to receive a written update on the progress of the framework in line with the action plan and target dates as well as receiving information from Southern Water to enable discussion on sewage overflows.

Focus for Scrutiny

- What is the Beach Management Framework and how does it function?
- Being now over halfway through the strategy life span what have been the successes and challenges with implementation?
- Have all the targets on the action plan been achieved?
- What is the process with beach litter picks going forward?
- Has further benchmarking to determine the type and scale of safety services delivered by other south coast Local Authorities taken place to be able to inform the future policy?

Approach

3. Set out the approach for the committee.

Document(s) Attached

4. Appendix 1 - Action Plan
Appendix 2 – Beach Management Framework

Contact Point: Melanie White, Statutory Scrutiny Officer,
(01983) 821000 ext 8876, e-mail melanie.white@iow.gov.uk

Scrutiny Report

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION
Date	2 MAY 2024
Title	BEACH MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2021 – 2026
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, BIOSPHERE AND WASTE

Executive Summary

There is a need to ensure the Isle of Wight Council has clear strategic direction to the management of beaches on the Isle of Wight, this is key to ensuring that consistent and sustainable management occurs to one of our island's biggest resources.

Following the review there needs to be separate policies and process for the areas of beach management which are dynamic and cannot be defined by a set and static process or contained within a framework or strategy.

The Isle of Wight Council needs to ensure that our beach management activities coincide with the changing needs of our island's residents, visitors and that they meet our moral, legal, and environmental responsibilities.

The Isle of Wight Council needs to review its statutory responsibilities, as the current Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026 has discrepancies within it.

The current Beach Management Framework 2021 - 2026 requires a formal review in order to remain effective and to take account of the recent internal changes to the Isle of Wight Council's structure recognising, and also the continuing financial pressures.

Recommendation

To note the proposed revision Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026 and its associated action plan, and the recommendation that beach, and coastal management is included within the Isle of Wight Councils Climate and Environment Strategy when it is refreshed in 2025.

Background

Beaches form an essential part of life on the Isle of Wight, providing an important outlet for recreational use, and tourism, supporting both jobs and the local economy.

Beaches help provide natural coastal protection, they contribute significantly to the distinctive landscape and sustain varied wildlife; they are a particularly significant part of the Isle of Wight's natural infrastructure and one of the main reasons why people choose to come to the Isle of Wight to live and visit all year round.

There are some statutory duties for the Isle of Wight Council associated with beach management, however the Isle of Wight Council also needs to ensure that the right balance is met for our moral, legal and environmental responsibilities as owners and managers of 25 beaches on the Isle of Wight.

The aims of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026 is to;

1. Put in place appropriate management techniques to sustain and enhance the economic, environmental, and social value of beaches.
2. To encourage wider involvement and participation within beach management, so that it reflects a more local vision.
3. To promote the importance and raise awareness of beaches and their wider value to the Isle of Wight; consequently, defining Isle of Wight as an exemplar in beach management.
4. To provide guidance, direction, and the setting of standards for managing activities on beaches.
5. Improve the physical, intellectual and equality of access to beaches.
6. Make full use of beaches and related open space as a resource to promote physical activity and leisure and thus to improve health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.
7. Where appropriate to apply, improve opportunities for sensitive and sustainable income generation on beaches and their surroundings.

The Beach Management Framework sets out direction to the following areas.

Beach and Slipway Cleaning (Section 4.3 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The Isle of Wight Council has 35 beaches which are owned or leased under its control. 15 of those beaches are cleaned between 1st May to 30th September annually. Across the island there are 23 slipways and beach access steps that are cleaned fortnightly in the summer and monthly during the winter.

Beach Safety (Section 4.4 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

There are no statutory requirements to provide either water safety equipment or beach safety services. The level of provision has changed over the years due to the reduction in the funding available. Currently the council has 144 items of life saving equipment over 35 sites across the island. The provision has been based on historical information and on the good practice guide by the RNLI.

Personal Watercraft (Section 4.5 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The Isle of Wight Council previously provided Beach Management Zoning, through the

provision of marker and launching buoys, which determined the limits of Pleasure Boat byelaw at Sandown, Yaverland, Shanklin, Bembridge, Wootton, Totland & Colwell. However the service was withdrawn in 2014 due to funding constraints. Concerns were raised in 2020 by members of the public over personal watercraft use, and a subsequent police operation was undertaken in 2020. Following the police operation the proposal within the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026 was to review other Local Authorities approaches and move forward an approach commensurate to the budget available.

Beach Awards (Section 4.6 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The Isle of Wight Council does not apply for Blue Flag or Seaside Awards; however Local Town or Parish Councils can do so if they wish.

Bathing Water Quality (Section 4.7 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The Environment Agency sample the water quality around the islands beaches between May and September each year, from these samples they publish the results nationally. Of the 14 designated bathing waters across the Island 10 are managed by the Isle of Wight Council. The Isle of Wight Council are responsible for displaying the Environment Agency water quality rating for each of the designated 10 bathing water classified beaches.

Beach and Seafront Concessions (Section 4.8 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

Commercial services are responsible for more than 34 leases and licenses. They vary from deck chairs/loungers, pleasure craft and miscellaneous properties, to ice cream kiosks, cafes, restaurants, amusement grounds, beach huts, sports facilities and community properties.

Strategic Context (Section 4.9 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The purpose of the framework was to support the Isle of Wight Councils objectives through the delivery of the action plan. Appendix document “working action plan as at 10.08.203”

Benchmarking (Section 5.0 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The Isle of Wight Council obtained information published by the Association for Performance Service Excellence (APSE) and under section 5.2.5 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026, the proposal was to undertake further benchmarking to inform future policy on the areas under the Isle of Wight Councils beach management responsibilities.

Finance (Section 6.0 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The budget contained within the framework is out of date and not relevant for the duration of the document term. It only accounts for the duration between 2020 – 2021.

Legal Implications (Section 7.0 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

The Isle of Wight Council needs to determine what our full and detailed statutory responsibilities are, this section of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026, does not include some of the statutory duties which are referenced earlier within the document

(Part IV of the Environmental Protection Act 1990), which highlights the need for the review.

Performance and Risk (Section 8.0 of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026)

Some of the processes which the Beach Management Framework 2021 - 2026 are aligned to, form the contract monitoring and management of services under the Beach Management Framework 2021 - 2026. In addition to this an action plan was developed to ensure that future monitoring and management of the areas affected by this framework were undertaken.

Current Status and the Future of Beach Management.

Owing to the internal changes which the council has recently undergone, the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026 is not fit for UpToDate best practice guidance and the associated action plan is currently out of date. Officers who were responsible for the delivery of actions within the plan have now left the Local Authority.

The status of the actions contained within the framework require necessary resources to complete them, the last update was 10.08.2023. The current outstanding actions required resources to complete the actions.

A formal review of the framework is necessary to determine if the actions within the Beach Management Framework 2021 - 2026 are still relevant and in line with Isle of Wight Council overall corporate objectives and the key areas for action, including responding to climate change, enhancing the biosphere and economic recovery.

Following a short informal review of the Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026 in March 2024, areas have been identified which are not included within the current Beach Management Framework 2021 – 2026. The areas identified in the March review require the Local Authority to actively manage or take some form of management activity in relation to the islands beaches which they are responsible for, as they impact on the island's residents, visitors and on the public purse. This gives further weight to a full and detailed review of the framework being undertaken.

Areas which have already been identified requiring direction and future management include driftwood, the use of seasonal beach access steps, cleaning of sand and stones from promenades and pre-season beach access clearance.

Following the detailed review there will be a need to separate policies and processes, from the Isle of Wight Councils strategy.

The Isle of Wight Council needs to ensure that our beach management activities coincide with the changing needs of our islands residents and visitors and meet our moral, legal and environmental responsibilities.

Appendices Attached

Appendix 1 – Working Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Beach Management Framework

Contact Point: Alaster Sims , Service Manager Climate, Coast & Environment, ☎ 821000
e-mail *Alaster.sims@jow.gov.uk*

COLIN ROWLAND
Strategic Director of Community Services

CLLR LORA PEACEY-WILCOX
Cabinet Member for Climate Change,
Biosphere and Waste