

# PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



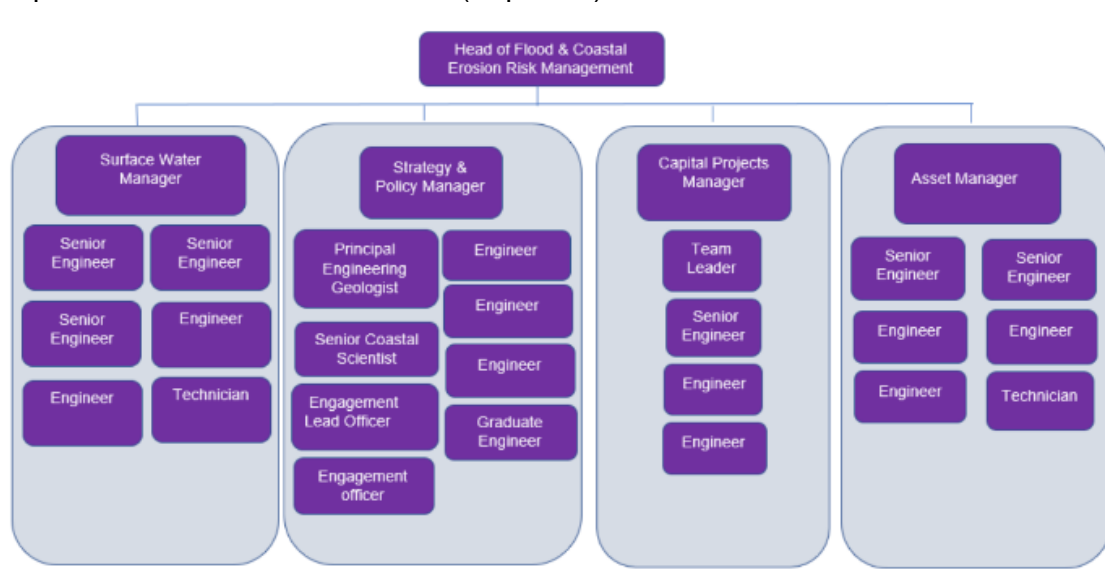
Report subject	<b>FCERM Service Progress</b>
Meeting date	11 October 2023
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<b>Request from Chairman to report on the progress of the FCERM service since Cabinet approved (Sept 21) the re-structure of the service to meet aspirations of growing a regional delivery model</b>
Recommendations	<b>This paper was requested by the O&amp;S Chair for update and information only.</b>
Reason for recommendations	To update on the growth of the FCERM Service

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Andy Hadley – Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy
Corporate Director	Jess Gibbons – Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Matt Hosey – Head of FCERM
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	Update or Information

## Background

In September 2021, Cabinet agreed for the re-structuring of the Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) service to allow growth in line with needs for the FCERM capital programme, aspirations for climate resilience and expertise sharing across the South-West region. Proposals were set out against the expectation that growth could be enabled at no additional cost to the Council due to the ability to secure central government grant in aid. This was also in response to a Dorset Council political decision that a regional Shared Service was not their preference. Cancelling existing arrangements removed all Dorset staff from an established joint line management structure, resulting in the need for the proposed changes.

The proposed FCERM service structure (Sep 2021):

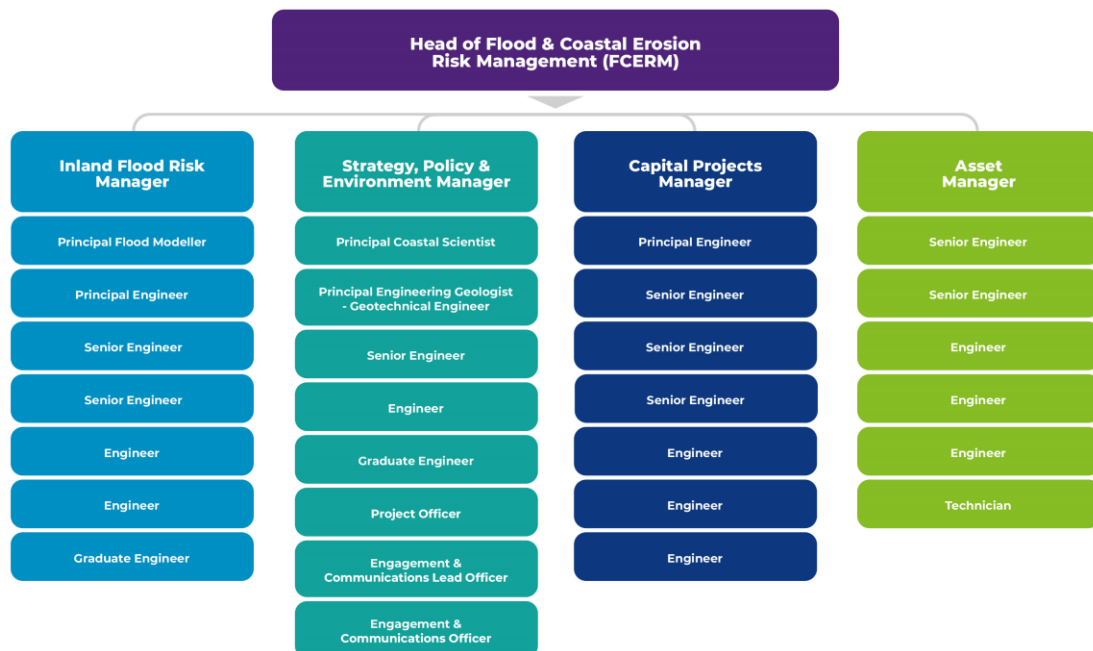


After Cabinet approval, the relevant Job Descriptions and Evaluations were rapidly delivered and vacancies advertised for recruitment. It was evident that the vision for sharing services across the South-West and willingness to work with partner authorities was very attractive to potential candidates and recruitment has been very successful, with very high calibre staff joining the organisation. This included filling 3 manager roles as well as Principal roles for specialist activities with candidates transferring from Technical Director positions at external

consultancies. The growth has enabled a specialist skills focus through the different teams and ability to significantly reduce consultancy dependency as well as increasing capability to provide support to neighbouring authorities. In all, 14 new posts have been recruited to since Cabinet approval two years ago.

The Environment Agency (EA) have the strategic overview, on behalf of Defra, for all national FCERM delivery. They had previously lobbied BCP legacy authorities, and others in the South-West, to look at joint working models to improve delivery, thus helping the EA to deliver on national targets for 'Households protected from flooding or erosion' – referred to as Outcome Measures, or OMs. They cited the success of other such arrangements, in particular the Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership, now known as Coastal Partners (<https://coastalpartners.org.uk/>) which is a shared service across 5 authorities. The Cabinet approval and consequent growth has transformed the capabilities of the service and feedback from Regional Senior EA colleagues is extremely positive.

The current FCERM service structure (Sep 2023) is shown below:



Over the last couple of years there have been minor changes to role needs and levels in line with the evolving business plan, but the current structure mirrors very well the proposed structure from Sep 2021. As set out, this has not resulted in an increased budget as Staff recharges have grown in proportion to the recruitment, in fact income targets have been exceeded since.

It should also be noted that with the growth in specialisms, the service has been able to reach out to other BCP services and has provided support in a number of ways to reduce costs to other departments (as this has been delivered at no cost to them, where not re-chargeable). This will have either created savings due to reduction of consultancy support, or enabled a higher level of service where the functions were not previously delivered. Good examples include:

#### Planning:

- Project managed the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to support the Local Plan
- Flood risk advice for minor planning apps
- Geotechnical advice on planning apps in the Coastal zone.

#### Seafront:

- Expert advice and opinion on cliff stability and potential impacts on the numerous seafront assets, including leading on two LUF project elements
- Engineering advice on the various Pier structures.

#### Environment:

- Project management of engineering construction (Baiter Sluice).

#### Drone surveys:

- Building control / dangerous buildings
- Highways surveys
- Incident Response (Poole Harbour Oil Spill).

#### Key BCP Funding / Projects (most of which have more detail here, <https://twobays.net/>):

- Poole Bay Beach Management Scheme (£36m FDGiA)
- Poole Bridge to Hunger Hill (£320k Local Levy for business case, £12.5m FDGiA for design & construction)
- Christchurch Bay & Harbour FCERM Strategy (£525k FDGiA)
- Durlston to Hurst Sediment Resource Management Programme (£750k FDGiA)
- BCP wide Cliff Management Strategy (£304k Local Levy)
- Dorset Coastal Asset Management System (£230k Local Levy)
- BCP Inland Flood Asset Management System (£100k Local Levy)
- Holes Bay Saltmarsh Regeneration feasibility (£60k Local Levy)
- Hamworthy Seawall upgrade (£320k Levelling Up Funding)
- East Cliff Stabilisation investigations (£110k Levelling Up Funding)

BCP are supporting and working collaboratively with numerous authorities across the South-West including:

- Dorset Council
- East Devon District Council
- Exeter City Council

- Teignbridge District Council (on behalf of South West Coastal Monitoring and South West Coastal Group)
- Torridge District Council (on behalf of South West SMP Groups)
- North Somerset District Council
- Environment Agency
- New Forest District Council

## **Options Appraisal**

1. N/A

### **Summary of financial implications**

2. Growth has been at no net cost to the Council, with income achieved against a proportionate growth in Capital funding through successful bids for Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) or Local Levy. Our forward financial programme is very healthy and we have the potential to expand this across neighbouring authorities through a shared service approach.

### **Summary of legal implications**

3. To date we have entered into co-operation and collaboration agreements with Dorset Council and the Environment Agency. Separate 'Supply of Services' Agreements have been prepared for other bespoke projects with external partners. With the increasing interest, we have been proposing the potential for a shared service approach (which would be subject to Cabinet approvals) in the future. This would also need insurance (liability) implications to be investigated.

### **Summary of human resources implications**

4. As shown in the update report, the service growth has attracted specialist skills from the FCERM sector and a foundation for the growth of younger staff members.

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

5. The FCERM service growth has hugely increased our ability as a council to make our communities more resilient to climate change. The team's ethos is very focused on sustainability ranging from how we design our projects and materials used (including recycling wherever possible), to delivering projects whose sole focus is sustainability e.g. Holes Bay Saltmarsh Regeneration – being delivered to reinstate this very important habitat.

### **Summary of public health implications**

6. There is a lot of evidence linking mental health to flood risk. Our increased ability to mitigate flood risks should have a positive impact on mental health. The amenity spaces created by FCERM projects (e.g. our beach) are known to have very positive impacts (see links in appendices)

### **Summary of equality implications**

7. N/A

## **Summary of risk assessment**

8. N/A

## **Background papers**

9. *Cabinet decision details: Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Service structure.* Available at:  
<https://democracy.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=435>

## **Appendices**

[Green and blue spaces - mental health benefits of being outdoors - Health Research Authority \(hra.nhs.uk\)](https://www.healthresearchauthority.org.uk/our-research/our-research-projects/green-and-blue-spaces-mental-health-benefits-of-being-outdoors)

[Flooding and health: assessment and management of public mental health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/research-data-and-statistics/publications/flooding-and-health-assessment-and-management-of-public-mental-health)