

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting: 12 July 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Policy

Report summary:

The MCA code of practice “Managing Beach Safety” 2019 requires that every council with coastal water have a specific policy detailing how they manage coastal risk. Further the National Water Safety Forum’s Drowning Prevention Strategy asks all councils to have strategic plans in place to prevent drowning at their beaches and open water sites. As EDDC currently does not have either policy, this report and policy seeks to address these issues.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

Cabinet are asked to adopt the EDDC Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Policy.

Reason for recommendation:

As per the summary.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

- [Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Policy](#)
- [Managing for health and safety \(HSG65\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

1 Background

1.1 In 2022 151 people drown accidentally in English waters each year with another 150 taking their own lives by drowning. In 2016 The National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) formulated the first National Drowning prevention strategy with the aim of “reducing accidental drownings by 50% by 2026 and reducing the risk among the highest risk groups, populations and communities”

The specific targets pertinent to this policy were that:

- Every community with water risks should have a risk assessment and water safety plan
- All recreational activity organisations should have a clear strategic risk assessment and plans that address key risks

1.2 The most recent example of coastal drowning risks are the tragic drowning of two children, aged 12 and 17, off Bournemouth beach on the late May bank holiday weekend. There was also a near miss at Exmouth at the same weekend where two children got into difficulties off Maer rocks and would have drowned had it not been for the intervention of our lifeguards.

1.3 In part spurred by the NWSF strategy and also by the Camber Sands tragedy in 2016 where 7 people drowned the Marine and Coastguard Agency together with the NWSF and the regional bathing action groups put together guidance on “Managing Beach Safety” published in 2019 which requires:

- Every local authority that has beach ownership and or management should have a specific policy establishing its standards and approach to managing risks on the beach.
- That this policy should be overseen by a named executive, supported by manager, officer and teams.
- That the policy and underlying procedure should demonstrably follow the HSG 65 model of Plan, Do, Check, Act for constant review and improvement

1.4 This guidance has the status of an approved code of practice, meaning that although it is not obligatory, if it is not followed and an accident results, failure to follow it could become evidence of contributory negligence.

1.5 The review of lifeguard provision at our beaches will come as a separate paper in September 2023, so that any lessons from this summer season can be included.

2 **Recommendation**

Cabinet are asked to approve the attached policy. The rationale as to why this recommendation is made is set out in 1.3

Financial implications:

The report is not requesting additional budget provision in order to implement the Policy if adopted.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are detailed in the Policy and this report.