

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Public Protection Committee
DATE	27 October 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Water Safety
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/21/239
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Steven Shaw
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report provides an overview of Aberdeen City Council's involvement in the Aberdeen Water Safety Group and gives an update on this group and Environmental Services' current initiatives.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Notes and endorses the information contained within this report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Aberdeen Water Safety Group

- 3.1.1 In 2016, there was a high-profile incident which involved the tragic deaths of a mother and her young son at Aberdeen's seafront. Following this incident and as part of a series of measures to look at water safety in Aberdeen, the Aberdeen Water Safety Group was set up. Aberdeen City Council was invited to be part of this group. The group has representatives from the emergency services, Sport Aberdeen, Water Safety Scotland, and other national charities.
- 3.1.2 The Aberdeen Water Safety Group was fully established in 2017 with the aim to develop a collective and consistent approach to water safety in Aberdeen. The main purpose of the group is to save lives through the education and promotion on water safety. The group is currently chaired by Graham Dutton, The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS) / Sport Aberdeen. The group is not statutory.
- 3.1.3 The group's membership is wide ranging, with experts from many fields relating to public safety and partnership working. The group includes representatives from Aberdeen City Council, The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS), Aberdeen Sports Village, Royal National Lifeboat Institution Aberdeen (RNLI),

Aberdeen Surf Lifesaving Club, Surf Live Saving GB (SLSGB), Police Scotland, Sport Aberdeen, Her Majesty's Coastguard (HMCG), SEPA, Water Safety Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Aberdeen Harbour, Scottish Association for Mental Health, and other national charities. The group is also supported by three Aberdeen City Councillors, Councillor Michael Hutchison, Councillor Ciaran McRae and Councillor Dell Henrickson.

3.1.4 Key outcomes from the Aberdeen Water Safety Group to date include:

- Creation of a local water safety group who are members of Water Safety Scotland.
- Support for and development of the risk assessment of Aberdeen's beach front.
- Primary and secondary signage with a unique code location.
- Safety awareness messaging and initiatives in local schools through partners.

3.1.5 The group meets regularly to consider progress against the collective plans, and to update and discuss insights from the jointly held incident plans. These inform the risk profile, education campaigns and search and rescue resources. The group is also working towards developing a Water Safety Policy for Aberdeen.

3.2 **Aberdeen Beach Risk Assessment**

3.2.1 A full beach risk assessment of Aberdeen beach is undertaken every 3 years by the RNLI and Aberdeen City Council. The assessment is due at the end of 2021.

3.2.2 The risk assessment is comprehensive and provides an action plan based on the observations reported in this assessment. It is the responsibility of Aberdeen City Council to manage and complete the plan.

3.2.3 The risk assessment and plan are communicated to and discussed with the Aberdeen Water Safety group. This gives assurance to ACC and provides for a wider discussion on Aberdeen's beach safety. It also ensures any recommendations resulting from the assessment are talked through fully by the group prior to being implemented.

3.3 **Public Rescue Equipment**

3.3.1 Environmental Services has currently 84 pieces of public rescue equipment (life belts) in place on ACC land and has the responsibility for maintaining them. The Service maintains location maps showing all sites (beach, rivers, and ponds) with lifebelts, and undertakes a physical inspection of the equipment including relevant signage, to ensure equipment is accessible and useable. Inspection is undertaken a minimum of once per week (the beach front is inspected daily in the summer and twice a week in the winter). All inspections are recorded and logged. They are reported to the Operational Delivery Committee through the performance report. An inspection target of 100% is set.

3.3.2 Signage has been added to the equipment which gives details of who to contact should the life belt be missing or vandalised. A new, full process and procedure has been adopted by the team.

3.3.3 Public rescue equipment was included as part of an internal health and safety audit during the summer of 2021.

3.4 Audit Risk & Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2021, Health and Safety Report.

3.4.1 The Audit Risk & Scrutiny Committee included a report on Operations and Protective Services Health and Safety. Water safety and ACC maintained public rescue equipment was included as part of the wider Operations health and safety report. The report was well received by elected members.

3.4.2 There were recommendations made in the audit which were all completed prior to committee. These recommendations included, service-specific procedures, version control and review data, risk assessments, staff training, checklist forms, inspection recording and lifebelt signage / instruction.

3.4.3 The report was endorsed and agreed by Committee. The full audit report is included as a background paper to this report.

3.5 Aberdeen Beach Signage

3.5.1 One of the key early priorities agreed by the Aberdeen Water Safety Group was to put in place new signage along the beach front. This work has been completed.

3.5.2 The 40 secondary signs have been sited along the lower promenade. Each sign has a unique reference number printed on the front and back of the sign, linked to its location. The road-facing side of the signs feature information about water safety, while the reverse includes the code which can be quoted to emergency services to help them find the location. These location codes have been passed to all the emergency services. This helps pinpoint closely any incidents that may occur along the beach.

3.5.3 The Primary Entrance Signs have been sited at various points along the seafront, from the Donmouth to Footdee. The signage gives onlookers their exact location, safety advice, beach information and guidance around hazards in the area, together with highlighting the nearest safety equipment.

3.5.4 RNLI Spot the Danger signs aimed at children have also been put in place at the beach front and placed at the two play parks along Aberdeen Beach at Footdee and the Beach Ballroom.

3.6 Campaigns

3.6.1 The group includes all partners in the sharing of information and data and encourages all members to actively engage with each other's safety campaigns, both locally and nationally.

3.6.2 These campaigns have included, the National Marine Week Campaign, RNLI's Respect the Water campaign and Swim Safe program.

3.6.3 Aberdeen beach, A 'Ton of Water' display on the promenade has been in place for several years to help raise safety awareness in the area.

This display is simply a cube containing water and is used to successfully promote safety elsewhere in the UK. The RNLI have used the display as a focal point when promoting safety at the beach, setting up the gazebo nearby and issuing general safety information to passing members of the public.

3.6.4 The group also promote water safety in schools. This is done through information sharing and presentations.

3.7 Seaside Award

3.7.1 2021 saw Aberdeen retain its Seaside Award. This is the 14th year in a row that Aberdeen's beach has been recognised and awarded in this way. This is a fantastic achievement and recognises and celebrates all the hard work of our staff and the many volunteers who help care for the beach.

3.7.2 Awarded beaches demonstrate excellent beach management and environmental best practice ensuring the maintenance of high standards. The awards started on 1993 and are administered by Keep Scotland Beautiful.

3.7.3 The awards aim to celebrate all of Scotland's beaches and coastal communities whilst driving up the environmental standards around our coastline. Focusing on local environmental quality, the award is designed to complement the work currently undertaken by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency on bathing water quality and the RNLI on beach safety.

3.7.4 Awarded beaches demonstrate excellent beach management and environmental best practice ensuring the maintenance of high standards. The award recognises excellence across three key areas:

- Access, facilities, and safety – risk assessment, hazard warnings, rescue equipment, emergency plan.
- Local environmental quality – water quality information, pollution incident information litter, graffiti dog fouling etc.
- Community and heritage – community engagement, events and activities, interpretation panels and trails.

3.7.5 Aberdeen gained its first beach award in 2007 and has retained it every year since. The benefits of the award include,

- Independent accreditation showing the public that the beach area is well managed.
- Recognising and celebrating the efforts of all partners involved in offering an excellent beach experience.
- Well managed facilities offer recreational, educational and health and wellbeing benefits to the community.

- Economic benefits from high profile beach area which is attractive to tourists and increased revenue opportunities.

3.7.6 The Seaside Award is an important award that recognises all the hard work involved in keeping Aberdeen's beach front well maintained, accessible and safe.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	None for this report.	NA	
Compliance	Staff and partners not carrying out proper checks and risk assessments aligned to water safety in Aberdeen.	L	Regular scrutiny from Aberdeen Water Safety Group and Council Operational Delivery Committee (Performance Report).
Operational	Staff and partners not carrying out proper checks and risk assessments aligned to water safety in Aberdeen.	L	Regular scrutiny from Aberdeen Water Safety Group and Council Operational Delivery Committee (Performance Report).
Financial	None for this report.	NA	
Reputational	Staff and partners not carrying out proper checks and risk assessments aligned to water safety in Aberdeen would undermine public confidence in the Council and how it operates.	L	Regular scrutiny from Aberdeen Water Safety Group and Council Operational Delivery Committee (Performance Report).

Environment / Climate	Water safety will continue to be of concern as our weather and climate continues to change.	M	Continue to work with appropriate partners. Report challenges and successes through the Operational Delivery Committee (Performance Report).
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7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	Supports the delivery of Aberdeen City Council Policy through the Council's commissioning intentions, aligned to the LOIP key drivers, and stretch outcomes.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 14. Developing a bottom-up approach to community resilience to encourage greater ownership and independent action towards preventing and mitigating impact of climate change.
Regional and City Strategies	Aberdeen Adapts - the City's climate change adaption strategy to enable Aberdeen to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change such as extreme weather.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HASW) HASW sets out the duties between employers and employees and, via the subordinate Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, the requirements to plan for, assess, and manage safety and health risks.</p> <p>Bathing Waters (Scotland) Regulations 2008 The regulations implement the European Bathing Waters Directive (2006/7/EC), which lays down provisions for the monitoring, classification and management of bathing water quality and the provision of information to the public on bathing water quality. The regulations outline the responsibilities of Scottish Ministers, local authorities, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, among others.</p>

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
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Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s124939/210929%20AC2113%20Operations%20Health%20Safety.pdf>

10. APPENDICES

NA

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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