

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

SCRUTINY OF CRUSTACEAN DEATHS

SUMMARY

The report presents an update on the Redcar & Cleveland Council motion concerning crustacean deaths off the North East Coast.

RECOMMENDATION

Executive Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider its response to the request.

DETAIL

1. At the Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council meeting held on the 14 July 2022, a motion was passed regarding the mass mortality crustacean event that occurred along the length of the Tees coastline. The motion was as follows:

MOVED by Councillor Carl Quartermain and duly seconded by Councillor Thomson:-

“Redcar & Cleveland Council believes that much more needs to be done to investigate the reasons for the mass death of sea creatures found on our coast in the latter part of 2021 and more recently.

Redcar & Cleveland Council also believes much more support should be given to our local fishing industry which has been adversely affected by the consequent radical reduction in fishing stock.

Since October last year dead crustaceans have been found on our beaches along with, the possibly associated, deaths of seal pups and porpoises.

The report of the Government Joint agency investigation into Teesside and Yorkshire Coast Crab and Lobster mortalities was published in May 2022 and concluded that as healthy crabs and lobsters were now being found the investigation was closed.

Redcar & Cleveland Council believes:

1. *The decision to close the investigation was premature and demands that the Government re-open it as a matter of urgency to consider why the crustacean deaths.*
2. *The Tees Valley local authorities should work together in expressing concern to central government and commission a new independent report in the light of the inconclusive evidence. In addition, the ongoing situation should be monitored by a special Scrutiny Committee from each local authority.*

3. *That the Government proposal to give support to the local fishing industry via the existing Seafood Fund is inadequate and calls on them to provide proper compensation for the lost income and livelihoods caused by this crisis.*
4. *That the possibility of creating a coastal hatchery to replenish crustacean stocks should be investigated.”*
2. Section 2 called for the establishment of a special scrutiny committee from all the Tees Authorities to monitor the ongoing situation.
3. At the meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee on 20 September 2022, views were invited from Members about the possibility of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council participating in a joint scrutiny exercise. Members requested more information from Redcar and Cleveland Council about the scope and terms of reference of a joint scrutiny prior to making a decision.
4. Further details are awaited from Redcar and Cleveland Council and will be shared with Executive Scrutiny Committee when received. In the meantime, the Committee are advised that Hartlepool Borough Council and Darlington Borough Council have declined the invitation to establish a special scrutiny committee to monitor the ongoing situation.
5. In addition, since the meeting held on 20 September 2022, the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee have announced that they will be holding a hearing on 25 October 2022 in response to conflicting theories about the reason for the deaths of the crabs and lobsters. The Government has attributed the cause to a marine ‘algal bloom’, while others have argued that the phenomenon is caused by pollution linked to dredging. The session will look at the different explanations for the cause of the deaths, what can be done to prevent a recurrence and its impact on local communities.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6. No financial and legal implications are identified at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

7. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

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<u>Background Papers:</u>	None
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward Specific
<u>Property Implications:</u>	None