

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Attendance:

Councillors
Laming (Chairperson)

Westwood
Achwal
Bolton

Pearson
Warwick
Williams

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Batho

Deputy Members:

Councillor Cutler (as deputy for Councillor Batho)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Becker (Cabinet Member for Inclusion and Engagement), Cook, Porter (Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan), Thompson (Cabinet Member for Business and Culture), Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management) and Wallace

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Power (Cabinet Member for Finance and Value)

[Full Video Recording](#)

1. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

At the start of the meeting, the Chairperson made an announcement that, due to time constraints and the level of public interest in respect of agenda item 6 (Water Quality): items 8 (Air Quality Update), 9 (Council Homes Retrofit Programme) and 10 (Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) review) would be deferred. These agenda items (or items related to the same subject matter) would come forward for consideration at the next meeting of the committee on 4 July 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the consideration of the matters contained in agenda items 8, 9 and 10 be deferred to the next meeting of the committee on 4 July 2023.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Westwood be appointed as Vice Chairperson for the remainder of the municipal year 2022/23.

3. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 6 December 2022 be approved and adopted.

6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Georgina Palmer (also reading statements on behalf of James Murray and Councillor Mark Smith of Otterbourne Parish Council), Councillor Cook, Councillor Thompson (reading a statement on behalf of Danny Chambers), Dr Martin Burton, Ian Diver, Howard Boardman, Councillor Frances Strange (Chairman of Compton and Shawford Parish Council), Nicola Williams, Dr Paul Spencer (on behalf of Winchester BID) and Councillor Wallace spoke raising questions and comments in respect of agenda Item 6 (Water Quality), as summarised under the relevant minute below.

In addition, Tim Perry and Ian Tait addressed the committee in relation to agenda item 7 (Winchester District Youth Provision) and their comments are summarised under the relevant minute below.

7. **WATER QUALITY: REPRESENTATIVES FROM NATURAL ENGLAND AND SOUTHERN WATER IN ATTENDANCE (VERBAL UPDATE)**

The Chairperson welcomed Graham Horton of Natural England and Toby Willison (Director of Environment) and Rena Perri (Stakeholder Engagement Manager) from Southern Water to the meeting to provide a verbal update

following the motion taken to Council on 6 July 2022. The detailed matters in the motion had been referred to the committee, for a better understanding of the current levels of pollution and remedial action being taken to enable conclusions to be published to inform local community action groups. In addition, Southern Water were also asked to address the committee in light of the impact of water outages on residents within the Winchester district and wastewater discharges into waterways.

Georgina Palmer (also reading statements on behalf of James Murray and Councillor Mark Smith of Otterbourne Parish Council), Councillor Cook, Councillor Thompson (reading a statement on behalf of Danny Chambers), Dr Martin Burton, Ian Diver, Howard Boardman, Councillor Frances Strange (Chairman of Compton and Shawford Parish Council), Nicola Williams, Dr Paul Spencer (on behalf of Winchester BID) and Councillor Wallace addressed the Committee. In summary, they made reference to the following points and raised detailed questions, as summarised below:

Where it was available, a response was provided by Southern Water representatives as summarised below, with all outstanding responses to be given in writing by Southern Water following the meeting.

1. Regular clearance of raw sewage from drains off the boundary and beneath the foundations of the property.
Response: This was a result of combined sewer overflow (CSOs) relief valves on drainage systems. When the systems are overloaded with rain and surface water, the valves were in place to prevent properties flooding and raw sewage backing up through internal facilities (toilets, baths and sinks). It was accepted this was not ideal and that some residents were experiencing impacts from this system. A task force had been established specifically to look at how to eradicate this issue. A regional plan was due to be published in the next month detailing how spills would be eliminated in the region. An application had been made to OFWAT to accelerate funding to tackle immediate issues.
2. Quality of water for residents in Twyford and the poor quality of water for open water swimmers using the River Itchen.
Response: As above. The driver from Government was primarily about protecting nature conservation sites (including the River Itchen and bathing waters) as a priority.
3. Do Southern Water recognise hobbyists (wild swimmers and anglers in particular) as conscientious custodians of the river, and are they willing to work with them to turn around the environmental destruction pollution?
Response: The important role of hobbyists, including anglers, was recognised and the importance of working in partnership was considered key. It was noted that rivers trust were representatives on independent climate and environment groups which comprised of external stakeholders who challenged and scrutinised the performance and plans of Southern Water

4. Difficulties contacting Southern Water (long waiting times, calls being cut off etc)
Response: These issues would be reported to the customer service provider. Mr Willison advised that he was happy to make his contact details available to engage with stakeholders with a view to making improvements.
5. Water outages.
Response: An apology was provided for the two water outages that took place in December and February which affected a large number of residents in the Winchester district. It was noted that there were different reasons for the two incidents with a review due to be published shortly setting out why the incidents occurred and the learning behind this. Compensation payments would be doubled for the failure in service and supply happening in quick succession and a £50k donation would also be made to five food banks in the area.
6. Timeframe for providing bottled water to customers (particularly vulnerable customers) without a water supply. Registration methods to become a vulnerable customer and percentages of vulnerable residents provided with bottled water upon the recent supply losses.
7. Droughts and water bans
Response: There was a significant drought last summer/early autumn the during October - December, rainfall was excessive causing ground water levels to rise significantly being the reason why some local communities were experiencing flooding from very high ground water levels. River reservoirs and ground water level were monitored and reported by the Environment Agency and Southern Water to ensure appropriate action is taken quickly if required.
8. Planned pipe construction from Havant to Otterbourne – A response on this point would be provided in writing to the Chair in due course.
9. Routine maintenance and timely repairs to pipework.
10. Water station collection sites.
11. Water Butt provision – In respect of the pathway to resolve CSO issues, one of the interventions being trialled was the installation of water butts which were an effective method to flatten waterflow peaks.
12. Thames Water interaction map showing real-time raw sewage discharges for online view – could Southern Water publish similar?
13. Assurance that storm discharge pipes are fitted with data-gathering sensors to ensure accurate information is reported and shared with public in real-time throughout the whole network?
14. Concerns regarding the poor water quality at the upper Itchen – questions surrounding the content of Southern Water's draft water

resource management plan in relation to the catchment first programme, soil erosion and over fertilisation of farmland.

Response: This forms part of the 5year business planning cycle.

During the period 2019-24 spend on catchment first activities is in the region of £32m on catchment, largely with farms and the whereabouts of this would be confirmed in writing.

15. Southern Water engagement with stakeholders to protect chalk streams from hazards.
16. The pumping of wastewater from Alresford treatment works in the chalk aquifer at the head water of the River Itchen that contains high levels of phosphates and heavily contributes to the poor quality of the water at River Itchen now and going forward. When will Southern Water install a phosphate stripper at Alresford to stop pumping pollutants into the Itchen aquifer?
Response: Investigations via the Environment Agency to look at pathways may exist between the treatment works, ground water and the Itchen were ongoing. Southern Water representatives indicated they would be happy to meet with interested parties and the Environment Agency to talk about details of these studies. Investment in the treatment works was unknown at this stage but an update on this matter would be provided to the Chair in due course.
17. Farmland Issues and the build-up of nitrate levels.
Response: Partnership working was paramount as this was largely an issue of how land was managed - Southern Water can play their part but a partnership between the water company, farmers and the regulator to identify what the best intervention was is considered necessary.
18. New build development at Sun Hill, New Alresford – How will the increased wastewater usage at the treatment works at Appledown Lane be managed, particularly phosphate?
Response: In general, Southern Water are a statutory consultee on strategic plans advising on capacity of sewage systems and ability to supply water but are not a statutory consultee on individual developments and have no right to refuse to connect developments to their systems either. The need for an excellent working relationship with local planning authorities therefore continued to be essential to mitigate risk.
19. Septic tank discharges – how are nitrates and phosphates being managed?
Response: We all have a role to play in choosing what products we use that release these into the environment. Details contained in the business plan 2025/2030 regarding domestic septic tank provision will be provided in due course.
20. Clean Water – Do Southern Water routinely add phosphates to drinking water output?

Response: In some locations, water supply works do add phosphorus to reduce lead contained in pipes – this is highly regulated by the Drinking Water Inspectorate. Specific details to follow.

21. Estimate of percentage losses due to leaks through the Southern Water network (particularly the Itchen Valley) and plans/timescales to reduce losses?

Response: Current level leak figures are 17% of water supplied. In 2023, the target was to fix 27,000 leaks with the volume of water leakage monitored on a weekly basis.

22. Kiln Lane sewage (major incidents) – monitoring station installed by the Environment Agency and remedial works taking place by Southern Water.

Response: Climate change placed an ongoing concern on network resilience with the need to ensure a reliable supply of water of a particular quality and have a wastewater treatment network that has resilience to a changing climate in the future.

23. What water saving measures are being implemented to prevent further droughts happening and what is being done to secure new sources of water to increase resilience and demand for water?

Response: Regional water resource plans were in place, with a water partnership for the south-east, including all the water companies in that region, with plans overseen by the environmental regulator. Also exploring solutions such as de-salination, water recycling etc. In the long term, a programme of measures were in place to assist customers in reducing their water consumption.

24. Health implications for those residents with medical conditions requiring the need for high water use (such as those with a stoma). Lack of water deliveries to vulnerable residents, lack of access to obtain supplies for those without vehicular use, non-payment of compensation and insufficient communication to residents giving supply updates.

Response: Southern Water acknowledged the points raised and apologised for their failure to adequately respond to the needs of its customers. A breakdown of the quantity of bottled water supplied to customers and those not supplied, would be provided. It was noted that lists of vulnerable customers were kept by various services (local authority etc) which differed, so there was a need to strengthen the vulnerable customer list data and improve service provision across the board. Compensation payments had been made for the outage that occurred in December and compensation would be made at double the statutory rate for the most recent outage. The compensation payments information given would be checked for accuracy with any changes to be reported back. For clarification, Southern Water confirmed that the reason the Otterbourne works was shut down was due to their monitoring and detecting a risk of contamination. It was noted that no contamination had occurred off the site, but a rigorous and timely

cleaning operation had to follow before a safe supply of water could be restored.

25. Failures in Southern Water's duty of care to the environment and its customers with the systematic dumping of raw sewage and inadequate infrastructure due to lack of investment over many years.

Response: Southern Water was striving to improve performance, to accelerate this to make it sustainable and resilient.

26. Raw sewage in Winchester High Street as drains overflowed after heavy rainfall which was a recurring problem and infrastructure investment was required to address this. Blockages were removed in Autumn last year but queried why work was not carried out sooner and what could be done to prevent further problems?

Response: This should have been resolved quicker and short-term mitigations had been put in place with scoping of the medium-term plan to put in more resilient system going forward. This would take place over the next six months, with work anticipated to take place during 2024/2026. A definitive response would be provided in due course.

27. Southern Water's annual performance report 2021/22 shows a failure to achieve the water quality compliance target and every wastewater performance commitment with the British water performance survey, OFWAT and others ranking Southern Water's performance as a water company very poorly across the board. There were ongoing issues with wastewater systems effecting residents in local villages, including the inadequacy of the pumping facility and the age of sewage pipes in Hambledon and sewage discharges impacting residents in Waltham Chase over many years. A real-time improvement was required as residents deserve better. In relation to sewage discharge into water courses, will Southern Water commit to helping the council by providing information on which treatments works will be managing the sewage for new developments and to provide an assessment to assist with planning decisions? Environment land management plans – how much of Southern Water's land was being actively managed to support nature recovery?

Response: A full written update would be provided regarding the issues experienced in Hambledon regarding the infiltration reduction plan, significant sewer lining work had taken place and this was on going. The concerns regarding Waltham Chase had been passed onto the operations team to review these problems. On the use of land, 9,000 hectares was Southern Water's land ownership which although significant, was the smallest land holding of any water company and a balance was required for operational activities, renewable energy regeneration and nature recovery and a land management strategy was currently being progressed. An update on this could be provided to the committee at a later date, if required. Regarding performance improvement, it was noted that Southern Water's primary focus was on significantly improving pollution incident levels, leakages and customer service. It was noted that total pollution incidents had been reduced by

approximately 35% from 2020/21 to 2021/22 and a pathfinder was in place to reduce CSO spillage into the environment.

Prior to the meeting, questions were submitted by members of the committee to Southern Water and Natural England for a response to be provided at the meeting. These questions were largely addressed during the public participation session, as set out above. In addition, Mr Willison (Southern Water) and Mr Horton (Natural England) responded to further questions from members of the committee on the following points:

- (i) Reassurance of drinking tap water quality from Otterbourne reservoir for safe use.
Response: Mr Willison confirmed that the product met the quality requirements of the Drinking Water Inspectorate and reassured the committee that this was safe for consumption.
- (ii) Poor infrastructure support for farmers during the recent water outages.
Response: Mr Willison acknowledged the issues experienced and advised that he would be happy to discuss with the farming community to discuss how large water butts could be provided for agricultural premises to help provide some resilience.
- (iii) Consideration of the River Meon – Wickham waste treatment works and storm drain and the reliability of figures and information regarding discharge.
Response: Mr Willison advised on how short and long spills were recorded, stated that the importance of the River Meon was recognised, that action was being taken to reduce spilling and confirmed that he would check on monitoring with Rivers Trust to ensure accuracy.
- (iv) Renumeration of Directors and strategic alignment of investors.
Response: It was noted that a letter from Southern Water's significant investor was issued to OFWAT setting out their expectations of Southern Water's performance. This was available on the OFWAT website and a copy would be provided.
- (v) Natural England: Pollution and extraction rates in rivers.
Response: Mr Horton stated that rivers were having a difficult time due systemic challenges with over-extraction and lack of care. It was also for society to decide what kind of environment choices it wished to make and the importance of continuing to hold Southern Water and the Government to account was recognised. It was Natural England's responsibility to continue to provide the evidence, clear science and advice on what needs to be done to improve the environment.
- (vi) Effective communication to businesses to ensure the appropriate disposal methods for fats, oil and grease.
- (vii) Current plans for phosphates, nitrates and pharmaceutical products.

Response: In response to phosphates and nitrates, Mr Horton stated that Natural England had been running its catchment sensitive farming programme that works with farmers and landowners to give advice on how to manage land in an appropriate way to ensure phosphates and nitrates do not wash off the land into watercourses. It gives the grants and opportunity for farmers to invest in the right equipment to look after livestock and advice on soil management so nutrients absorb into crops. In respect of pharmaceuticals, the impact on the environment from various chemicals in waterways was still largely unknown which was of significant concern.

In conclusion, the Chairperson thanked members of the public for participating in the meeting and representatives from Southern Water and Natural England for their attendance and welcomed written responses to the questions asked in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update, questions asked and responses given to date, as summarised above be received and noted.

8. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT YOUTH PROVISION**
(HEP031 AND PRESENTATION)

Tim Perry and Ian Tait addressed the Committee on this item.

In summary, Tim Perry made reference to the following points:

- Campaigning for a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to be built in one of the parks in North Winchester.
- Survey undertaken to establish the need for such a facility with positive response – 97% responding that they would welcome a MUGA in their community.
- Believed there to be a lack of MUGA and all-weather recreational facilities in this area of Winchester for children and young people with over 4,000 young people in the St Paul and St Barnabas wards and no MUGA provision available.
- Suggested building of a MUGA at Dean Land of St Matthews Park to address concerns about the lack of free to use facilities in these communities.
- Wishes to partner with the council to agree a location for the MUGA, agree a plan to finance this with the use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) being suggested as an option and set a timetable for the works. Also committed to fundraising for part of the MUGA if required as experienced fundraisers.

In summary, Ian Tait made reference to the following points:

- Report highlights that Stanmore, by a large margin, has the highest proportion of young people but has very few facilities for youngsters with a high percentage of students, issues of drug and alcohol abuse amongst young people and pressures on their mental health and wellbeing.

- New development in The Valley do not trigger and CIL contribution which it would have if it was a private residential development – Stanmore badly requires these resources for facility provision. There was an ongoing reliance on the Carroll Centre as the only community centre in the area.

Councillor Becker introduced the report which outlined an audit of community youth provision. This was intended to establish what the council and other organisations have in place as a starting point for any additional work in developing facilities, whilst listening to the needs of young people through the vision for Winchester. In particular, there would be close working with teenage girls on what community and recreational facilities they would like to see, with discussions to continue further going forward.

The Corporate Head of Economy and Community gave a detailed presentation which provided an overview of the provision for the Winchester District Youth Offer including, the work carried out to collect data, insight at national, county and district levels, an audit of the facilities available across the district and some early conclusion from these initial findings.

The committee proceeded to ask questions on the following matters which were responded to by the relevant Cabinet Members and the Corporate Head of Economy and Community:

- (i) Comprehensive/Community School facilities – provision within schools data had been collected but work to understand when facilities were available etc was required and further information needed to be worked through at this stage. However, this data would be included going forward.
- (ii) The use of general CIL funds for the provision of community facilities. It was noted that affordable housing developments did not get charged CIL. However, areas such as Stanmore could apply for CIL funds, if it could be proven that it had an infrastructure need that was driven by development.
- (iii) Housing for young people – The Housing Team were currently working on next generational activity and how to best promote housing options available.
- (iv) The breakdown of data into smaller age ranges to remove the number of students included within the town ward area statistics.
- (v) A holistic approach of adequate facilities for the teen to twenties age group in the town areas.
- (vi) Balance of city centre and rural district access – provision of safe, uniformed and organised events.

At the conclusion of debate, the committee thanked officers for the progress carried out to date and for the informative presentation received.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report and presentation be received, and the comments raised by the committee, as summarised above, be noted.

9. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23**

RESOLVED:

That the work programme for 2022/23 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 10.10 pm

Chairperson