



COUNCIL MEETING – 4 November 2020

Questions by the Public **under Council Procedure Rule 15(1)**

- Each questioner will have 2 minutes in which to ask their question. The order of the questions to be asked is as set out below and an officer will pass a microphone to the questioner when their name is called by the Mayor.
- Please note that following the response given by the Councillor, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.
- The total time allocated for questions will *normally* be limited to 20 minutes. For any question which cannot be dealt with at the meeting, a written answer will be provided, normally within one working week.

	From:
1	Tony Langridge
2	Fiona Isaacs



Winchester
City Council

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under Council Procedure Rule 15(1)

QUESTION 1

From: Tony Langridge

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Wellbeing (Cllr Porter)

“The water environment within the Solent region is one of the most important for wildlife in the United Kingdom. There are high levels of nitrogen input to this water environment with sound evidence that these nutrients are polluting protected sites.

The Council will be aware that Natural England has recognised this and has issued advice which seeks to achieve nutrient neutrality from domestic wastewater but **only** for future developments.

It is acknowledged however that wastewater effluent from **all** homes in the area contributes to this pollution. In some sewage works in the Solent areas Southern Water removes some of the pollutants in accordance with permit limits. In the Winchester district this only applies to properties that are served by the Bishops Waltham and Peel Common works. These however only cover a minority of the district’s population.

The majority of sewage works in the Winchester district do not have permit limits for total nitrogen. As a result, Southern Water does not test for total nitrogen in the effluent. It is therefore impossible to verify the performance of these works despite them being in a ‘*sensitive area*’ and one where Natural England recognises that reductions in total nitrogen should take place.

The government department DEFRA has declared the whole of the area as a Sensitive Area for the purposes of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations. Please see the map and link attached.

Despite the fact that works that serve large urban areas including Winchester, Romsey, Andover, Petersfield, Eastleigh and parts of Southampton, the Environment Agency has not acted to ensure that permit limits are issued or required for these urban works. This means that Southern Water undertakes

no additional treatment at these works which serve an estimated population of 338,000.

According to these Regulations these larger urban works should have a permit limit of between 10mg/l and 15 mg/l total nitrogen. With a permit limit in place Southern Water would be required to test for total nitrogen and reduce the pollution to levels below that limit.

When responding to an email on 16th October 2020 the Environment Agency said;

“..some inland/distant WwTWS do not have nutrient limits as they are considered too remote to contribute to pollution and their impact is too small to warrant nutrient removal.”

This appears to be a direct contradiction to the advice of Natural England, another government agency, the DEFRA designation and their duty to review permits in the light of evidence.

With permits in place for these works pollution from **all** households would be reduced not just those from new development. This would produce an immediate improvement in water quality far far greater than just dealing with new development.

To put this in context if these urban works had permit limits of 15mg/l following the Natural England methodology a 54% reduction in total nitrogen would be achieved. This conservative estimated would be a reduction in the order of 185,000 kg total nitrogen per year.

In a joint note from English Nature and The Environment Agency in respect of their respective roles it is stated that;

The Environment Agency has a duty to review permits under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016. In the granting and onward review of waste water treatment consents, the Environment Agency is a competent authority under the Habitats Regulations. This requires the Environment Agency to assess the effects of such consents on habitats sites

The Environment Agency will undertake a review of a permit or permits if evidence is received from Natural England which clearly demonstrates that there have been changes which could mean the permit(s) are no longer fit for purpose, for example a change in the condition of a habitats site, informed by site monitoring. For the purposes of undertaking an assessment under the Habitats Regulations, it will be important to take account of the most up-to-date information available in relation to the condition of habitats sites

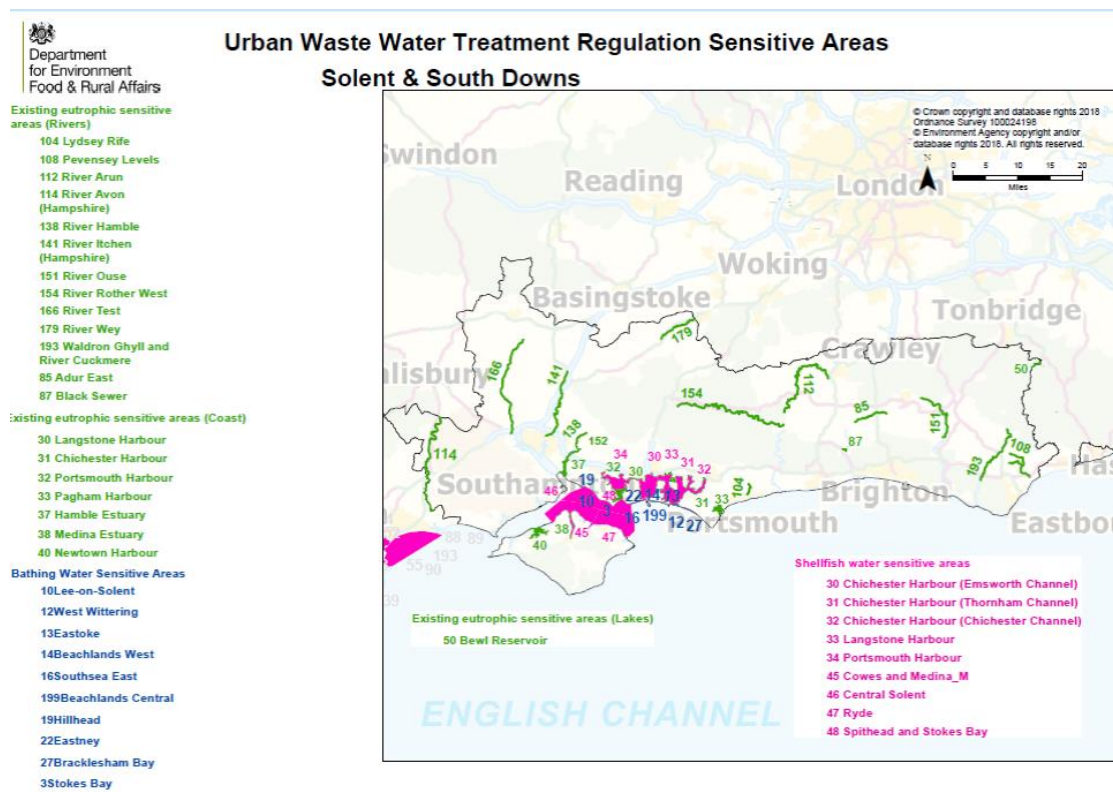
The Environment Agency do not appear to be undertaking any review despite the urgent importance of reducing pollution in the region.

As a side effect if these works have permits limits similar to those of coastal works the cost to local housebuilder in Winchester district to mitigate the problem would be similar to builders elsewhere and more equitable.

Question

“Acknowledging its concern for the environment is the Council able to put pressure on the Environment Agency, Southern Water and Natural England to ensure that the existing Regulations are properly administered and that appropriate permit limits for total nitrogen at sewage works in the district are put in place and fit for purpose?”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796758/sensitive-areas-map-solent-south-downs.pdf



Reply

“As you rightly suggest regulating discharge from waste water treatment works resulting from wastewater effluent generated by existing housing is a matter for the Environment Agency, Natural England and Southern Water and therefore the issue of the impact caused by new development, which the Council has to address when granting planning permission, is only part of the problem.

The issue of nitrates has been considered by Cabinet in January and July this year and, as reported, I have already written to the Minister for Housing,

Communities and Local Government stating that there is clearly a conflict on this issue between Natural England, the Environment Agency and Water Authority. As you will probably be aware others in Hampshire have the nitrates issue with Government including the Partnership for South Hampshire.

As indicated in the July Cabinet report the Council can pursue the issuing of EA permit limits on Southern Water Treatment sites in the district. However, this is not something which the Council has control over and needs to be addressed strategically by the three parties responsible.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Fiona Isaacs

To: The Cabinet Member for Service Quality and Transformation (Cllr Tod)

“Can the Cabinet Member confirm the cost of continuing to use the green bag for garden waste collection? Residents currently believe following receipt of the Lib Dem focus , that if they continue to use their bag there will be no charge. Or can we expect the same outrageous 41% increase on their council tax which has been levied on the 240L bin?”

Reply

“If a resident currently has a bagged collection for residual or recycling waste – or there are other technical reasons why a garden waste bin is not suitable for their address – they will be able to continue with a bagged collection for garden waste, but will have to pay for £39 a year for collection. This will pay for up to two bags to be collected. If they chose to pay £59 a year, they will be able to have three bags collected.

This compares to the current system – where having one bag collected from a household is free, but purchase of a second bag to enable a two bag collection costs £25 and purchase of two extra bags to permit a three bag collection is £75.

So there’s a mistaken assumption in the question. At no point in recent history has it been possible to get the equivalent volume of waste in a 240L bin collected by the council free of any charges.

Indeed, the cost of signing up for a year’s collection of 3 bags under the new system is £16 less than the current charge for signing up to have three bags collected.

I appreciate also the reference to the cost of garden waste collections in relation to council tax. This is something this administration takes very

seriously. The City Council put through the 3rd lowest council tax in Hampshire this year, far below the average increase put through by local Conservative authorities.

Following guidance issued by the Conservative County Council – and in response to the County Council decision to retain all the revenue from recycling, all councils in Hampshire – without any exception – and irrespective of party – now charge for garden waste collection – or have committed to do so.

Taking the suggestion that we look at the cost of signing up for garden waste collections alongside Band D district council tax across Hampshire reveals an interesting pattern.

Name of Council	Band D council tax + garden waste sign-up and collection charge
Gosport Borough Council	£290.75
Hart District Council	£262.39
Havant Borough Council	£253.48
Rushmoor	£251.42
Fareham Borough Council	£231.22
New Forest District Council	£213.36
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	£204.54
East Hampshire District Council	£203.73
Winchester City Council	£182.09
Test Valley Borough Council	£181.41
Eastleigh Borough Council	£168.91

This shows Winchester is the 3rd cheapest authority in Hampshire for the combined cost of council tax and garden waste collections. Only Lib Dem Eastleigh is significantly cheaper.”