

<b>Name of Committee:</b>	Cabinet		
<b>Committee Date:</b>	6 September 2023		
<b>Report Title:</b>	Review of Portsmouth Water Company's Plans for Havant Thicket Reservoir		
<b>Responsible Councillor:</b>	Councillor Kennett, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
<b>Cabinet Lead:</b>	Councillor Lloyd		
<b>Status:</b>	Non-Exempt		
<b>Urgent Decision:</b>	No	<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	None		
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None		
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<b>Report Number:</b>	HBC/33/2023		

### Corporate Priorities:

As part of the Pride in Place theme, the Corporate Strategy highlights that the Council will "aim to take measures to promote and embed environmental matters and consider environmental impacts in all our decisions to help tackle climate change".

### Executive Summary:

Following concerns raised by resident groups in the Borough at a public meeting, hosted by the Leader of the Council, on Wednesday 15 February at 5pm, representatives of Southern Water Authority and Portsmouth Water Company were invited to attend meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 February and 5 July 2023 respectively to answer questions on the proposals to use Havant Thicket Reservoir to store and supply treated wastewater.

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on progress made with a review of the future use of the reservoir and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's initial response to its discussions with Portsmouth Water Company.

### Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to note the serious concerns raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about Portsmouth Water Company's support for Southern Water Authority's recycling scheme.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meetings held on 5 and 25 July 2023 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered in detail the Portsmouth Water Company's future plans for Havant Thicket Reservoir.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 20 February 2023 representatives from Southern Water Company ("SWA") updated the Overview and Scrutiny Committee ("the Committee") on the proposal to pump treated wastewater into Havant Thicket Reservoir ("the reservoir"). Following this meeting, the SWA submitted written responses to questions raised by members of the Committee regarding this project.
- 2.2 On 5 July 2023 representatives from Portsmouth Water Company ("PWC") attended a meeting of the Committee to give a presentation and answer questions on the PWC's plans for the future use of Havant Thicket Reservoir.
- 2.3 During the question and answer session held on 5 July 2023, the Committee, examined:
  - a. the case for the provision of a new reservoir;
  - b. why a proposed desalination plant was considered inappropriate for the area;
  - c. when Portsmouth Water was made aware of Southern Water's proposal to pump treated wastewater into the proposed reservoir;
  - d. the challenges facing Southern Water in relation to supplying water to its customers;
  - e. PWC's mains renewal rate and its performance for mending water leakage;
  - f. the quality of the recycled water with particular attention to its comparison with spring water;
  - g. the projected mix of recycled and spring water to be stored in the reservoir;
  - h. how Southern Water's proposal to store treated wastewater in the reservoir impacted upon the environments benefits identified when the reservoir was granted planning permission;
  - i. measures undertaken and proposed by Portsmouth Water to encourage residents to reduce their water use;

- j. the habitat mitigation measures for the reservoir site;
  - k. the communications strategy to overcome concerns relating to the future use of the reservoir raised by residents; and
  - l. the proposed changes to the pipelines and how these changes were related to Southern Water's proposals.
- 2.4 During the presentation and question and answer session held on 5 July, the representatives of the PWC:
- a. gave an assurance that if the plans went ahead, their customers' water would nearly always come from Bedhampton springs: their customers would only receive some recycled water mixed with spring water in extreme drought or emergency scenarios; and
  - b. advised that it welcomed any feedback on from the Council on future public communications relating to the reservoir
- 2.5 At its meeting held on 25 July 2023, the Committee considered the response given by PWC at its meeting held on 5 July and written responses to questions raised by members of the Committee following this meeting.
- 2.6 Although the Committee agreed in principle for the need of the reservoir, it was not satisfied, on the basis of the information provided during the review, that PWC's support for SWA's proposal to store treated water from the recycling plant in the reservoir overcame the concerns raised by residents relating to the financial and environmental impact of the proposals and the financial implications of the scheme. It therefore RESOLVED that
- a. based on the information provided, Cabinet be advised of this Committee's serious concerns about Portsmouth Water Company's support for Southern Water Authority's recycling scheme;
  - b. further consideration of this matter be deferred to enable the officers to invite Portsmouth Water Company and Southern Water Authority to attend a future meeting of this Committee, in person, to discuss their future plans for the reservoir; and
  - c. PWC be requested to arrange a site visit of the reservoir site for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to view the proposal and in particular the woodlands and mitigation measures.

### 3.0 Options

- 3.1 The Committee considered the option of recycling water using a desalination plant but were advised that this was rejected for many reasons including its high carbon footprint.

### 4.0 Relationship to the Corporate Strategy

- a. As part of the Pride in Place theme, the Corporate Strategy highlights that the Council will “aim to take measures to promote and embed environmental matters and consider environmental impacts in all our decisions to help tackle climate change”.
- b. Effective water resource planning is essential in striking the correct balance and ensuring that there is a plentiful supply of water to residents and businesses, that this can adapt to the challenges of climate change and protect the natural environment. Every five years, statutory Water Resources Management Plans set out each company’s intended approach for at least the next 25 years.
- c. Water companies are increasingly required to work collaboratively and on a regional basis, in order to ensure that areas where water is more plentiful are able to assist those where there is less water or where abstraction licenses need to be revisited.
- d. Within this context, abstraction licenses on the Rivers Test and Itchen must be reduced to protect those chalk streams. This led to the bringing forward of the Havant Thicket Reservoir, which has now been granted planning permission. The planning permission relates to the reservoir’s use as a winter storage reservoir – storing excess spring water emitted during the winter in order for it to be used during the summer months when water is scarcer.
- e. Since permission was granted, the project has developed to include a proposal to filter treated wastewater from Budds Farm. This treated and filtered wastewater would then be pumped to the reservoir, together with excess spring water from the aquifer. This mix of water in the reservoir, including rainfall, would then, under this proposal, be pumped to the relevant treatment works across Southern Water’s catchment for potable water, and processed to drinking water standards.
- f. Following concerns raised by resident groups in the Borough at a public meeting, hosted by the Leader of the Council, on Wednesday 15 February at 5pm. Representatives of Southern Water Authority and Portsmouth Water Company were invited to attend meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 February and 5 July 2023 respectively to answer questions put to them by residents on the proposals to use the Havant Thicket Reservoir to store and supply treated wastewater.

## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Although the Committee agreed in principle for the need of the reservoir, it was not satisfied, on the basis of the information provided during the review, that PWC's plans for the reservoir, which would contain treated wastewater, would overcome the following concerns raised by its customers:
- a. the water supplied to the Borough's residents from the reservoir would be inferior to the quality of water supplied from the springs;
  - b. the supply of treated water from the reservoir by PWC to its customers would have a detrimental financial impact on residents of the Borough; and
  - c. the storage and supply of treated water from the reservoir to residents of the Borough would have a detrimental impact on the environment and the biodiversity plans originally proposed for the reservoir when planning permission was first granted

## 6.0 Implications and Comments

### 6.1 S151 Comments

The contents and recommendations of this report have no direct financial or budgetary implications. The decisions surrounding the reservoir are unlikely to have any short-term or direct financial implication either. However, they clearly have some resourcing implication which could have a knock-on financial impact and the outcome of any decisions could have impacts on the local economy which may also flow through to some financial implication for Havant Borough Council over the long-term.

### 6.2 Monitoring Officer Comments

None arising from this report.

### 6.3 Equality and Diversity

None arising from this report.

### 6.4 Human Resources

None arising from this report.

### 6.5 Information Governance

None arising from this report.

### 6.6 Climate and Environment

The environmental impact of various ways of ensuring adequate water supply need to be carefully considered. This is one of the main themes being examine of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the reviews of the future use of the reservoir.

## 7.0 Risks

7.1 There are no immediate risks arising this report.

## 8.0 Consultation

8.1 The review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee involves consultation with Portsmouth Water Company and Southern Water Authority

## 9.0 Communications

9.1 Not applicable

<b>Agreed and signed off by:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:</b>	Councillor Kennett	11 August 2023
<b>Executive Head:</b>	Alex Robinson	23 August 2023
<b>Monitoring Officer:</b>	Jo McIntosh	25 August 2023
<b>Section151 Officer:</b>	Steven Pink	18 August 2023