

<b>Name of Committee:</b>	Cabinet		
<b>Committee Date:</b>	6 March 2024		
<b>Report Title:</b>	Conclusions of Water Quality Testing in Langstone Harbour		
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Alex Robinson – Executive Head of Place		
<b>Cabinet Lead:</b>	Cllr Elizabeth Lloyd		
<b>Status:</b>	Non-Exempt		
<b>Urgent Decision:</b>	No	<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix A: Summary of Results		
<b>Background Papers:</b>	HBC/128/2023 (Water Testing in Langstone Harbour) March 2023		
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<b>Report Number:</b>	HBC/86/2024		

### 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:

The report outlines the results of water quality sampling conducted in Langstone Harbour during 2023.

### Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested:

1. To note that the Council has undertaken a comprehensive water quality sampling programme in Langstone Harbour during June – October 2023 and following independent expert analysis has outlined the findings in this report.
2. To endorse the publication of the results of the water quality sampling on the Council’s website and the sharing of this information with partner agencies.
3. To support the Council’s commitment to continue to work closely with partner agencies and in doing so, the Cabinet Lead for Planning, Environment and Water Quality shall write to partner agencies calling for further action to protect water quality in Langstone Harbour as detailed in section 4.2 of the report.
4. To recommended to Council, that Council notes the works undertaken and that the Cabinet Lead for Planning, Environment and Water Quality has reported back to full Council on the water quality sampling programme in Langstone Harbour.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report updates Cabinet on the programme of water quality testing conducted in the period June to October 2023 in Langstone Harbour pursuant to full Council decision (reference HBC/128/2023).

## 2.0 Background to Testing Approach

- 2.1 Havant Borough Council and its partners<sup>1</sup> have carried out water testing in Langstone harbour between June to October 2023. Seven separate sampling locations across the harbour were identified, principally because of the use of these locations for recreational purposes (Appendix A). Currently there is no testing of these waters by the Environment Agency as Langstone Harbour is not a designated Bathing Beach.
- 2.2 The programme collected 19 rounds of water sampling across the harbour across the monitoring period. The programme had originally intended to have conducted 20 rounds of sampling but this was not possible due to unfavourable weather conditions. Of these samples 15 were collected in the bathing season (15<sup>th</sup> May - 30<sup>th</sup> September) and four were collected outside of the bathing season (5<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> October).
- 2.3 The samples were tested for *E.coli* and *Intestinal Enterococci* because they are both indicators of faecal matter in the water. These are the same bacterial indicators tested for by the Environment Agency in designated Bathing Waters. The samples were during a period of unsettled weather with some sampling taking place after periods of heavy rain.
- 2.4 The support and assistance of Langstone harbour board and their staff has been critical for the completion of the sampling programme.

## 3.0 Water Quality Results

- 3.1 The samples were analysed in an independent laboratory using the existing testing methodology employed by the Environment Agency for designated Bathing Waters. Furthermore, the results have been independently audited by a third-party specialist to ensure the approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation are sound.
- 3.2 The results are contained in Appendix A. For each sampling location two results have been produced. The first (top left) shows the aggregated results of sampling from within the Bathing Season (May – September). The second (bottom right) shows the aggregated results over the full sampling period (June - October).

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<sup>1</sup> Langstone Harbour Board and Portsmouth City Council

- 3.3 The results of sampling demonstrate that water quality across the harbour varies depending on location and time when the samples were collected. This reflects the harbour having differing microbiological characteristics and water classifications.
- 3.4 In four of the seven locations water quality is excellent or good with four locations showing excellent water quality during the Bathing Season. Excellent water quality was reported at W1 (Ferry Point) throughout the monitoring period. Poor Water quality was highlighted at W3 (Harts Farm Way slipway) throughout the monitoring period. Generally, water quality tends to be better during the Bathing Season compared to the whole monitoring period. The analysis does also indicate that heavy rainfall does have an impact on water quality.
- 3.5 The purpose of the programme of water quality sampling was to measure the levels of *E.coli* and Intestinal *Enterococci* – as these are both indicators of faecal matter. The programme was not designed to identify where this matter originated, and this type of testing does not allow the Council to determine whether it is human or animal waste.
- 3.6 Moreover, it is not possible to conclude whether elevated levels of *E.coli* and Intestinal *Enterococci* are linked to discharges from Combined Sewerage outflows and Sewerage treatment discharges or arise from agriculture or other run-off or contamination.

## 4.0 Options

- 4.1 It was always the Council's intention to publish the results of the water sampling programme and share the results with our partner agencies. Moving beyond this there are several options available to the Council, as set out below:
1. Option 1 – undertake an annual programme of water quality testing in Langstone Harbour. The Council is not the statutory body for undertaking water quality sampling and is not resourced to repeat this programme annually.
  2. Option 2 - publish the data and share the results with partner agencies and refresh the Council's advice to bathers and water sports users. The results have shown that heavy rainfall impacts water quality which is consistent with the Council's current advice which advises users to consider avoiding higher-risk activities for 72 hours following moderate-significant rainfall.
  3. Option 3 – to undertake all actions set out in option 2 and to write to partner agencies calling for further action to protect water quality in Langstone Harbour. This includes writing to Southern Water to provide additional investment in infrastructure and calling on the Environment Agency to expand their current testing regime to sample recreational waters as well as designated bathing waters. This is to ensure the same level of

information is available to the public for them to make informed decisions about where to swim or engage in water sports.

- 4.2 The Council considers Option 3 is the most appropriate course of action.

## **5.0 Relationship to the Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1 **Pride in Place:** 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”.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 Havant Borough Council and its partners have carried out water testing in Langstone harbour between June to October 2023. This involved 19 rounds of water sampling collected both within and outside of the bathing season and analysis the water for E.coli and Intestinal Enterococci. The locations were identified principally because of their popularity for recreational users.
- 6.2 The results demonstrate that water quality across the harbour varies depending on location and time when the samples were collected reflecting the variation in microbiological composition across the harbour. In four of the seven locations water quality is excellent or good with four locations showing excellent water quality during the Bathing Season. Excellent water quality was reported at (W1) Ferry Point throughout the monitoring period. Poor Water quality was highlighted at (W3) Harts Farm Way slipway throughout the monitoring period.
- 6.3 Generally, water quality tends to be better during the Bathing Season compared to the whole monitoring period. The data also indicates that heavy rainfall has an impact on water quality.
- 6.4 The data does not allow the Council to determine whether elevated levels of bacteria are from human or animal activity, nor does it allow the Council to conclude that this is linked to discharges from Combined Sewerage outflows and Sewerage treatment discharges or arise from agriculture or other run-off or contamination.
- 6.5 The analysis demonstrates that it is safest to use water during the bathing season when weather conditions are less likely to adversely affect water quality. In addition, the Council’s existing advice which advises users to consider avoiding higher-risk activities for 72 hours following moderate-significant rainfall remains sound.

## 7.0 Implications and Comments

### 7.1 S151 Comments

Members should be reminded that it is not the responsibility of the Council to fund water quality testing. Any costs associated, where additional funding has not been sourced, become a pressure on the Council's limited revenue budget resources. Testing also takes up valuable officer time. Whilst this is not an additional cost, it is a use of resources that would otherwise be deployed on budgeted functions.

Members should also be aware that the results themselves, when published, may have an economic impact on local businesses associated with the harbour and its coastline.

### 7.2 Financial Implications

There are no additional costs of reporting the results. Council officers were able to reduce to costs of the sampling programme, with credits from UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

### 7.3 Monitoring Officer Comments

The Council has no statutory duty or legal responsibility to assess water quality, work towards the meeting of water quality targets for public health protection, nor provide the stakeholders with accurate information about the associated risks to health. With specific regard to the public health impacts of water pollution, the Council's duties are limited to its role as a bathing water controller (Beachlands & Eastoke), and insofar as its general role in emergency planning.

The Environment Agency is the responsible authority for monitoring and classifying bathing water quality at designated bathing waters. The Environment Agency regulate the activities of the sewerage undertakers, including permitted releases, and have powers to take enforcement action in relation to pollution of waters. These powers are not available to the Council. The lobbying of the responsible authority calling for further action to protect water quality in Langstone Harbour is most appropriate course of action.

### 7.4 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications of disclosing the information to the public.

## 8.0 Risks

- 8.1 The risks of the sampling have been reduced, by adopting the following steps:

- 1) The microbiological testing was conducted, by an approved laboratory for sea water testing.
  - 2) Independent review of data and the conclusions by a third party specialist in the field of sea water quality.
- 8.2 The study reinforces that it is safest to use water during the bathing season when weather conditions are less likely to adversely affect water quality.

## 9.0 Consultation

- 9.1 The results have been shared with both Portsmouth City Council and the Harbour Master of Langstone Harbour.

## 10.0 Communications

- 10.1 A detailed communication plan has been developed by Communications Team to communicate the findings.
- 10.2 The data will be added to relevant section of the HBC website and will be refreshed during March 2024.
- 10.3 Southern Water, the Environment Agency and Portsmouth City Council have been provided the data for information.

<b>Agreed and signed off by:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Cabinet Lead:</b>	Cllr Lloyd	26/02/2024
<b>Executive Head:</b>	Alex Robinson	25/02/2024
<b>Monitoring Officer:</b>	Jo McIntosh	26/02/2024
<b>Section151 Officer:</b>	Steven Pink	26/02/2024