

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Operations and Place Shaping Board held on 13 November 2018

Present

Councillors Lloyd (Chairman), Buckley, Davis, Howard, Milne, Patrick, Satchwell and Thomas

26 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Raines and Shimbart.

27 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

28 Review of Southern Water Authority - Discharges into Langstone Harbour

The Board received a presentation By Sam Underwood and Paul Kent from Southern Water.

The Chairman then invited the following members of the public to make their Deputations to the Board:

- Mr Richard Platt
- Mr David Parham

The Chairman opened the challenge session and explained that the session would comprise of three elements:

- The blocked pumping station at Stoke on Hayling Island on 15 September 2018;
- The electrical fault at Budds Farm on 14 September 2018; and
- Communications

The blocked pumping station at Stoke on Hayling Island on 15 September 2018

The Board was advised that the failure had been due to both pumps becoming blocked by wet wipes. The incorrect disposal of wet wipes was an increasing problem and the Board noted that the issue had recently been raised in the national media.

Upon the failure occurring, a warning alarm had been received at Southern Water's Control Centre in Worthing and a local responder dispatched to investigate. This was in accordance with standard procedure, which was for a local responder to assess and repair if they were able or arrange for the appropriate remedial action. In this instance the latter took place and tankers were dispatched whilst the pumps were repaired. Southern Water apologised for the length of time that the repair took, which was due to the clean-up required after some of the contents of the wet well entered the dry well.

In response to questions the Board learnt that screens or filters were not usually fitted to pumps, although Mr Kent agreed to investigate whether there were any engineering solutions to the problem. Southern Water concentrated on education to prevent wet wipes being disposed of down toilets and also lobbied manufacturers and the Government via the appropriate body, Water UK. It was confirmed that there had been educational visits carried out on Hayling Island during the past year.

The Board was advised that pumping stations were routinely checked and it was agreed that the inspection schedule for the Stoke Pumping Station would be forwarded. Residents were not usually alerted to problems in their area, unless homes were at risk of flooding. However, this would be discussed with Southern Water's Customer Engagement Manager to review whether there were any opportunities for improvements.

With regard to clean up operations, it was confirmed that the Environment Agency led on compiling an action plan, which was then carried out by Southern Water. In the instance of the Stoke Pumping Station incident, tankers took away the untreated effluent and the system was then flushed through with treated effluent once the repairs had been completed.

The Board raised the issue of overgrown ditches, as these had the potential to hamper the natural process of untreated effluent breaking down by blocking UV light. In reply Mr Kent confirmed that ditches were checked after any incidents and agreed to investigate the Board's suggestion that they be checked annually.

In response to specific detailed questions, Mr Underwood agreed to report back on the following:

- The frequency of inspections at the Stoke Pumping Station;
- The number of instances in the past year where tankers had required to be deployed to Hayling Island;
- How quickly the first tanker arrived in respect of the incident on 14 September 2018; and
- Whether manhole No 9701 now had a permanent seal.

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The electrical fault at Budds Farm Wastewater Treatment Works on 14 September 2018

The Board was advised that an electrical failure on the site had required an emergency mobile generator to be brought in. Whilst there were fixed emergency generators on site, the power from them could not have been used on this occasion due to the location of the fault. As an emergency measure untreated effluent had been diverted into a storm tank for temporary holding before treatment. However, this had overflowed for a period of 22 minutes and released untreated effluent into Langstone Harbour.

In response to questions the Board was advised that the power failure had been an abnormal situation. Some failures could not be prevented, but reassurance was given that processes that had been proven to work were in place to deal with them.

With regard to sampling, Mr Underwood confirmed that Southern Water sampled the releases from Budds Farm and that the Environment Agency took regular samples from the bathing waters. The Board highlighted concerns about the quality of water in the open sea, which was used for recreation by water sports enthusiasts. In reply, it had to be remembered that the releases protected homes from flooding, although the quality of the harbour water was agreed to be a knowledge gap. It was highlighted that Chichester District Council tested the water in Chichester Harbour, therefore there was potentially a role for Havant Borough Council to do the same in Langstone Harbour. Mr Underwood confirmed that Southern Water would be happy to work with the council.

Communication

The Chairman offered the council's assistance with a joint communication plan with Southern Water, particularly around the Beachbouy website and the issues caused by wet wipes.

Mr Underwood welcomed working with the council on a joint communication plan and explained that the Beachbouy release reporting system had launched in July 2018. This was currently a pilot system for Langstone and Chichester Harbours, but was planned to be rolled out over the whole Southern Water area. Following the discussions at this meeting Mr Underwood agreed that the beaches on Hayling Island would be prioritised for the next phase of Beachbuoy. This was welcomed by the Board, as was Southern Water's proposal to undertake some educational events on Hayling Island during the coming six months.

With regard to the year round use of the beaches on Hayling Island, Mr Underwood confirmed that Southern Water would look to the council and the Environment Agency for assistance with water testing outside of the bathing season.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking Mr Underwood and Mr Kent for attending and requested that representatives from Southern Water attend future meetings of the Board to provide updates on progress.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 7.00 pm

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Chairman