

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Operations and Place Shaping Board held on 17 December 2019

Present

Lloyd (Chairman), Carpenter, Jenner, Raines and Bains

40 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Howard and Robinson.

41 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

42 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest relating to matters on the agenda.

43 Update from Southern Water

The Chairman opened the item by thanking Southern Water for coming back to speak to the Board. It was acknowledged that the Council has no direct responsibility for Southern Water, and that Southern Water were still under investigation.

The Board received a presentation by Sam Underwood, Daniel McElhinney and Nick Mills from Southern Water (please see attached with minutes).

In response to a question about lobbying for less water waste, Mr Underwood advised that lobbying was taking place through Water UK to reduce the number of plastic bottles in the environment and encourage refillable water bottles. He advised that it would be difficult to target manufacturers as manufacturers respond to a market where sales and convenience take priority, but Southern Water do not endorse the "Fine to Flush" accreditation. Whilst the biodegradable wipes may break down over an extended period of time, they still block up the screens and release plastic into the waste water treatment works, thus creating problems further down the line.

Mr Underwood agreed to share Southern Water's submission on plastic lobbying and the extended polluter tariff.

Councillor Bains suggested that one way to reach out and educate residents would be to deliver information issued by Southern Water about flushing responsibly and reducing plastic waste with Council tax bills for the next fiscal year. Mr Underwood advised that Southern Water was also aiming to work with schools to educate residents, and that Southern Water was going to show how waste water and clean water were two very different teams, by sending them to schools on different day in order to maintain focus.

Councillor Raines offered to work with Southern Water to speak to Hayling Island residents and local groups about water issues.

In response to questions from Board Members about water quality testing, Mr Underwood counselled that:

- a) the Beach Buoy system covered 6 areas, including Chichester and Langstone despite there being no water quality testing taking place in those waters;
- b) reintroducing oysters into the Langstone oyster beds would enable testing to happen in Langstone Harbour;
- c) the Beach Buoy system still needs human intervention to send out alerts to the mailing list, but possibilities of automation in the distant future still exist;
- d) the Blue Marine Foundation were working on the Solent Oysters Restoration Project, which could be funded by Southern Water's Enforcement Undertaking through the Environment Agency. Rather than a prosecuted fine, it allows for the money to go to a localised project agreed by the offender and the Environment Agency to help give improvements;
- e) once Langstone Harbour's waters began to be tested again, the results and data should be readily available to residents, and there was a need to determine responsibility of testing.

Mr Underwood explained that since a change in executive management there appeared to be a marked improvement in Southern Water's performance.

The Chairman then covered questions about the mechanical infrastructure of the pumping station, to which Mr Underwood, Mr Mills and Mr McElhinney advised that:

- 1) whilst in the last meeting of Southern Water and the Operations and Place Shaping Board it was advised that mechanical screening at pumping stations could be a viable option, it was since established that this would be difficult to implement as it required skips and easy access to the site, which Stoke pumping station does not allow for;
- 2) the investment period for improving mechanisms began in 2020, so Southern Water would be working up until then to plan for potential future investments;
- 3) environment permits do not require there to be a backup generator on site, hence why there was not one at Stoke at the time of the incident in 2018;
- 4) along with Southern Water's plans to install a second working pump at the site, they hoped to put in a third in order to have a duty pump, an

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assist pump, and a standby pump to prevent the events of the incident taking place again;

- 5) they had put in level monitors at 50% of the chamber depth of the sewer pipes in order to track the level of the flow. This had not been in place prior to the incident and the monitors were now in place at the 9701 manhole cover;
- 6) overgrown ditches were not Southern Water's asset; the environment agency deal with it. Southern Water only need to ensure access to manhole covers to allow for easier maintenance routes;
- 7) Southern Water had existing routines in place in order to deal with different types of risk (static risk and dynamic risk) which covered areas such as location, reactive failure, and performance;
- 8) releases over the year were measured in instances rather than duration, so some could have lasted minutes – others hours – and were very dependent on the weather of that day;
- 9) the replacement of the iron sewers on Hayling Island had been prioritised and was going through the risk and value process. Replacing it could cause disruption as the areas were covered by different types of land use, but a scheme was in the pipeline which meant traffic mitigation measures could be planned to ease this disruption.

The Chairman enquired as to whether there was an improved plan for communications for residents. Mr McElhinney advised that there was a new communications strategy in place for dealing with residents' enquiries. He highlighted that all Southern Water representatives at the time of the Stoke Pumping Station incident were focused on fixing the issue rather than informing residents. Mr McElhinney advised that there was now a new incident management structure in place to have a lead to speak to residents/customers, a stakeholder lead, and a service management lead. Southern Water also now had an incident van based in Durrington to take to sites to have a visible presence for residents, and social media will be better utilised to inform residents of immediate action.

In response to a question about coping with the new housing plan for Hayling Island, Mr Underwood advised that there was headroom at the treatment works to expand to accommodate the extra dwellings' supply, and the legal obligation of connecting new properties was counteracted by their aim to reduce water usage to 100 litres per person of water per day by 2030.

In response to questions about Nutrient Neutrality, Mr Underwood counselled that;

- i. Southern Water can mitigate nutrients, because the overall proportion of nutrients in the Solent caused by the releases was typically 5% (but can increase to 10+% at the point of source), and the amount of

nutrients removed by the treatment works was over 90% in each sample;

- ii. the Environment Agency did not say there was a need to reduce nitrates further in the water as Southern Water's emissions coaligned with their permits;
- iii. Southern Water had land in the New Forest to off-set nitrates and were working with PfSH;
- iv. water efficiency measures in new developments would be uncstly to developers but save a lot of water in the long run;
- v. farms cause the largest percentage of nutrient based water pollution, and Natural England would be the non-departmental public body to find out which sites cause the greatest percentage of run-off;
- vi. by investing into clean water by filtering the water upstream of the nutrients by working with the National Farmers Union and Natural England.

The representatives from Southern Water also advised that it was not the capacity of the pipes that had caused an incident at Stoke in 2018, rather it was the efficiency of the pumping station, which once it had a pump replaced was working far better than in previous years.

It was agreed that a trip to Budds Farm to see the treatment works in action in the future would be beneficial. It was agreed that Southern Water would share their submission on plastic lobbying with the Board, and that Southern Water would also share figures on the percentage of nitrates removed in the water treatment process prior to discharges being released.

The Chairman thanked Southern Water for attending and closed the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 5.35 pm and concluded at 7.03 pm