

	Question From	Question to	
1	Beth Hawdon	Cllr Bowerman	<p>I have worked in Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry as a cell biologist since 1987 at Rutgers University, University California, National University Singapore and Portsmouth University. I also have an MSc in Environmental Management.</p> <p>Many news stories regarding sewage being released into rivers and the sea mention people and animals falling ill recently. I contacted HBC two years ago, before the media picked this up because of my concerns and was told that it was not the Council's problem. However, as Councillors are elected to manage and ensure the health and safety of their constituents it is a problem to be dealt with by MPs and Councillors. My concerns are not just people and dogs falling ill when bathing, but the long-term degradation of the ecosystem around Hayling, Portsmouth, Havant and Emsworth. Natural England produced a paper developed from a large survey regarding the state of these waterways and in general they are dangerously declining.</p> <p>Thousands of papers are written every year by scientists about the chemicals in sewage and their effects on plants and animals near sewage outfalls, and these are written about treated sewage. In our harbours we are releasing a toxic solution of untreated sewage on a regular basis. All pharmaceuticals end up in wastewater because a large portion of medication is not broken down by the body and is excreted, hence present in high concentrations in pre-treated sewage. Current sewage treatments get rid of some but not all of compounds generated by humans including, hormones, anti-epileptics, anti-depressants, NSAIDS, and so on. Engineers and scientists are currently looking for further methods to remove these from sewage, but if we are allowing frequent releases of untreated sewage, their research becomes pointless, and money wasted.</p> <p>These scientists have shown the hormones and antidepressants do impact the organisms exposed because many of these tend to bioaccumulate. Concentrations so low that it requires specific equipment to detect them will accumulate over time and will</p>

			<p>impact entire populations of plants and animals. Many of these organisms are at the foundation of the marine ecosystem. Hence you have three problems. First, they are the food for higher organisms such as fish, birds, and other wildlife so if the feed population is affected so are the feeders. Ultimately, these compounds will make it into fish people are eating. Another problem is the destruction of these populations will also destabilise the physical environment, which can lead to increased erosion, for example seagrass destruction.</p> <p>For my MSc I studied the measures taken to control polychlorinated biphenyls, a widely used compound in industry until scientists showed the problems they caused when they enter our ecosystem. They were banned and disposal was regulated, but it was not done quickly enough. Now, PCBs are found across the planet, even in the tissues of organisms in the Arctic. From a selfish perspective, they are in the seafood caught in most countries, and in some communities' human breast milk. Compounds used by humans must be dealt with correctly to protect everyone. Many of these chemicals are endocrine disruptors which will have an irreversible effect on humans and wildlife. Dilution of sewage is not the answer. We must stop releasing untreated sewage now, not in fifteen years when the compounds have already destroyed our precious marine ecosystems.</p> <p>My question is what will the council do to stop this threat? Examples of what they can do are: stopping any new sewage source being developed until Southern Water has the capability to deal with what they already have. Help Southern Water build their capacity by gaining funding from central government. Work with the EA and DEFRA to run a study to see to what extent these human toxicants are accumulating in sediments and wildlife tissues. These are just a few answers to my question.</p>
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Reply

The Council is aware of the concerns which have been raised and would like to thank Ms Hawdon for the depth of consideration of her question. The Council looks to Government to consider these matters in detail when putting together secondary legislation and other implementation measures for the Environment Act.

Under the current legislative and policy framework raised, the Council's ability to act to unilaterally reduce the volumes of untreated wastewater discharged to the Harbour is extremely limited. Discharges to the environment from Wastewater Treatment Works are managed through an Environmental Permit which outlines the both the quality of treated wastewater discharges, and the circumstances under which discharges of partially treated or untreated wastewater may be made. This process is regulated by the Environment Agency, to nationally consistent standards and the Council is not part of this process. It is appropriate to highlight that the ability for wastewater treatment works to discharge in this way is also in place for good reason: to prevent flooding in urban areas during storm periods which would itself have significant impacts on both human health and the environment.

The Council's ability to control the development of new sources of sewerage is also constrained by the National Planning Policy Framework, whilst Southern Water's ability to reject new connections to it's network is similarly limited by the provisions of the Water Industry Act. The policy and legal framework does not allow a moratorium on development based on current sewage network capacity to be put in place and so the Council simply cannot undertake the suggested action. If the Council were to refuse planning permission for residential development on this basis, planning permission would inevitably be granted through the appeal process, with costs awarded against the Council as the refusal would be considered unreasonable.

Nonetheless, the Council is working with our neighbours, through the Partnership for South Hampshire to advance discussions with the Environment Agency, Southern Water and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This has included pushing the Environment Agency to undertake a Review of Consents which is now being scoped and has a dedicated resource. It is hoped that this review should be complete in sufficient time to feed into the start of the next five year investment programme for Southern Water (2025-30). More details about work being done at a sub-regional level are in a report which was considered by the Partnership for South Hampshire's Joint Committee on 27 July 2021 (<https://www.push.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Item-12-PfSH-Nutrient-Neutrality-Update.pdf>).

The Environmental Act gained Royal ascent on the 9th November 2021, and this legislation aims to address a number of the issues raised in this question. Environment Secretary George Eustice stated that the Act will "...crack down on water companies that discharge sewage into rivers, waterways and coastlines". It will see a duty enshrined in law to ensure water companies secure a progressive reduction in the adverse impacts of discharges from storm overflows. New duties will also require the government to publish a plan to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows by September 2022 and report to Parliament on the progress towards implementing the plan. The Council supports the Environment Act and its provisions and looks forward to the implementation of these measures, and to the realisation of the expected environmental benefits."

2	Pat Brooks – Havant Climate Alliance and Friends of the Earth	Cllr Rennie	With the financial strain of separating from East Hampshire District Council, can we be assured that Climate and Environment issues will remain a priority for HBC, with the implementation of an effective Action Plan?
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Reply

The Council will bring forward its Corporate Strategy in February 2022 which outlines its commitment to the Climate Change Strategy.

As Leader / PH I would like to thank the Havant Climate Alliance which continues to offer valuable support in developing our Environment Action Plan and for the insights it continues to offer on improvements we can all make to help our climate and environment.

The last few years have been challenging for all Councils, however the Strategy outlines that this will remain a priority for the Borough Council. The Council would like to ask, in turn, for the continued support of the Havant Climate Alliance to help us tackle some of the considerable challenges we are facing over the coming weeks and months to ensure that our mutual work together produces the results the community needs.

3	Pat Brooks – Havant Climate Alliance and Friends of the Earth	Cllr Rennie	Can you re-assure us that after the separation from EHDC, HBC will continue to fund a post for a Climate and Environment Officer, preferably several days per week? This will be essential if climate and environment issues are to be recognised in relation to all developments in the Borough. An example of just one issue, is the reference to the Future Role of the Hayling Billy Trail, where it is noted that the initial draft is to be sent to the Climate and Environment Officer so that the carbon impact of the proposals can be recognised. Many hours of officer's time will be needed if the same is to be applied to all proposals.
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Reply

Having confirmed that the Climate Change Strategy is a Council priority, we recognise that we need the officer support to deliver the challenges ahead.

We also recognise that we cannot achieve a change in our behaviours and attitudes without working in partnership, that we need our collective community power to deliver these changes and that we are reliant on officers to lead that work for the Councils.

4	Pat Brooks – Havant Climate Alliance and Friends of the Earth	Cllr Rennie	As the Local Plan may be reconsidered, will it be possible to bring the Section on Building Standards more in line with the Climate and Environment Strategy? This would mean increasing standards required, to 2025 levels ahead of that date. Local Authorities do have leeway to set higher standards than those required by current building regulations. EHDC are incorporating net zero standards into their Local Plan for 2023. More work can be done to persuade developers that it will be easier to sell their houses if they are built to 2025 standards which reduce fuel bills.
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Reply

The Council has recently adopted the Climate and Environment Strategy and this represents the up-to-date position on these matters and post-dates the Submission draft of the Local Plan. Government are also bringing forward the Future Homes Standard. In an ideal world, the Future Homes Standard would introduce a high standard of low-carbon design in Part L of the Building Regulations so that it is non-negotiable and must be implemented for all new homes right across the country. Planning policies for development quality standards in Havant Borough have essentially less weight at the current time due to housebuilding not meeting housing need over the last few years. Whilst this is not something which the Council supports, and I have written to the Secretary of State regarding this, it is nonetheless the case.

The submission local plan includes a policy whereby new homes will need to have carbon emissions 19% lower than the Building Regulations, which is a significant step. Nonetheless should Government not update the Building Regulations, we will be looking at the tools available to increase the local policy so that new homes in the Borough meet the aspirations set out in the Climate and Environment Strategy.

5	Ann Buckley Havant Borough Residents' Alliance	Cllr Satchwell	Nitrates - The Court of Appeal has granted permission to appeal against the judgement of Mr Justice Jay in Wyatt v Fareham Borough Council 2021. The challenge principally concerns the lawfulness of the advice contained in the Natural England's document 'Advice on Achieving Nutrient Neutrality for Development in the Solent Region.' Permission to appeal has been granted on four grounds, three of which raise questions about whether the advice note complies with the Habitats Directive. Havant BC has based its Nutrient Neutrality on the same advice. If Wyatt wins the appeal what implications does this have for Havant BC?
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Reply

The Council has undertaken a huge amount of work regarding nutrient neutrality over the past three years, culminating in the multi-award winning mitigation project at Warblington Farm. As such, we are watching this case with great interest. The case referred to is

being considered in February and it is hoped that a judgement will be received shortly after that so that much-needed certainty can be brought to this matter for local authorities, the housebuilding industry and other stakeholders.

We are continuing to work closely with Natural England and our neighbouring local authorities on solutions for this matter. In contrast to when we launched Warblington Farm, there is now an active and growing market for nutrient mitigation in the Solent (www.push.gov.uk/work/mitigation-schemes-available-to-developers/). Particularly in the East Hampshire catchment, which includes the majority of Havant Borough, there is a healthy supply of nutrients mitigation for several years of supply, which includes headroom to accommodate potential changes in approach which could be the result of this case (<https://cdn.havant.gov.uk/public/documents/EB69%20PfSH%20Joint%20Committee%20Report%20Nutrients%20Options.pdf>).

6	Ann Buckley Havant Borough Residents' Alliance	Cllr Rennie	Decoupling of Havant Borough Council and East Hants District Council - It was noted in Councillor Rennie's report on the decoupling of the two Councils, that Havant is focused on Regeneration and Place-making, whereas EHDC focus is different based on Sustainable Planning and Enforcement, Welfare and Well-being. Can you reassure us that the four latter aims are also ones that remain important to HBC particularly as we have wards in the Borough with high levels of deprivation and why then are Sustainable Planning and Enforcement, Well-being and Welfare not a focus for Havant?
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Reply

In asking this question Ms Buckley has identified the key difference between Havant and East Hampshire District Council. Havant is a more urbanised area than East Hampshire and this Council wants to take more active interventions to impact levels of deprivation and improve the economic forecast for our area.

The focus on regeneration means that we will focus on matters within our control like housing, development and community safety and work with our partners to tackle employment, health and transport improvements.

Whilst our focus is on economic development, we are committed to bringing forward regeneration that improves the lives of our communities. That means planning and enforcement, well-being, welfare and the environment remain important to us. They contribute to the positive regeneration of our area.

7	Ann Buckley Havant Borough Residents' Alliance	Cllr Rennie	U-turn in policy on joint staffing - Residents are concerned that £100,000 was spent recently on consultant fees based on looking into the progression to joint staffing across the two authorities and there were also significant other costs. This was followed at both Councils by scrutiny and then votes taken in favour of this policy at Cabinet and full Council. How is it possible after such enthusiasm for and expenditure on this project that there suddenly is a U-turn which will bring even more expenditure which can only result in increased Council Tax for Havant residents at a time when many are under severe financial pressure?
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Reply

The Council's investment into the transformation programme is a worthwhile investment. The transformation programme is about more than sharing staffing costs. It's primary objective is to improve the 'customer journey'. What does that mean? For our residents, our businesses and our community groups, it means understanding your priorities and putting our funding behind those priorities. For our staff it means investing in their training and development so that they provide the best possible support to their communities. The investment has given us a better understanding of what will make a difference to our area and how we can achieve improved outcomes.

The transformation programme is also showing us how we can improve our interaction with the public, how we can support our residents and our businesses better. It has also helped us to understand how we are structured. We are becoming a more performance focused authority as a result.

We know there are challenges ahead. By investing into the transformation programme and a dedicated management team we are making that upfront investment into providing a better future Havant Borough Council.