

Agenda Item 18d

Ordinary Council Meeting of: 14 March 2023
Cllr Heaney/Cllr Gerada

AGENDA ITEM 18d - Notice of Motion - Southern Water

Amendment:

After (iv) add a new (v) and renumber subsequent paragraph.

(v) That Southern Water disclose what they propose to do to neutralise or remove chemicals and pharmaceuticals from sewage before wastewater is recycled or discharged.

Therefore the amended motion to read:

'Sewage dumping into our waterways damages an already delicate ecosystem that we rely on as a coastal city. The consequence these discharges have affect our resident's health and wellbeing, can damage environmental habitats, and harm species all whilst being detrimental to our tourism industry.

Full Council has debated motions in 2019 and 2021 regarding the harmful discharges Southern Water have pumped out into Langstone Harbour. There have been many actions taken forward by the leader of the Council, group leaders, members and the 2 MPs for Portsmouth however, many residents feel that not much notice has been taken by the company and therefore, not much change has happened. Discharges are still occurring, and a recent report jointly undertaken by both Portsmouth University and Brunel University show that drugs such as antidepressants, antibiotics and cocaine are now being detected in animals in the harbour environment. A citizen led project by the clean harbour's partnership called 'Project Spotlight' has been set up to take water samples from the harbour and look at the creatures in this environment to see how those discharges and chemical cocktails are influencing them.

Several organisations have been working to highlight these issues and this council wishes to thank those who have done so including the Stop the Sewage - Southsea group and the Hayling Sewage Watch group. Due to groups such as these, real time signs have been installed at points along Portsmouth Seafront and water testing is also occurring. This is also due to the Council working in partnership with neighbouring councils and the Langstone Harbour Board.

Back in 2021, 750 hours of raw sewage was pumped out of the outflow pipe into Langstone Harbour. So far this year, 305 hours of confirmed sewage discharges have already been sent out into the harbour from Budds Farm. Southern Water was fined £90m due to this in 2021 and in 2022, they were fined a further £28.3m and forced to reduce customer bills.

Consequently, Full Council acknowledges that we are disturbed that discharges continue to happen to this day and continue to happen for significant lengths of time.

The council also acknowledges that funding by the Environmental Agency has been cut almost in half in the last decade. The number of water samples taken has also fallen by 51% and there has been a 94% drop in prosecutions against water companies who continue to illegally discharge affluent into our waters.

Therefore, Full Council asks:

- (i) that Southern Water pay for electronic signs on the seafront to notify bathers if there have been any recent discharges so that individuals can take the decision on whether they wish to swim in the sea and also reimburse any money spent by this council on the signs already put up.
- (ii) That Southern Water also pay for a live update E.coli buoy to be stationed at Southsea beach like the one recently installed at Hayling Island
- (iii) To ask that Southern Water supports the efforts of the Langstone Harbour Board, Portsmouth City Council and Havant Borough Council to find solutions jointly and therefore, pay for regular water testing to see what effect their discharges are having on our marine environment and to meet with all 3 parties to discuss these issues.
- (iv) That Southern Water meet with the Council to discuss their plans going forward for any improvements to Budds Farm and the sewage infrastructure across the city.
- (v) That Southern Water disclose what they propose to do to neutralise or remove chemicals and pharmaceuticals from sewage before wastewater is recycled or discharged

- (vi) To ask Southern Water to discuss with all members the plans for the proposed wastewater recycling for our drinking water and to ask them to have public events so that the public can have a chance to look at these plans and make an informed decision as part of their consultation. This means that the deadline of the 20th February should also be extended.

Full Council also requests:

- (i) That group leaders sign a letter written by the Council leader to be sent to the Prime Minister, Therese Coffey MP (Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Lord Benyon and Mark Spencer (Minister of State for DEFRA) to remind them of the environmental destruction and ongoing health concerns that these discharges cause. To request they to publicly condemn the water companies who are causing these discharges and to reiterate that a timescale has been requested to end these discharges occurring in our marine environment as quickly as possible.
- (ii) For the Chief Executive to write a letter to the Environment Agency asking them to continue acting against those who illegally discharge sewage into our waterways. To ask them to lobby the government for further funding to allow for more water sampling to occur, for more investigations of suggested illegal dumping to occur and therefore, more prosecutions being able to happen.

Proposed by (Name) Councillor Graham Heaney

Signed _____

Seconded by (Name) Councillor Charlotte Gerada

Signed _____

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