



Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee
30 January 2020

ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Key Decision [No]

Ward(s) Affected: N/A

Southern Water - 2019 Bathing Water quality and monitoring results

Report by the Director for Digital and Resources and Director for Communities

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides some background and context to assist the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) in discussing the results of the Adur and Worthing 2019 bathing water quality monitoring with representatives from Southern Water.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That JOSC note the presentation from Southern Water on the results of the 2019 bathing water monitoring and works being undertaken to continually improve bathing water quality and also questions Southern Water on these results.

3. Context

- 3.1 At the meeting of JOSC on 26 July 2018 representatives from Southern Water attended to provide some background information on the sewage spill incident from July 2017 and also further information on works to improve bathing water quality and improvement works to the East Worthing Treatment Works.

3.2 At the same JOSOC meeting it was also agreed that Southern Water should be invited to attend a future JOSOC meeting to discuss the results of the 2019 bathing water monitoring following the joint stakeholder actions steered by the Worthing Bathing Water Enhancement Project. Going forward there needs to be further discussion about action being taken by Southern Water working with the Councils, West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and the Environment Agency to improve and maintain excellent bathing water quality in Worthing and at the other designated bathing beaches at Lancing Beach Green, Southwick and Shoreham Beach.

3.3 To recognise the importance of these issues, the Council strategic direction - 'Platforms for our Places' - Platform 3 - (Stewarding our Natural Resources) included a commitment to 'Develop the role of communities in stewarding our natural resources' and a project contained within this sought to improve Worthing's Bathing Water Quality through the implementation of an enhancement programme. The next version of the 'Platforms' vision - *'Platforms for our Places - Going further 2020 - 2022'* also includes a commitment to improve water quality and as part of this there is an aim to obtain and maintain 'blue' flag status for the foreshore areas.

4. How the Councils are working with Southern Water to improve Bathing Water quality

4.1 The Public Health & Regulation Manager has chaired the Worthing Bathing Water Enhancement Project Steering Group with the aim of raising the 'sufficient' bathing water quality to that of 'excellent', as measured on an annual basis, by the end of the 2019 season. The Steering Group met regularly and was attended by Public Health & Regulation (Environmental Health), Beach Office, Waste Services, WSCC Highways, Environment Agency, and Southern Water. Analysis undertaken by Southern Water has identified the main source of poor water quality as human sewage, followed by some dog and some bird faecal matter. This enabled prioritisation of efforts for improvement.

4.2 Southern Water surveyed surface water drainage assets owned by them in and close to Worthing town centre and found foul effluent in some of these (sewage from toilets and grey water from sinks, washing machines and dishwashers). By tracking connections upstream they identified a number of properties where foul water was being incorrectly discharged into the surface water system, so called 'misconnections'. After resolving some of the larger misconnected properties themselves (mainly larger blocks of flats), they

passed a list of the remaining misconnected properties, both commercial and residential, to the Public Health & Regulation Team for further action. The Team have powers to deal with drainage misconnections under the Building Act 1984.

4.3 The Public Health & Regulation Team then contacted the affected properties, advising them of the problems identified with their drainage connections and asking them to resolve these within a specified time. The majority of owners rectified the issues, however in two cases formal Notices under the Building Act 1984 had to be served to remedy the problems. These Notices were subsequently complied with.

4.4 In addition, Southern Water provided funding to the Councils for extra bird proof bins, beach flags in the dog control areas and extra dog warden patrols over the summer. The Dog Wardens patrolled over most weekends during the bathing season, issuing advice and warnings to people with dogs within the dog exclusion zone.

4.5 The **annual** samples taken by the Environment Agency for 2019 were 'excellent'. The published DEFRA results did not reflect this improved **annual** result as they measure on a 4 year rolling programme and previous poor result years have impacted overall. Therefore, although encouraging, there will need to be a maintenance of excellent sample results in coming years to achieve the DEFRA 'excellent' standing and therefore eligibility for Blue Flag status.

5. Engagement and Communication

5.1 The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of JOSOC, Southern Water and relevant Council Officers have been consulted on the contents of this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications relating to this report.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Councils have the power to do anything to facilitate or which is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of their functions.

7.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a Local Authority to do

anything that individuals generally may do (subject to any current restrictions or limitations prescribed in existing legislation).

- 7.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Background Papers

Report to JOSOC on 26 July 2018

Platforms for our Places progress report to Joint Strategic Committee on 3 December (Platform 3 - Natural Resources) re Bathing Water quality

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

Issues relating to bathing water quality can impact on economic development long term.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

The quality of bathing water can impact on the communities.

2.2 Equality Issues

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

Matter considered and no issues identified.

3. Environmental

The quality of bathing water and the protection of beaches is important for the protection of the environment.

4. Governance

Matter considered and no issues identified.