

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 January 2024

* Councillor James Walsh (Chair)

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| * Councillor Honor Brooker | * Councillor Maddy Redpath |
| * Councillor Philip Brooker | * Councillor Joanne Shaw |
| * Councillor Jason Fenwick | Councillor Katie Steel |
| * Councillor Lizzie Griffiths | * Councillor Dominique Williams |
| * Councillor Gillian Harwood | * Councillor Sue Wyeth-Price |
| Councillor Steven Lee | |

*Present

Councillors Catherine Houston (Lead Councillor Commercial Services), Tom Hunt (Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Regeneration), Richard Lucas (Lead Councillor for Finance and Property), Julia McShane (Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing), Richard Mills OBE, George Potter (Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change), Merel Rehorst-Smith (Lead Councillor for Regulatory and Democratic Services), and Howard Smith were also in attendance. Councillors Yves de Contades, Amanda Creese, Geoff Davis, Carla Morson (Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development), Fiona White (Lead Councillor for Planning), and Catherine Young in were remote attendance.

OS33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee was advised of apologies from Councillors Steven Lee and Katie Steel.

OS34 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman reminded the meeting that Councillor Furniss had stepped down from the Committee.

Upon the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Honor Brooker, the Committee:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Philip Brooker be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2023-24.

OS35 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or disclosures of non-pecuniary interests.

OS36 MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 January 2024 were agreed.

OS37 WATER ISSUES IN GUILDFORD

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the purpose of the item was to consider the outages in November 2023, the management of the crisis, and measures being put in place to avoid such outages arising in the future. He welcomed three representatives from Thames Water: Tess Fayers, Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties; Paul Wetton, Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties; and Huw Thomas, Head of Engagement, Thames Valley and Home Counties.

The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties began with an apology to those affected by the water supply disruption in November. She proceeded to lead a presentation on the water supply interruptions in the Guildford area (the slides for which had been published as part of the agenda papers). The presentation provided an overview of the incident, the key lessons learnt and priority actions taken since, and investments and plans by Thames Water to improve the resilience of the Guildford water supply system.

The Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties informed the Committee of the characteristics of the Guildford water supply area. He indicated that the water supply for the area consisted of two island zones, unconnected to the rest of the network, and that Guildford was reliant on treating water within the area as none was brought in. The meeting was advised of the benefit of connecting the two island zones to improve supply resilience. In addition, the Committee was advised that the daily demand within the Guildford supply area was 50m litres, which exceeded the storage capacity of the area's service reservoirs.

The Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties advised the Committee that on 2 November 2023 power fluctuations due to Storm Ciaran impacted eight sites, including four water treatment works, while

Shalford water treatment works was affected by increased turbidity from the river sources supplying it. He explained the variances in water pressure and supply likely to be experienced by customers during the incident.

With reference to the limited capacity of the Guildford system, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated the challenge of removing assets from supply to undertake the necessary improvements. He advised the Committee that due to improvements introduced since November 2023 the Guildford system had been able to maintain supply during periods of very high turbidity at the Shalford water treatment works.

The Committee was advised by the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties of the geographical area affected by the outages in November and the number of properties affected (14,520 properties had 12 or more consecutive hours of supply interruptions, of which 14,009 were household properties and 482 non-household properties).

With reference to the provision of alternative water supplies during the outages, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties informed the Committee that tankers were used to supply over 2m litres to hospitals and other sensitive locations and to directly infuse the network. She stated that 130 Thames Water staff were involved in running four bottled water stations from 4-12 November 2023. The meeting was informed that during the incident priority was given to vulnerable customers on tiers one and two of the Thames Water Priority Services Register. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties confirmed that during the incident over 5,000 calls concerning it were received in Thames Water's customer contact centre and a further 129 complaints had been made to date. In response to a question from the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties, the Chairman indicated that the issue of compensation was best considered during the question session following the presentation.

With reference to lessons learned from the outages and actions planned, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that the leadership team across the Guildford and Godalming area had been improved. He reminded the Committee of the investments programmes already agreed and suggested that long term it would be necessary to improve the resilience of the Guildford system by connecting it to one of the London water supply systems. The Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties noted that such a connection would be many years in the

future. He explained that a change in working habits since the pandemic had lessened the drop in daytime demand in the Guildford area and a traditional emphasis on reducing both leakage and consumption would not be adequate.

The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties informed the Committee that Thames Water acknowledged it needed to do more to support vulnerable customers during such outages other than focus on tiers one and two of their Priority Services Register. She advised that Thames Water was working to improve the scope and scale of the Register. The Committee was advised that feedback from Surrey's Local Resilience Forum was critical of the service provided to the Farnham Road Hospital during the November incident.

The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties stated that communications with customers during and after the incident had not been timely, clear, and transparent. She indicated that more information should have been provided sooner to inform customers of the challenges of the incident. The meeting was informed that in terms of clear messaging it had at times been unhelpful to have a line of communications running to a Member of Parliament.

With reference to the investment in the Guildford system, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties emphasised the importance of improving both the resilience of water treatment works and network connectivity. The £93.1m of total investment committed to the Guildford system until 2025 and planned for the period 2025-30 was summarised.

The following information and responses were provided during the ensuing discussion:

- A member of the public, Ms Zöe Franklin, who had provided notice of her question in accordance with Public Speaking Procedure Rules, asked:

In November last year, thousands of residents across Castle, Onslow and St Nicolas and other wards found themselves without water, or with very low water pressure, for days. Since then we have been waiting for compensation, many have received nothing or much less than they would expect given the length of the outage. I would like to ask the committee chair to seek answers from Thames Water on how they are making compensation decisions relating to the outage and ask them to justify how it is fair or appropriate that residents on the same road

and/or who experience similar length outages have received very different compensation amounts or none.

- The Chairman invited the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties to comment on the points raised by the question from the member of the public. In response, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties advised the meeting of Thames Water's Customer Guarantee Scheme and levels of compensation. The meeting was informed that the Thames Water account of any customer who had experienced interruptions lasting longer than 12 hours would automatically be credited with £30, with an extra £30 for every further 12-hour period that the water supply remained interrupted. She indicated that compensation for business customers operated to the same time periods but with a £75 allowance rather than £30.
- The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties advised that flow and pressure measurements, together with property ground height were being applied to help establish eligibility for compensation. In addition, Thames Water had undertaken to include factors such as intermittent supply, the uniqueness of the incident, and the time at which supply had been restored in reaching its decisions concerning compensation. The meeting was informed that over 5,000 customers impacted by intermittent supply would receive compensation, with a total of over 18,000 customers receiving compensation; the amount of compensation for customers in the Guildford and Godalming area totalled £1.7m to date. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties agreed to examine specific ward concerns raised by Ms Zöe Franklin.
- In reply to a question, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that it would not be possible to set up an application programme interface (API) to enable members of the public to connect to the flow and pressure measurements used by Thames Water to help establish compensation payments. He undertook to see if further data could be made available to the public but highlighted the possible impact of different internal plumbing on water pressure at adjacent properties.
- In response to queries from a Committee member, the compensation levels were clarified and the meeting informed that over 500

compensation payments were related to business customers. The Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties advised that businesses might be able to recover lost income from an interrupted water supply through their business insurance.

- With reference to lessons learned by Thames Water, the meeting was advised that the Asset Management Plan to fund investment in the Guildford system from 2025-30 was subject to OFWAT agreement. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that OFWAT's determination was expected in June 2024.
- In reply to a question, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties advised the meeting of the limitations and challenges of the Priority Services Register and stated that Thames Water was to an extent reliant on others to build up the Register. The Head of Engagement for Thames Valley and Home Counties suggested the Council might possess information relating to vulnerable people that could usefully be shared with Thames Water. The Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing stated that during the incident the Council did provide Thames Water with information about vulnerable people and, as a result, she was aware that some vulnerable residents were not included in direct deliveries. The Head of Engagement for Thames Valley and Home Counties noted the merit in a regular sharing of information on vulnerable users rather than only during an incident.
- With reference to communications from Thames Water during water supply incidents, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties identified this was an area of constant improvement for the company. She noted that feedback from Surrey's Local Resilience Forum confirmed the updates to the public during the incident had proved to be overly optimistic and that it was better to provide more candid information.
- In reply to a question on the increased leadership and technical presence in the Guildford system following the incident, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties outlined the increase in staff. In addition, he stated that prior to the incident all the water treatment works in the Guildford system had been unmanned and monitored by a central control system in Reading, whereas Shalford water treatment works was now manned 24/7.

- In reply to a question from a Councillor, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties outlined how the Priority Services Register was used during water supply incidents.
- With reference to the tankers used to supply the Farnham Road hospital, a Councillor suggested that engine idling was a noise nuisance for nearby residents and sound dampening was needed. In reply, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that the issue would be reviewed.
- A member of the Committee questioned the impact of the November 2023 incident on residents of Burpham and Merrow and a lack of communications from Thames Water. The Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties confirmed that there had been supply issues throughout the Guildford system. He was unable to state why Burpham and Merrow had not been included on Thames Water maps of the affected area. In response, the member of the Committee indicated that priority water deliveries were undertaken by Thames Water in Burpham and Merrow which suggested Thames Water was aware the area was affected. In response to a question later in the meeting, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties agreed to look further into the situation in Merrow and Burpham.
- In reply to a question about the maintenance and replacement of the network, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties advised the meeting that approximately thirty visible leaks and fifteen detected leaks were fixed each week. He advised the Committee that sample pipes from repairs helped monitor the condition of the network and inform decisions over future replacement works.
- In response to questions, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that the fail-safes at Shalford water treatment works were to guarantee water quality. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties and the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties invited Councillors to visit the water treatment works relevant to their wards.

- A Councillor attending the meeting remotely criticised the apparent lack of engagement by Thames Water since the incident and asked if Thames Water would indemnify hospital trusts that had to close or reduce services because of water supply issues. In addition, the Councillor referred to her questions submitted to Thames Water prior to the meeting requesting details of the company's spending on infrastructure for Surrey since 2010 and then for the Borough of Guildford (broken down by ward and by water treatment works or reservoir), along with the cost for each treatment works and reservoir in the next four years. The Councillor commented on the proposed pipeline from Pewley to Netley and asked for clarification as to whether it was two-way or not. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties thanked the Councillor for her feedback. The Chairman requested that responses to the specific queries raised be provided for circulation to the Committee members.
- A Councillor questioned whether there was sufficient capacity in the system to meet future demand and referred to work undertaken at Ladymead water treatment works. The Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that managing water resources in the Guildford system was a challenge and advised that a second contact tank had been added to the Ladymead water treatment works. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties outlined the increased resilience gained from investing in an additional contact tank at Ladymead water treatment works.
- In reply to a query, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that the current Water Resources Management Plan for the period until 2050 needed to be re-visited as growth and demand in the Guildford area was outstripping predictions and models. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties suggested the value in a colleague attending a future Committee meeting to discuss the Water Resources Management Plan with Councillors; the Head of Engagement, Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated he would liaise with the Senior Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) to progress such a meeting.
- In reply to a question on the power supply for Thames Water sites and system resilience, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated that most of the water treatment works in the

Guildford system had double feeds from the principal sub stations and Thames Water were not reliant on investment by UK Power Networks

- In response to questions, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties informed the meeting of monitoring arrangements both for ground water and for the pipe network and indicated that discharge points for consented storm outfalls were not an issue for water treatment works in the Guildford system.
- In reply to a question concerning poor communications from Thames Water about a burst water main in Shalford on Boxing Day, the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties acknowledged that such incidents were not viewed as routine by residents whereas they were considered business as usual for Thames Water.
- In reply to a question, the Committee was informed that Thames Water was not a statutory consultee on all planning applications. The Head of Engagement for Thames Valley and Home Counties acknowledged that Thames Water needed to improve its response-rate to consultations on large planning applications and suggested the matter might be discussed more fully with the Committee at a future meeting.
- In relation to communications, the Chairman suggested the value in increased collaboration within Thames Water.
- A Councillor requested that the information to be provided to the Committee on how Thames Water investment plans fit with Guildford's Local Plan should include Ash. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties stated that there were no investment plans for Ash Vale water treatment works. She advised that there was capacity within the Ash Vale water treatment works to treat flow from an additional 3,000 properties.
- With reference to the inaccessibility of bottled water stations for some residents during the November outages, a Committee member asked if the creation of more collection points had been considered. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties acknowledged that some vulnerable customers with mobility challenges could have been better supported although the company would help

customers with transient vulnerabilities and respond to individual requests.

- Responding to questions and statements, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties told the meeting of the duty of care Thames Water had to its staff and how the necessary rotation of staff had inadvertently led to miscommunication and misunderstandings. He advised the meeting of instances of hostility towards Thames Water staff at bottled water stations. The Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties indicated the value of feedback about the location of bottled water stations.
- A Councillor asked why when the only remaining area affected by the outage was Onslow the decision was made to keep the bottled water station at the Spectrum open, rather than the closer one at the cathedral site.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Operations for Thames Valley and Home Counties, the Director for Clean Water for Thames Valley and Home Counties, and the Head of Engagement, Thames Valley and Home Counties for attending and answering questions.

In concluding the item, the Chairman asked that the additional information requested by Councillors be forwarded to the Senior Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), that Thames Water liaise with the Council to progress improvements to its Priority Services Register, and action be taken to progress a Committee meeting to consider Thames Water's Water Resources Management Plan and the Councillor visits to relevant water treatment sites.

OS38 LEAD COUNCILLOR QUESTION SESSION

The Chairman welcomed the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change, Councillor George Potter, and invited him to make an introductory statement.

The Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change thanked those Councillors who had provided notice of the question areas and he asked if questions of a technical nature might be shared sooner. He suggested that some questions on Climate Change were better directed to other portfolio holders rather than himself, but indicated he would try to answer all questions put to him.

A Committee member asked the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change for an update on progress in supporting businesses in the community to lower emissions and ensure sustainable ways of working. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change referred to the A3 sustainable travel project with Surrey County Council which offered grants to local van delivery drivers to convert to an electric vehicle, the relaunch of the Sustainable Business Network in Guildford, the forthcoming publication of the Guildford Business Guide which had a section on moving towards a low carbon economy, the promotion of a number of green business courses, collaboration with Surrey County Council to use funding for a decarbonisation loan scheme, and promotion of the easit travel scheme.

In response to a question on progress to achieving net zero by 2030, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change noted the establishment of the Climate Change Board, the development of Borough-wide partnerships to decrease carbon emissions, the establishment of a 2019 carbon emission baseline, the identification of Council activities where carbon emissions can be reduced, the development of an action plan to achieve net zero across Council activities by 2030, and the adoption of the action plan by the Council. In addition, the meeting was advised of decreases in the Council's emissions and plans for the Council's website to have a dedicated Climate Change section.

IN response to a question, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change confirmed that an update on the Climate Change Action Plan would be presented annually to full Council.

In answer to a question about the installation of solar panels on Council land and the installation of electric vehicle charging points, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change advised that officers were looking to identify feasible sites for the installation of solar panels on Council assets and that detailed questions on the EV charging points were perhaps better directed to the officers involved in air quality or the portfolio holder responsible for air quality.

When asked about the funding of projects identified by the Climate Change Board, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change indicated that the non-committed Climate Change budget was cut for the current year only and the budget would be reinstated from April 2024 onwards. He stated that

Climate Change actions were taking place across the Council using existing budgets and resources.

In reply to the suggestion that air quality should perhaps be within the Environment and Climate Change portfolio, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change advised that a decision had been made to mainstream climate change across the Council and to align the portfolios of Lead Councillors as closely as possible with the remits of the executive heads of service. The Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change suggested the Committee ask individual Lead Councillors about climate change within their portfolio when they appeared before the Committee and indicated he did not consider himself responsible for driving climate change across the Council. The Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing indicated that the members of the Executive would discuss the issues raised and update Committee members.

In reply to a question about working with partners to achieve progress on reducing the reliance on petrol and diesel-powered vehicles, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change advised the meeting of the limited influence of the Council on the provision of bus services, including Park and Ride. He suggested that opposition to the London Road, Burpham to Guildford Active Travel Scheme was largely due to how the scheme was developed and introduced by Surrey County Council. The Committee was advised of the e-bike scheme and the setup funding it would receive from the Council, the University of Surrey, and Surrey County Council.

A Councillor asked the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change to identify the top three achievements since the Council's declaration of a Climate Change Emergency in 2019. In response, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change noted that communication of the Council's achievements had been poor. He then referred to the creation of a dedicated climate change officer post at the Council, the installation of solar panels at multi-storey car parks, the re-procurement of the Council's energy contract, and planning policies relating to EV charging points, cycling, and walking. The Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing reminded the meeting of the electrification of the Council's community meals and community transport fleets and sustainable initiatives involving the community wellbeing team based at The Hive.

In reply to a question from a Councillor, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change suggested the advantages of merging officer teams with Waverley Borough Council and noted the productive relationship with Surrey County Council. He reminded the Committee that the Council had a net zero carbon emissions goal of 2030, whereas the county council was aiming for 2050.

In response to a question on his support for the London Road, Burpham to Guildford Active Travel Scheme, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change indicated that his support for the scheme was not unequivocal as the design was not finalised and consultation results had not yet been taken into account.

In reply to a query from a Committee member, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change referred to the creation of jobs and development of skills within the local economy from initiatives such as the e-bike scheme.

A Committee member stated that fly-tipping in Ash had increased since residents had been prevented from using their closest recycling centre (in Hampshire) and a further increase in fly-tipping was expected following the closure of the recycling Bring Site in Ash Wharf. In response, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change indicated that an increase in fly-tipping was expected after the closure of the Bring Sites but that it would remain within the capacity of the Council to deal with.

In reply to a question about fly-tipping blocking drainage ditches and culverts and causing flooding, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change advised that all the services of the Bring Sites could be dealt with through household collections. He requested that any issues be reported to himself or the Interim Executive Head of Environmental Services.

In response to questions from a Committee member, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change confirmed the recent policy change affecting the provision of refuse sacks for town centre residents. With reference to the supply of refuse and recycling bins to residents and local developments, the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change stated that there were no immediate outstanding deliveries to new developments, officers were continuing to work through the delivery backlog on refuse and recycling bins, and every type of container was in stock.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change for attending and answering questions.

OS39 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) invited the Committee members to consider the work plan items attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Committee.

The Chairman requested Committee members submit key questions to inform the scope of the report on Community Services scheduled for the Committee's next meeting.

The Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing indicated that she would be referring matters to the Committee for investigation.

The meeting finished at 10.07 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman