

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of the virtual briefing meeting with South West Water for members of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillors and the public held Online via Zoom on 3 November 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.18 am

42 Declarations of interest

It was noted that all Members had an equal personal interest as customers of South West Water.

43 Chair's opening comments, welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed Mr Ian Lake, Head of Solution Development and Technical Performance, South West Water, to the meeting. The Chair expressed the hope that the meeting would continue the constructive dialogue between the Council and South West Water which had started when Mr Alan Burrows attended a meeting earlier in the year and continued on 2 November with a briefing meeting to consider beach and river water quality.

It was noted that no questions had been submitted for Mr Lake prior to the meeting.

44 Presentation by South West Water on planning issues followed by questions from Members of the Scrutiny Committee, Members and the public

Mr Lake introduced three colleagues who were participating in the meeting; Mr David Hardy, Strategic Wastewater Asset Manager, Ms Alison Tregale, Developer Relationship Manager and Ms Helen Steed, Pre-development Lead. Mr Lake welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Council and hoped that this would continue going forward.

The presentation included the following points:

- SWW as Regional Statutory Undertaker.
- An outline of the water market today.
- Developer choice with regard to construction of assets and adoption of assets, including the option for a NAV (New Appointments and Variations) whereby another water company can adopt assets on a development under licence as a Statutory Undertaker. An example of this is the Goodmores Farm development in Exmouth.
- A developer's right to connect to the nearest size water main or sewer of a similar size or bigger.
- An outline of who funds what element of waste water handling. As part of this, the developer also pays to SWW an infrastructure charge which is a standard charge levied on all properties connecting to SWW's system for the first time and which allows SWW to invest in upgrading its assets to take account of future development.
- An overview of the pre-development process including the predicted costs of developing a site, how developers are planning to handle surface water adhering to the SUDS hierarchy, monitoring of planning applications across the region, supply and demand planning tool for development proposals above ten dwellings, liaison with the asset management and drinking water supply modelling teams within SWW.

- Current challenges for SWW including the introduction by OfWat of adoption codes which also included the adoption of SUDS for the first time, with an emphasis by SWW on the SUDS hierarchy for dealing with surface water drainage.
- With regard to development at Cranbrook, SWW has worked with the Consortium to agree connections and what upgrades to its assets SWW needs to make to facilitate connections. SWW meets with the Consortium every other week to agree the process for adoption of the sewers, excluding the SUDS which are managed by the Town Council.
- Regarding drainage and wastewater management, SWW is now under a new duty to produce a long term plan for the next 25 years, the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan, which has recently been out for consultation. This plan is a requirement for every water company and assists other agencies working in the waste water and flooding sector. SWW acknowledges that collaborative working with other agencies, including local councils, is needed to achieve the ambitious targets in the plan. SWW has identified an investment requirement of £8.5billion over the next 25 years to achieve the plan. The plan is available on the SWW website.
- Feedback on the consultation showed a desire for urgent improvements using traditional engineered solutions, with nature based solutions prioritised afterwards. Stakeholders were of the view that not all costs should be borne by the water companies and bill payers.
- EDDC could assist and engage with SWW on issues such as improving water efficiency [see SWW website], consideration of handling of surface water discharges and support with planning conditions.

Responses to questions from members of the Scrutiny Committee included the following points:

- The recent SWW water butt offer was well received and a supply issue has meant a delay in delivery.
- The standard SWW charge per new property is a fixed charge per property of approximately £100 for clean water and approximately £700 for foul water connection.
- Sewerage networks are upgraded according to need coming from new developments and additional capacity can be built in to existing assets.
- Sewage is not moved around in tankers, but sludge, a bi-product of sewage treatment is moved around to specific centres in order to be used most effectively.

Responses to questions from Councillors who are not members of the Committee included:

- EDDC building control service is one option for developers to deliver building control on site, however, most larger developments use external inspectors to check infrastructure. EDDC remains the enforcement body for building control.
- The SWW team responsible for reviewing planning applications currently has twelve members and reviews every application which affects the SWW assets.
- SWW would welcome being a statutory consultee on planning applications and is working at national level on many of the key issues of common concern.
- Strategic sludge treatment plants are located around the region and best use is made of them by moving sludge around. The current strategy of moving sludge around plants is under review.

The Chair thanked Mr Lake and the South West Water team for attending and for their presentation.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

M Chapman

O Davey

J Kemp (Vice-Chair)
E Rylance

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Arnott
B De Saram
P Faithfull
P Millar
E Wragg

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

M Allen
J Bailey
A Bruce
C Gardner
S Hawkins
D Key
H Parr
T Woodward

.....

.....