

# SOUTH HAMS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



**Minutes** of a meeting of the **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held  
on  
**Thursday, 21 December 2023** **Thursday, 21st December, 2023** at **2.00 pm** at the  
**Council Chamber - Follaton House**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Hawkins  
**Vice Chairman**

Cllr Dennis	Cllr Dommett
Cllr Jackson	Cllr Lawford
Cllr Munoz	Cllr Oram (as Substitute)
Cllr Pannell (as Substitute)	Cllr Penfold
Cllr Presswell	Cllr Steele

**In attendance:**

Councillors (via Teams):

Cllr Birch	Cllr Edie
Cllr Hopwood	Cllr O'Callaghan

Officers:  
Director – Customer Service & Delivery  
Director – Strategy & Governance  
Assistant Director – Strategy (via Teams)  
Senior Democratic Services Officer

13.

**Minutes**

O&S.13/23

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 October 2023 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following change - Cllr Birch was in attendance and not Cllr Brazil.

Regarding the outstanding action on the list of outside bodies funded by SHDC to be circulated to the committee. Officers reported that they were updating the list of partners that SHDC engage with and would circulate to the committee when completed.

14. **Declarations of Interest**

O&S.14/23

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting, but there were none made.

15. **Public Forum**

O&S.15/23

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, the Chairman informed that no questions had been received for consideration.

16. **Executive Forward Plan**

O&S.16/23

A question was raised on the significance of the item highlighted in red. It was reported that this item was being moved to the March Executive meeting.

17. **Environment Agency and SW Water (Quality of River and Beach water)**

O&S.17/23

The Chair welcomed Clarissa Newell, Environment Agency and Alan Burrows, SW Water to the meeting. The Environment Agency (EA) and SW Water (SWW) provided presentations.

In discussion, particular reference was made to:

- The EA regularly monitor the bathing waters, and this was undertaken weekly.
- Dogs were banned from beaches during the summer season and they undertake additional monitoring to determine if E.coli was present.
- They take samples of bathing water for analysis and always from the same place to build up a history of data. They were also undertaking pilot work outside of the bathing season for testing.
- SWW were recreating new resources for reservoirs but were also encouraging people to reduce their demand. In 2022 demand for water was excessive.
- SWW were investigating leakages and working across the wider southwest to improve services and address leakages.
- The service level agreement in place would determine how quickly a leak would be responded to, it depended on the leak and the number of properties affected. The SWW website shows the number of leaks in the area.

- Water bills were increasing and it was estimated that household bills would increase by 7.5%.
- SWW recognised the cost of living and support was provided to customers, also advice provided on the website.
- Extensive work and engagement with the farming community regarding pesticides and run-off and reducing risks.
- Pennon Group covers different elements and not just SWW and stakeholders expect a return on their investments.
- The water industry was privatised in 1989 and since then standards had considerably improved, if nationalised they would have to compete with statutory services such as the NHS.
- The EA monitor climate emergency such as salmon moving up rivers and flood modelling for following years and have long term plans in place to safeguard the environment.
- They cannot remove the risk of flooding and local authorities ensure residents were prepared for flooding, reviewing communities at risk and how to adapt.
- SW Water PR24 Plan outlines their clear commitment to reaching net zero by 2030 such as electrifying their fleet, looking at renewable energy and the implications of climate change.
- The recent fines incurred by SWW were paid direct to central Government and the local area would not benefit from that money.
- They were increasing the capacity for sewage treatment but were having to remove items from sewage treatments that shouldn't be there. They were undertaking a large piece of work looking at overflow systems and working with communities when issues were raised.
- OFWAT highlighted lack of investment and it was reported within a five-year period were spending above and maintaining networks, however, need to spend £3bn to meet the new Government targets and projecting they could achieve this.
- Water saving devices were available for domestic households to help preserve water supplies.
- The inspectorate requires SWW to regularly test the quality of drinking water. Drinking water in the SW was regarded as the best in the industry.
- The South Milton outlet, leakages onto the beach and signage to warn people using the beach. SWW reported that they met with residents last week and felt that clarity was provided at that meeting. It was not the responsibility of SWW to provide signage, however they were happy to provide wording for the signage. Officers reported that SHDC could cover the signage subject to landowners' permission.

Questions were raised on the percentage loss through leakage and what SWW insurance for domestic households covered and responses would be provided by SWW outside of the meeting. There were also a number of questions submitted by the public for responses from the EA and SWW.

The Chair thanked the Environment Agency and South West Water for their attendance at the meeting.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the presentations from the Environment Agency and SW Water and request that a response is provided for the additional questions provided.

18. **Devon Building Control Partnership**

O&S.19/23

The Executive Member for Economic Development; Commercial Strategy and Governance provided an overview of Devon Building Control Partnership.

SHDC has an obligation to deliver a building control service and a decision was taken by SHDC to work in partnership with West Devon Borough Council and Teignbridge District Council to provide this service. The administration for this service was undertaken by Teignbridge. Each local authority has two members that sit on the Partnership Board and the Board meets quarterly.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

Due to the loss of connection with the Devon Building Control Partnership, it was agreed that this agenda item would be deferred to a future meeting.

19. **Performance Report - July to November 2023**

O&S.20/23

The Executive Member for Customer Service; Improvement; IT and Digital Services presented the report.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that:

- With regard to the number of missed bins, a revamp of bin rounds to take place over next couple of months and expect normal levels at that time. The Executive would receive a report on waste in March and would also include resident feedback.
- The employment estate occupancy rates did not include spaces for let at Follaton House.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

The Committee noted:

1. the Key Performance Indicators for April 2023 – November 2023

2. the intention to review some Key Performance Indicators to provide more helpful information for Members in the future.

20. **Task and Finish Group Updates**

O&S.21/23

- Reconvene the EA and SWW Research Task and Finish group in the New Year to reflect and analyse the response from today's meeting. Cllr Munoz to be added to the task and finish group.
- Fusion Task and Finish membership confirmed and meetings to take place in the New Year.
- Planning Enforcement Task and Finish. The Chair of the task and finish reported that 3 meetings held with enforcement officers which resulted in a series of recommendations and review of the Enforcement Plan. A report presented and approved by the Executive and Full Council.

21. **O&S Annual Work Programme**

O&S.21/23

The Committee agreed the following items for the work programme:

February:

- Fusion - Task and Finish Group to convene following this meeting.
- Sustainable South Hams
- CSP

March:

- Devon Building Control Partnership

At the Executive meeting on 21 September – a request was made to O&S to review the Local Lettings Policy (minute below)

- (a) With regard to the properties at St Anns Chapel, some Members asked that every step be taken to ensure that these were allocated to local residents. Officers made reference to the Housing Act and specifically the 'reasonable preference criteria' and committed to providing a Briefing Note to Members outside of this meeting. In addition, the Leader asked that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee give consideration to undertaking a review into the Local Lettings Policy;

The Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee also informed that it was intention to ask that his Committee undertake a review into the St Anns Chapel project to ascertain what (if any) lessons could be learned.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

The Chair and Vice-Chair in consultation with the Lead Officer to agree to the workplan and Membership to be sought to review the Local Lettings Policy

The Meeting concluded at 4.33 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**

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