

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 27 March 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **27 March 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr P A Capon (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs R Brown (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R S Allen
Cllr C A Hungate

Cllr P K Savill
Cllr Mrs M A Weir

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R A Amner and P F A Webster.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllrs T G Cutmore and T Livings.

NON-MEMBERS ATTENDING

Cllr Mrs T J Capon

DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICERS PRESENT

G Woolhouse	Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
D Timson	Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
S Worthington	Committee Administrator

ALSO ATTENDING

P Gibbs	Anglian Water Services
J Mitchell	Anglian Water Services
A Bates	Stambridge Parish Council
T Coulson	Stambridge Parish Council
D Flynn	Stambridge Parish Council
C Hayes	Stambridge Parish Council
J Hayes	Stambridge Parish Council
R Bailey	Sludgewatch

159 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 18 and March 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 27 March 2003

160 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs P A and Mrs T J Capon declared a personal interest in items 6 and 7 by virtue of living in Stambridge.

161 ANGLIAN WATER SERVICES – LIAISON ISSUES

The Committee welcomed representatives from Anglian Water Services who had been invited to discuss issues relating to odour controls at Stambridge Sewage Treatment Works and to surface water flooding.

Odour Controls at Stambridge Sewage Treatment Works

The representatives from Anglian Water Services informed the Committee of some short-term and long-term proposals aimed at addressing the ongoing odour problems at Stambridge.

In the short-term, the company proposed that use of the presses be discontinued and that the centrifuge unit be moved within the building, to be fully connected to odour control equipment.

In the long-term, the company was exploring different ways of treating sludge and ideally would wish to find an alternative outlet for the sludge treatment process currently taking place in Stambridge.

Responding to a concern raised by Members relating to the safety of sewage pipes running beneath farmed fields and problems associated with checking the pipes, the Anglian Water representatives confirmed that these pipes could not be physically inspected. However, the flow of the main pipe bringing sludge from Southend on Sea to Stambridge was monitored; this would indicate whether there were any problems such as leaks or blockages.

In response to a question relating to N-Viro, the representatives confirmed that there were no future plans to use a similar process to N-Viro for the treatment of sludge at Stambridge. There would, furthermore, be no lime treatment at Stambridge.

Responding to a further question relating to the long delay in providing odour control at Stambridge, the representatives claimed that most sewage treatment works exhibit some odour and that it was almost impossible to eliminate such odours; the treatment works at Stambridge, however, was not considered to be odorous.

In response to a concern raised about the level of investment in the site, representatives said that an undertaking had been given some time ago that the old control unit would be removed at the end of its lease period, at the end of

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 27 March 2003

February 2003, and be replaced with a more permanent system. Significant investment had been made by the company in Stambridge, within the level defined by the industry regulator, and the company was continuing to invest there.

Responding to a request for assurances that any systems installed be properly monitored, the representatives confirmed that there was no standard practice and insufficient resources to monitor sites over 24 hours.

In response to a concern raised about hydrogen sulphide, representatives stated that the company utilised a monitor for recording levels of hydrogen sulphide and that emissions at Stambridge were low.

Concern was expressed that the structure of the de-watering building had failed within 4 years to the extent that it required a complete re-fit. In addition it was perceived that the mobile centrifuge, with its small belt press, was inadequate for the volume of sewage it needed to treat. It was mounted externally, not connected to any odour control kit; the odour around it was extreme, it was claimed.

Responding to an enquiry as to when the centrifuge would be placed in the de-watering building, the representatives agreed to write to the Chairman of this Committee within one month providing a date.

In response to a Member question, the representatives confirmed that the treatment of sewage at Stambridge, by activated sludge, was one of two standard treatments around the country; the treatment of sludge by belt presses and centrifuge was also commonplace.

In response to a further enquiry, the Anglian Water representatives informed the Committee that they were unable to confirm a date when long-term proposals relating to alternative sewage treatments for Stambridge would be known. Members subsequently felt that the representatives should be invited to attend a future meeting of this Committee to discuss any such proposals.

On a motion moved by Cllr Mrs R Brown and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore it was:-

Resolved

That Mr J Mitchell and Mr P Gibbs be invited to attend a meeting of this Committee in 3 months' time to discuss a project plan for the Stambridge Sewage Treatment Works. (HHHCC)

Responding to a Member enquiry about responsibility for investigating other potential sources of the odour problem in Stambridge, Officers confirmed that this

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 27 March 2003

was within the remit of the Environmental Health Officers. Officers had not, however, been able to substantiate any complaints of odours which were significant. Most, but not all, visits have taken place within normal office hours.

Surface Water Flooding Problems

In response to Member concern raised about the ongoing problem of raw sewage flooding into and around homes in Barling since February 2001 the Anglian Water representatives confirmed that the refurbishment of the Kimberley Road pumping station was included in the company's investment programme for 2003/2004. The intention would be to extend the rising main to join with a new rising main from Wakering Common to the Southend works. This would, however, be subject to a satisfactory survey conducted by engineers. Representatives would inform the Ward Member for Barling & Sutton of any potential problems highlighted by the survey.

Responding to a further concern raised about effluence at the Tower Caravan Park in Hullbridge and requesting a timetable for addressing the issue, the representatives confirmed that they would respond to the responsible Officer on this issue next week.

162 PROPOSALS FOR THE STATUTORY CONTROL OF ODOURS AND OTHER NUISANCES FROM SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS – CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care summarising the main points in the consultation paper from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the proposals for the statutory controls of nuisances from sewage treatment works in England. Comments on the consultation document were required by 28 March 2003.

On a motion moved by Cllr P K Savill and seconded by Cllr Mrs M A Weir it was:-

Resolved

That DEFRA be advised that this Council supports Option 2 of the consultative document, 'The Extension of the Statutory Nuisance regime to include odours and other nuisances from sewage treatment works'. The development of a 'voluntary code of practice' is also seen as a benefit that would assist in consistent operation and enforcement. (HHHCC)

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chairman

Date