

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING AND PLANNING SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 31st January, 2024

Present: Cllr D A S Davis (Chair). Cllr D W King (Vice-Chair), Cllr L Athwal, A G Bennison (substitute), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr D Harman, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr S A Hudson (substitute), Cllr A Mehmet, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr R V Roud and Cllr D Thornewell

In attendance: Councillors F A Hoskins and Mrs A S Oakley were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Virtual: Councillors M A Coffin, S Crisp, M R Rhodes, K B Tanner and M Taylor participated via MS Teams in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Bell and P M Hickmott.

HP 24/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute Members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr A Bennison substituted for Cllr P Hickmott
- Cllr S Hudson substituted for Cllr S Bell

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these Councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

HP 24/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

HP 24/3 FUTURE IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES - WATER COMPANIES

Members received a presentation from the Head of Communications and the Head of Service Management, South East Water on the impact of Covid and climate change on recent events and the company's Water Resource Management Plan which looked ahead into the future to secure water supplies. Particular attention was made to the following:

- The long term Water Resource Management Plan proposed new reservoirs in Broad Oak and Arlington, considered how the company could protect the environment by reducing the abstraction

- from some catchments and targeted significant reductions on leakage.
- During lockdown, there had been a 20% increase in household water consumption and the demand had been met by increasing production and working production assets harder, however this had reduced the margin for error in the network as there was now less spare capacity. The increased demand was not factored into the PR19 business and therefore inhibited investment in short term, however the South East Water were building in more schemes to improve resilience to changing patterns.
 - Various projects had been completed since December 2022 to improve resilience, including works at Ryarsh, Pembury, Aylesford and Bloodshots, and significant progress had been made in the provision of alternate water during incidents and a complete review of all alternative water practices was being undertaken.
 - Following the incident in December 2022, the incident communication tool, 'In Your Area' had been deemed no longer suitable for purpose and an alternative 'Aqualerter' had been launched.
 - In terms of network capacity, the revised Water Resources Management Plan had been published, which detailed the need to increase the water resources available across South East Water regions, whilst working with customers to reduce water consumption.
 - The challenges of sustained heat waves were recognised and the use of water butts encouraged.
 - Members were asked to remind vulnerable residents to register for the priority service operated by South East Water.

During discussion it was explained that South East Water had a programme of water main replacement and were focused on managing water pressures to reduce the amount of leakage network, and attention was brought to the difficulties the company faced in terms of road closures and associated disruption. The possibility of returning grey water to the ground in order to replenish water supplies was raised and noted that although the network was not in place and consideration would need to be given to customer preferences and the financial challenges, there was an opportunity for South East Water to work with developers to determine how rain water could be used on new developments.

In terms of the Local Plan, reassurance was sought that the extra demand would be met and raised the importance of the water supply infrastructure being in place prior to the development of houses to ensure water efficiency.

The Chairman took the opportunity to explain that Southern Water had agreed to attend a future meeting of the Committee and requested that Members provide details of areas of interest in advance of the meeting.

HP 24/4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman invited Members of the Committee to identify items for the work programme. A request was received for the matter of Housing Allocations to be added to the work programme due to concerns regarding the backlog of applications.

HP 24/5 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters considered in private.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm