

Notice of Motion (Procedure Rule 12.1) – Council 12 December 2023

Cllrs Kiehl, Liz Townsend, Murray and Williams.

Disruption to water supply in Waverley and Guildford and raw sewage overflows / storm overflows

(1) That, Waverley Borough Council

(a) notes the disruption to potable water supply across large parts of the boroughs of Waverley and Guildford that commenced on Saturday 4 November 2023, the ongoing water supply issues in Cranleigh and surrounding villages, and the repeated discharge of raw sewage into the river network;

(b) welcomes all efforts from across the community to support people, and in particular those who are vulnerable, in accessing alternative supplies of water during the period of disruption;

(c) acknowledges the legitimate concerns of residents about raw sewage being regularly discharged into our river network from Sewage Treatment Works and from Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) and from raw sewage back flowing onto their private property and highway network;

(d) is concerned by elements of Thames Water's response to the disruption, in particular, but not limited to -

(i) poor communication with those impacted in the community, and

(ii) its limited actions to ensure the vulnerable or those unable to queue for water, were able to access alternative supplies,

(iii) its delayed environmental clean-up operations.

(e) condemns the chronic underinvestment in local infrastructure which risks the possibility of future water shortages and increased raw sewage discharges.

(2) Waverley Borough Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the leadership of Thames Water, to request -

(a) a detailed report of the cause of the disruption to water supply and the steps taken to resolve the matter and mitigate the impact;

(b) a detailed report on the instances and quantity of raw sewage discharges into the river network and at CSOs over the past 4 years and the investment plans to resolve this;

(c) assurances that residents and businesses will receive timely and full compensation for the disruption to water supply and sewage spills;

(d) an improved communications plan for informing the local community should a similar disruption to water supply occur again and/or raw sewage incidents; and

(e) a reassessment of its processes, procedures, and criteria for ensuring the vulnerable or those unable to queue are able to access alternative supplies of water in the event of a disruption.

(3) Waverley Borough Council requests that a temporary Executive Working Group is set up to review matters affecting the local community regarding water and sewage infrastructure issues.

(4) Waverley Borough Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to commission an investigation into the most recent water supply incident and agency response, in addition to the requirements for water companies to record and report sewage spills onto private property and the public highway through their assets.