

Council, 27 October 2022, 19:30

Motion with notice

Council procedure rule 2.17

Motion: The cumulative impact of emergency sewerage discharges

Councillor Chandler will move the motion. Councillor Sinden will second.

This Council notes that:

- Residents are deeply concerned about water quality and the impact of regular wastewater discharge, which includes untreated sewage, into our local rivers and the impact on wildlife and on human health.
- Emergency sewage spills have become common. Releasing sewage into rivers is no longer an emergency-only situation occurring as a result of severe storms but is now occurring on a regular basis even in 'normal' rainfall, reflecting a growing overload on the wastewater system that is required to treat sewage.
- East Surrey was the worst affected area in Surrey served by Thames Water according to data on 2021 discharges collated by the Rivers Trust (<https://theriverstrust.org/key-issues/sewage-in-rivers>).
- In Reigate and Banstead this included Earlswood STW near Redhill which spilt 98 times for a total of 1,778 hours into Earlswood Brook. Other sites in the borough were Lee Street in Horley where the sewer storm overflow spilled 69 times for a total of 1,119 hours, discharging into the Mole. The sewer storm overflow in Albury Road, Merstham spilled 30 times for a total of 353 hours, discharging into the Merstham Stream. The sewer storm overflow in Burstow spilled 112 times for a total of 1,025 hours, discharging into the Burstow Stream.

This Council agrees that:

- There is clear evidence of poor water quality (Thames Water Draft Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan DWMP – Surrey Catchment p.5) and evidence of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewage overload' in our borough.
- The Council has an obligation to protect its rivers, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution through the development management process. Planning authorities have the right to independently assess the cumulative impact of new development on both water quality and pollution.
- Reigate & Banstead Borough Council's Development Management Plan (DMP) includes a section for Sewage and Wastewater Infrastructure requirements that

states that none were identified relating to the developments listed in the local plan (DMP p216).

- Claims by major planning applications that there is sufficient capacity in the adjacent foul sewer network may be correct within current legislation but conflict with the scale of sewage spills that are occurring and the spill targets that Thames Water is setting in its Draft DWMP.

This Council resolves to:

- Monitor the extent, number and the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage on our local rivers, wildlife and the health of our residents.
- Require Thames Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to detail the number and duration of downstream sewage discharges into local rivers and whether this meets the spill targets in the Draft DWMP.
- Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses in line with DMP section INF1 paragraph 4, including the cumulative impact of development on sewage outflow into watercourses, the number and duration of sewage spills reported by the Environment Agency and whether Thames Water are meeting their spill targets and the infrastructure improvements planned to enable them.