

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SOUTH WEST WATER LIAISON GROUP

Thursday 4 December 2014

Present:-

Councillor Lesley Robson (Chair)
Councillor Keith Owen

Jay Harris, South West Water
Mary Evans, Residents Representative
Nigel Thomas-Childs, Environment Agency
Simon Ruddy, Exeter City Council
Jo Quinnell – Exeter City Council

9

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Kevin Bingham, Simon Lane and Councillor Newby.

10

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2014 were agreed.

11

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The revised Terms of Reference were circulated, which now ensured that representatives from the Environment Agency were included.

The Group agreed the new Terms of Reference.

12

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

13

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Jay Harris reported that there had been a scraper failure on tank no. 1 on 17 September. It had been fully operational since 7 November.

On 17 November work had started on site to clean the second digester. This had the highest risk of odour when draining. These works had been finalised last week.

The second digester was now empty and scaffold would be erected to ensure it is structurally sound. The sludge processing capability through digestion was now reduced as a result of this.

Photographs of the sewers in Admiral Way were circulated. These were relatively new sewers and showed the build up of rag waste caught across the chains. Gas detectors were also set off when the manhole covers were opened which indicates an odour. The chains were installed across manholes for protection, but due to safety measures now in place, these were no longer required and could potentially be removed as they no longer serve a purpose.

The industry is putting some pressure on the use of 'flushable' wipes, and SWW were looking at a long term strategy on the impact of wipes etc that are perceived to be flushable by the general public. They are looking at pilot areas to engage with communities on the issue.

Jay Harris reported on the communications plan. Service representatives had been newly appointed to SWW. Although they would be based at Countess Wear, they would cover a wider area.

Their main role would be the management of customers, and they would be undertaking a door-to-door campaign today asking customers if they wished to sign up for text alerts. Jay advised that they would liaise closely with the new team to keep them informed of any works taking place to try to be more pro-active with residents.

Any incoming contacts to the system regarding odours would be monitored. If a complaint is received, a text can then be sent out to customers advising that an investigation is taking place as they will have the capacity to do so.

The cases can be filtered down by postcode and the type of contact, eg odour.

One of the service representatives would be invited to the next meeting to discuss in more detail.

Reference was made to odours in Lower Wear Road. Jay advised that technicians would be carrying out a CCTV survey to try to identify the issues in that area.

The draft report from the Odour Survey carried out by Cornwall College had been received. This covered the period from April to September. Cornwall would be visiting again next week to do the final download of data as the timeframe had been extended to December.

Jay Harris would review the draft report, and suggested that Cornwall College be invited to the next meeting to discuss the findings.

Two more operators had recently been introduced on site, bringing the total to five. This would ensure that sufficient routine maintenance takes place.

14

COMPLAINTS

Residents who had submitted complaints in the past had been invited to a tour of the Works on 2 September. Four residents attended.

It was interesting to note that those attending did not associate the background odour to that experienced in their homes. A tanker discharge was taking place at the time, and this seemed to be the closest odour.

It was anticipated that a further tour would take place in the New Year, and SWW were keen to add these as regular events.

The cleaning of the storm tanks is a manual process at present, but SWW were looking at introducing an automated process where they could set the operation to take place during the night to reduce the opportunity for odours.

85 complaints had been received to date this year compared to 113 last year. The increase in October was attributed to the problems with the scraper. 59% of

complaints had been from six residents, and the highest volume of complaints were in the area of Wear Barton Road.

15

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Topsham Recreation Ground

It was reported at the last meeting that a section of the burst pipe at the Topsham Recreation Ground had been sent away for analysis. Jay Harris advised that he had not yet received the results, but would pass these on when available.

Topsham Footpath

Mary Evans referred to the green sludge accumulating on the public right of way at Topsham. When the tide recedes it is leaving the green sludge and the public are climbing the wall to avoid the public path. A sample was taken by a resident, and Jay Harris would check whether SWW had received this.

Nigel Thomas-Childs advised that the Environment Agency hotline should be called when the sludge is present as it was likely to be some form of algae. An officer can collect a sample and investigate in the laboratory. The number is 0800 807060.

Scrapers

Jay Harris reported on systems telemetry installed which would ensure that if there is a fail, the process stops. Jay was also asked if he could also provide flow data, which would be useful as complaints are received during the night and analysis could be undertaken to see how this ties in.

16

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday 18 March at 2.30pm.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 10.50 am)

Chair

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SOUTH WEST WATER LIAISON GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

- (i) To facilitate the exchange of information relating to the operation of the permitted waste water treatment works operated by South West Water at Countess Wear, Exeter, between management of South West Water, Councillors & officers of Exeter City Council (the Council), designated residents from residential areas adjoining the plant and the Environment Agency (Regulator)
- (ii) To report upon and examine instances of complaints arising from the site or the carriage of materials to and from the site, or other relevant occurrences that come to the attention of the parties; to foster a mutual understanding of the reasons for these instances and occurrences, and the impact on residents.
- (iii) To examine reasonably practicable means of preventing or mitigating any negative impact from these instances and occurrences, and to develop an effective monitoring and reporting system concerning these matters.
- (iii) To make suggestions for the improvement of the environmental conditions relevant to the operations of the permitted process having regard to the current Sector Guidance note.

Constitution

- (i) One Councillor drawn from each of the following wards – Priory and Topsham wards respectively, to represent the residents of within those wards.
- (ii) The Chair to be chosen from one of these two Councillors.
- (iii) Representatives from South West Water
- (iv) Up to 2 local residents from each of the wards of Priory and Topsham, to be nominated by the Ward Councillors serving each of those wards (N.B. nominations may be put by all ward Councillors, and no more than 4 nominated residents may sit on the Group in total). Nominated residents shall represent their ward for at least a 12 month term.
- (v) Officers from the Office of the Assistant Director Environment of Exeter City Council.
- (vi) Officers from the Environment Agency who are the regulator of the site
- (vii) The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing at his or her discretion
- (viii) The Group has the discretion to nominate additional members to the group, as appropriate, by a majority decision (the Chair having a casting vote).
- (ix) The Group will meet no less than twice a year, and may convene additional meetings as it deems appropriate.
- (x) Meetings will take place at Countess Wear waste water treatment works unless agreed otherwise by the Group.
- (xi) The Council will provide secretarial support to the Group including the timely distribution of agendas and minutes.

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