

**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

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**APOLOGIES**

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

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY 2014**

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

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**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.

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**MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

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**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.

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## **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.

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### **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.

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### **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