

**Council – 3 April 2024**

**Public Questions and answers:**

**1. From Ms Kate Arnold to Councillor J Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Otterpool Park**

On behalf of all Newington and Peene residents, I would like some clear and concise answers regarding a seriously disruptive issue taking place within 'The Street', Newington, Folkestone. Can the Leader tell us when the 24 hour/day Sewage Tankers will stop driving through Newington Village and why we have had to endure it for 4 months now?

**THE MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE MEETING, AND THEREFORE THE QUESTION WAS NOT ANSWERED. HOWEVER, THE WRITTEN RESPONSE BELOW WAS PROVIDED.**

**ANSWER:**

Thank you, Ms Arnold for your question.

Let me start by saying that this Council has no authority, control or influence on Southern Water, we can only advocate on behalf of our residents, their customers. I have many issues with Southern Water's performance, I recently signed a letter addressed to OFWAT the water regulator, along with many other Councils, asking OFWAT to take legal action against Southern Water because of their consistent failure to meet their customer's needs. Last year OFWAT fined Southern Water £91M for similar failures.

With regard to your specific question, I wrote to Southern Water, who have given a detailed response to your question. Rather than read it in full, I will summarise the main points and I will ask our Committee Services Team to include Southern Water's full response in the minutes. If you are happy to leave your email address with the Clerk, I am happy to write to you including my correspondence with Southern Water.

Southern Water respond that the tanker movements through the village are to transport excessive groundwater that is finding its way into the local sewer network in Newington and Peene.

Southern Water report that the local sewer network is over 60 years old and needs extensive relining works, which is why ground water is infiltrating into the sewers. The heavy rainfall experienced over recent months has only added to the problem and increased the need to pump the excess water into tankers and transport it through the village to be disposed of elsewhere.

Southern Water confirm that the tankers are taking the wastewater to the Range Road Wastewater Pumping Station (WPS) in Hythe.

Southern Water go on to state that whilst survey works are planned for the local sewers as first stage; the full relining works to the sewers will take, and I quote, 'considerable time' and no clear date is given when this work will start or finish. There is also the increased strain on the Range Road Pumping Station from the increased transported wastewater.

At the other end of the tanker journey, the people who live in St Leonard's Rd in Hythe, are being kept awake at night with many tankers loaded with sewage driving down this narrow residential street on route to the Range Rd pumping station.

I would like to thank Southern Water for responding promptly to the question. The candour in their response is appreciated, if not welcome. However, and not for the first time, we find our local community bearing the brunt of years of under investment in the water infrastructure. The council will continue to advocate and make the case for greater investment from Southern Water to resolve the local flooding pressures as well as the urgent turnaround needed in bathing water quality along our coast.

**THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WAS ALSO PROVIDED:**

Response received from Southern Water on 28/3/24.

What is the reason?

The issue in Newington is groundwater infiltration, due to the extreme levels of rain in recent months. The pipes have not become faulty recently, but the way they were laid 60+ years ago means groundwater is finding its way in the sewer network.

Specifically in Newington, there is lots of sewer relining work planned which will help reduce groundwater. Surveys are planned to take place to determine the worst areas for infiltration in the area, but it will take a considerable amount of time to reline all of the affected areas. Therefore we have to prioritise the worst affected and do what we can to reduce the impact.

The groundwater issues are weather related and using last week as an example, we didn't need tanker movements due to the dry period. However, tankers will be required during periods of wet weather.

Where are they coming from and going to?

The tankers are specifically coming from Newington and Peene, where we are experiencing the groundwater issues.

They are going to Range Road Wastewater Pumping Station (WPS), which is a treatment station and is permitted to take wastewater flows from within the catchment. All tanker movement taken to Range Road are coming from the local area.

How long will this continue?

Unfortunately, we are unable to put a timescale on how long these tanker movements will be required for currently due to the extreme amount of rain we've had in recent months.

We require a consistent period of warmer dry weather, which will help dry out the ground and lower groundwater levels.

#### Range Road WPS

Separately to the Newington query, I wanted to confirm that tanker movements being taken to Range Road WPS are coming from either Newington or Duck Street. Both of these areas are from within the catchment which would naturally pump to the site anyway. We cannot and will not take flows out of a particular catchment to a different site. Therefore, Range Road is not receiving tankers from the wider area.