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Angela Hutchings
Chief Executive

AGENDA

**Policy and Scrutiny
Committee:**

ENVIRONMENT

Date and Time:

Tuesday, 31st October 2023 at 7.00 pm

Venue:

Council Chamber

Membership:

**Councillors Thomas (Chairman), Ainsley, Campagna,
Edwards, Howlett, Lillis, J.A. Payne, Mrs J. Payne, Mrs J.
Thornton and Walter**

**Cabinet Member
attending:**

Councillor Fuller - Environment

Officers attending:

**Ann Horgan - Scrutiny Officer
Trudie Bragg - Head of Environment**

Enquiries:

Loretta Hill – Ext. 2427

PART I

(Business to be taken in public)

1. Apologies

2. Members' Interests

3. Notes of Previous meetings

Notes are included for information on the meeting held on 30.8. 2023. The meeting scheduled for 16.10.2023 has been rearranged to Monday 20 November.

4. Plans and Actions Anglian Water and Environment Agency

This meeting has been arranged to meet with representatives from Anglian Water.

Separate arrangements are being made for a meeting with the Environment Agency.

A request had been made by a member of the Committee that Anglian Water and the Environment Agency be asked to attend a meeting of the Committee to be arranged in October for plans and Actions regarding various issues at locations in the Borough.

These include Richmond Park, Canvey Lake, Ferry Road Benfleet, Danesfield Road, Saxon Close and Watlington Road.

Before proceeding with arrangements for the meeting, so that Members would have information for consideration before the meeting, Anglian Water was asked for responses to the matters raised in advance to inform the meeting.

The response from Anglian Water has been circulated and is attached.

Agendas and Minutes can be viewed at www.castlepoint.gov.uk

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NOTES OF ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

30th August 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Thomas (Chair), Ainsley, Edwards, Howlett, Lillis, J.A Payne, Mrs J Payne, Mrs J Thornton, and Walter.

Councillors Fuller Cabinet Member for Environment and Savage Cabinet Member for People and Community.

Officers: Trudie Bragg, Head of Environment, Ann Horgan, Scrutiny Officer,

ALSO PRESENT: Palmer and A.Thornton.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Campagna.

1. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

2. CAR PARKING REVIEW – RESUMED

Consideration of this review was deferred at the meeting held on 16th August 2023 to allow time to consider information presented at the meeting.

The Committee was reminded that key objectives of the previous review were:

- Ensure the provision of well-maintained and safe off-street parking facilities through improved asset management arrangements;
- Ensure a consistent charging regime is in place which is affordable and fair;
- Support local businesses by ensuring that Council operated car parks are being used for their intended purpose;
- Ensure suitable conditions are in place to control usage of Council operated car parks;
- Realise maximum benefit from the Council's car parking assets and to recognise their potential for development as brown field sites;
- Ease traffic congestion by ensuring that off-street parking provision and controls align with on- street parking availability and controls;
- Provide effective and targeted parking enforcement; and
- Effectively promote Council operated car parking provision in the borough.

Since the original meeting, the Local MP had written to the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to consider adjustments to the charging regime at Rectory Road Hadleigh and Oak Road Canvey Island to assist local businesses.

All papers circulated previously were before the Committee.

At its meeting on 19 July 2023 in considering arrangements for the future management of the Knightswick Car Park Cabinet decided that enforcement of parking terms and conditions was included within the scope of the Service Level Agreement with Chelmsford City Council for off-street parking enforcement. Cabinet had also tasked the Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee with reviewing the car parking terms and conditions for the Knightswick Car Park as part of its wider off - street parking review and to report back to Cabinet with its recommendations.

A report was due to be made to Cabinet in September that the amendments can be made to the off – street parking places order to incorporate the Knightswick car park and any other changes be factored into the Council's budget setting process.

Given the timescale the Committee decided to recommend to Cabinet that the off – street parking places order covering all council car parks should be amended to include the Knightswick Car Park with no change to the existing conditions of use or parking tariffs.

With regard to the detailed review of the operation of all the Council's car parks including the Knightswick car park, the Committee decided to establish a cross party Task and Finish Group including Cabinet members to review the detailed operation of all the council car parks and off -street parking.

The Task and Finish Group to comprise of Councillors David Thomas (Chairman), Sharon Ainsley, John Payne and Jacqui Thornton and members of Cabinet Councillors Fuller and Savage.

The Task and Finish Group would report back to the Committee to consider and make recommendations to Cabinet.

Resolved:

1. To recommend to Cabinet to proceed with a variation to Schedule 1 & 2 of the Borough of Castle Point (Off Street Parking Places) (General) Order 2013 to incorporate the Knightswick Car Park with its current waiting restrictions and car parking charges so that parking conditions can be enforced when the Council takes over the operation of the car park on termination of the Smart Parking contract;
2. To appoint the Task and Finish Group to undertake a wider and more detailed review of the operation of all the Council's car parks, including the Knightswick Car Park with the following membership Councillors David Thomas (Chairman), Sharon Ainsley, John Payne and Jacqui Thornton and members of Cabinet Councillors Fuller and Savage.

3. REQUEST FOR AN AGENDA ITEM – ANGLIAN WATER AND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Committee noted a request had been made by a member of the Committee that Anglian Water and the Environment Agency be asked to attend a meeting of the Committee to be arranged in October for plans and Actions regarding various issues at locations in the Borough.

These include Richmond Park, Canvey Lake, Ferry Road Benfleet, Danesfield Road, Saxon Close and Watlington Road.

Before proceeding with arrangements for the meeting and so that Members would have information for consideration before the meeting Anglian Water and the Environment Agency would be asked for responses to the matters raised in advance to inform the meeting.



Anglian Water briefing – Castle Point Borough Council

October 2023

This briefing describes how Benfleet Water Recycling Centre (WRC) and the local sewer network works and the investments we have made to maintain and improve it. It also includes:

- a review of recent incidents in Benfleet
- information about storm overflows and what we are doing to reduce how often they operate
- information about new developments and the sewer network
- an update on how we are working with other local organisations to reduce the risk of flooding across the borough, improve nature and create attractive new areas for residents to enjoy

Benfleet WRC and the local sewer network

Anglian Water delivers a clean water supply to 4.3 million people. Once our customers have used the water, for example, by taking a bath or flushing the toilet, we take the water away and clean it at one of our water recycling centres before returning it safely into rivers.

Benfleet Water Recycling Centre (WRC) and the local sewer network provides this vital service for residents in Benfleet and the surrounding area. The image below shows Benfleet WRC:



The local sewer network in the Benfleet area includes a total pipe length of 155.4 kilometres.

Pipes carry the used water from homes and businesses to the main sewers. Where the main sewer is on higher ground than the pipes in homes and businesses, we use a pumping station which collects the used water and pumps it uphill so that it can join the main sewer before moving it onto Benfleet WRC to be cleaned.

There are 12 Anglian Water sewage pumping stations in the Benfleet area.

How we treat used water

Once the used water has reached Benfleet WRC, it goes through several stages.

The first stage involves screening where we take out items such as toilet paper, wipes, nappies.

The picture below shows a skip at a WRC collecting unflushable items – if you piled all the skips filled with a year's worth of unflushables from our sewers on top of each other, they would nearly be as tall as Mount Everest.



Around 80% of blockages in our sewer network are caused by unflushable items such as wipes, nappies, fats, oil and grease.

The picture below shows an example of the sort of blockages we remove from our pipes.



We would welcome councillors' help with encouraging people not to put such items down sinks and toilets. Information about our Keep it Clear campaign is available on our website - [Why Keep It Clear \(anglianwater.co.uk\)](http://anglianwater.co.uk)

Other stages in the water recycling process at Benfleet WRC include:

- The removal of grit
- The removal of matter which could harm human health and the local environment – we do this through biological treatment
- The removal of any remaining solids

Once we have completed all these stages, we do some final tests before the water is put safely back into Benfleet Creek.

The Environment Agency (EA) issues a permit which allows us to put water back into Benfleet Creek as long it meets the required standard. Our performance is carefully monitored and the water which is put back into the Creek fully meets these requirements.

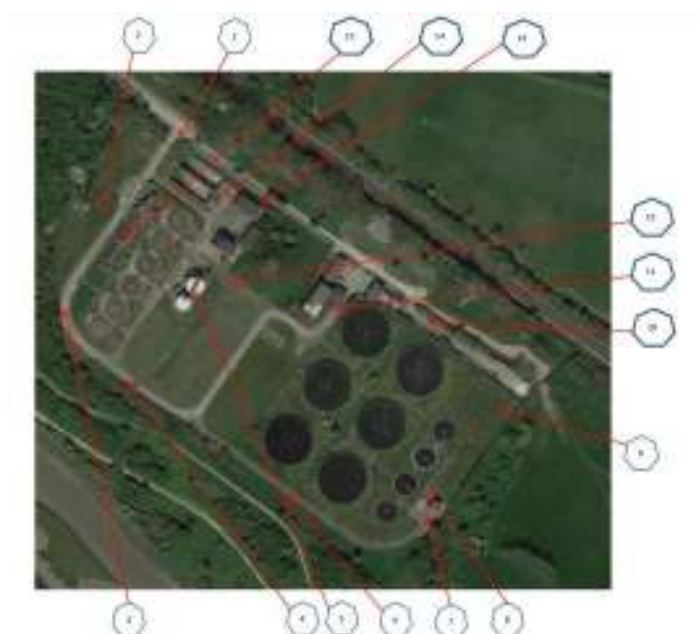
Odour management

Every water recycling site will have some smells due to the nature of the work we do. However, we do all we can to keep odours to a minimum at Benfleet WRC and have an Odour Management Plan in place. Actions include:

1. Enclosed lids and a system to help us remove odours when we process solids
2. Sprays to deal with any smells that may be present
3. Carrying out odour monitoring onsite and offsite to measure the amount of hydrogen sulphide in the air (this is the gas that will smell from the works). The offsite monitoring covers the playing field area and the local residential area.

The maps below show where we monitor the amount of hydrogen sulphide in the air. In total there are 27 locations.

Onsite monitoring points:



Offsite monitoring points:



Findings from both our onsite and offsite odour monitoring indicate that the WRC does create odours (hydrogen sulphide gas) at certain points throughout the site, as you'd expect from an operational wastewater treatment plant. However, as the gas disperses through the air, the levels, or smell reduces. We use a portable odour monitor to regularly collect measurements which show that on average there is no amount of odour detectable to the human nose beyond the access road to the site (points 16-18 in the above offsite monitoring points map).

We do appreciate that residents have been reporting odours in the area and always investigate any concerns about odours from the site so that we can look into the cause and likely source of an odour. It is very important that they are reported to us as soon as possible so that we can investigate these thoroughly. Issues can be reported by either telephoning 03457 145 145 and speaking to an adviser or by using a link on our website to contact the customer services team via WhatsApp

[Contact us \(anglianwater.co.uk\)](https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/contact-us)

It is possible that odours could be coming from other sources, including from the sewer network or other sources unrelated to our processes. We are happy to work with the Council's Environmental Health Officer to investigate further the odours that are being experienced in the area.

Danesfield Road/ Saxon Road flooding and foul odour

There is an ongoing issue at Danesfield Road/ Saxon Road where the watercourse which Anglian Water's surface water outfall empties into needs re-grading as the water level is above the level of our outlet pipe. As a result, the surface water sewer is left holding water and, in storm events, this can result in it backing up or flooding.

Re-grading of the watercourse would involve lowering the silt / debris levels back to the original level when the pipework was installed. Anglian Water is not responsible for maintaining the watercourse, but we will look to work with the Council and the Environment Agency to establish who is responsible.

How we are investing in Benfleet WRC and the local sewer network

We have spent more than £4.2million to maintain and improve the WRC and sewer network over the last ten years or so. This has included:

- Improvements to the sewer network by maintaining and repairing sewer pipes.
Examples of this include:
 - relining pipes to prevent blockages and leaks
 - regularly cleaning pipes with water jetting to help water flow properly through the pipes
 - using CCTV cameras to investigate the condition of pipes and identify the cause of any blockages or leaks
 - fitting non-return valves to the pipes at people's homes to prevent flooding
- Work to install a new sewer pipe (rising main) at Watlington Road pumping station to improve how well the pumping station operates.
- Work at the WRC including refurbishing equipment on site to ensure that it works well, new tanks to help treat wastewater, a system to help us reduce odours from the site and schemes to reduce flooding.

The table below includes examples of the investment we've made in some of these improvement works.

Description	Cost
Benfleet WRC – new primary tanks	£1,389,000
Benfleet WRC – general updates and improvements to equipment	£481,000
Watlington Road pumping station – new sewer pipe (rising main)	£413,000
Benfleet and Canvey sewer improvements	£351,564
Benfleet Marsh pumping station – improved screening	£121,000
Benfleet WRC – improvements to the drainage well	£104,000
Benfleet WRC – filter improvements, including replacing worn parts	£97,000

We are also fitting sewer monitors in the Benfleet area which will give us early warning of any possible problems and help us to tackle them before they occur. This is part of our scheme to fit over 22,000 sewer monitors across our whole region by 2025.

The Benfleet area has also been highlighted in our Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) for long-term investment to prevent groundwater entering the sewer network and causing flooding (infiltration reduction). The DWMP will inform our business plan for 2025-2030 which we are currently developing - [Drainage and wastewater management plan \(anglianwater.co.uk\)](https://www.anglianwater.co.uk).

Recent incidents in Benfleet

We operate and maintain 76,355 kilometres of sewers across our region and are continually making improvements to our network and constantly monitoring its performance. Things do, however, unfortunately go wrong from time to time and we would like to apologise for the incidents which happened earlier this year. We have reviewed each of these and can confirm that they were individual, separate events which were not related to each other.

To ensure full transparency, we have included below details about all recent events, some of which councillors may or may not already be aware of.

In March 2023 there was a pump failure at the WRC which led to a sewage spill. Clean-up operations were deployed immediately, and we worked closely with the Environment Agency to ensure minimal impact.

At the end of April 2023, a failed valve on site led to a sewage spill just outside the WRC. Alarms at the site alerted our teams and they responded as soon as they could. The spill did not reach the watercourse and a full clean-up was undertaken as soon as possible.

At the beginning of May 2023, there was a small leak on a sewer main which serves Marsh pumping station near the railway fence line close to Benfleet WRC. Our teams again located this quickly and took action to isolate the pipe and redirect flows onto another pipe to reduce the impact of the leak on the local area. The sewer main repair was completed approximately a week after the incident.

Throughout the incident, our teams worked closely with the Environment Agency as well as Network Rail and UK Power Networks because of the nearby railway line and underground cables. Our teams regularly checked the affected watercourse and found that it had recovered naturally within a few days of the incident. They also undertook a full clean-up visiting the affected areas, including Richmond Park, twice. We have shared concerns raised about the clean-up with colleagues, including the need for us to be more conscious of what the area means to the local community and what it's used for.

To date no penalties have been incurred in relation to these incidents.

Looking ahead, we are currently developing our business plan for 2025-2030 and will continue to keep the performance of Benfleet WRC and the wider sewer network under review, bringing forward proposals as necessary.

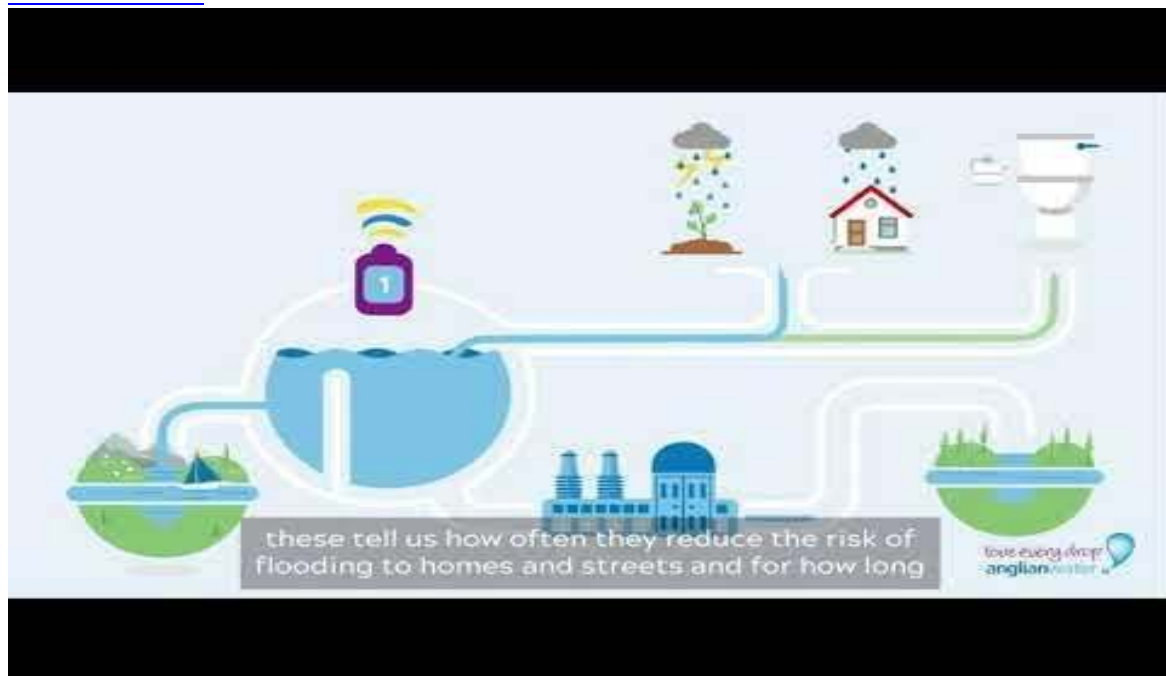
Storm overflows

Most of our sewers are 'combined sewers'. This is usually one single pipe that collects rainwater that runs off gutters, drains and roads as well as the wastewater from homes and businesses.

If it rains heavily, our sewers can become overloaded with far more water than they were made to cope with. As part of their design, they have safety release valves known as storm overflows. These help to protect homes and businesses from flooding by releasing the extra water that the sewers can't cope with into rivers and the sea. Because they operate after heavy rainfall, we know the vast majority of what comes out of storm overflows is rainwater.

The link to the video below explains how storm overflows work.

[CSO Animation](#)



We have permits to operate all our storm overflows in the Benfleet area and these are issued by the Environment Agency.

We recognise though that storm overflows are no longer the right solution when sewers become overloaded with rainwater.

That's why, as part of our Get River Positive initiative, we are committed to ensuring that our sewer network and operations will not be the reason for unhealthy rivers by the end of the decade.

Our online map of the Anglian Water region shows where storm overflows are located, including those in the Benfleet area, as well our investment plans. [What we're doing to improve your local rivers & coastline \(anglianwater.co.uk\)](https://anglianwater.co.uk/what-we-re-doing-to-improve-your-local-rivers-coastline)

We have also recently produced a Storm Overflow Reduction Action Plan for every storm overflow in our region, including those in Benfleet. We have submitted this to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) who are due to publish it soon.

New developments and their potential impact on the network

We understand that people may be concerned about whether the local sewer network and Benfleet WRC can cope with new homes being built in the area.

Our analysis shows that the WRC has capacity to be able to accept sewage from all new known developments. We calculate this by looking at the WRC's design capacity based on its biological and hydraulic loading. Current hydraulic and biological loading can be calculated using the recorded population equivalent. When comparing these against the design capacity, Benfleet WRC does have additional headroom.

In addition, the Environment Agency permit us to discharge at a certain Dry Weather Flow rate (DWF), a statistical analysis of the flow received into the works. We have permission to increase our flows to the maximum permitted DWF. Benfleet's permitted DWF is 6,970m³/d, with a five-year average DWF of 4,176m³/d (2018-2022).

Where a proposed new development requires a surface water connection to the public sewer, the developer applying to build the new homes must provide evidence to the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) at Essex County Council that there isn't another way that they can deal with the surface water.

If the LLFA approves a developer's drainage plans, then we will work with them to work out the impact of their surface water connection and any changes to our network that are necessary. We have, for example, recently worked with the developers proposing residential development at Jotman's Farm to help them prepare a surface water strategy for their proposal.

We will continue to keep a close eye on any potential impacts from proposed developments in the local area. We will also work closely with Castle Point Borough Council on its Local Plan.

Working together to reduce the risk of flooding and help improve the local area

We are working with Castle Point Borough Council, the Environment Agency and Essex County Council to reduce the risk of flooding across the borough.

As part of this, we are contributing £6million towards repairs to the sewer network and the development of a new wetland at Benfleet WRC.

The wetland at Benfleet WRC will be the first of its type in the UK to specifically treat storm water and will help to improve the water quality in the Thames Estuary. As well as increasing water quality, we are using new filter technology to reduce organic matter flowing into Benfleet Creek. This should reduce the algae bloom (dense layers of tiny green plants) which is currently impacting the salt marshes, and which can affect birds and insects. The salt marshes are classed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and RAMSAR sites.

Other projects include our work with Essex County Council highways to introduce rainwater gardens at Park Avenue on Canvey Island. As well as creating attractive new places for residents to enjoy, rainwater gardens have a number of benefits:

- They help absorb excess water, slowing the rate at which it enters the drainage system and reducing the risk of flooding
- They purify storm water before it enters the ground or watercourses
- They provide urban wildlife habitats, helping to increase local wildlife such as butterflies and bees.

We have also recently contributed £100,000 towards a new rainwater garden in Springfield Road in Canvey Island. In total this project, which is being led by Essex County Council, will represent an investment of £250,000 in the local area.

In addition, we have recently funded the provision of water butts on Canvey Island. Water butts can prevent flooding as it reduces runoff and reduces the pressure on drainage systems. They also help to reduce water usage, providing a source of water within people's gardens, and can help customers' save on their energy bills.

Looking ahead, we are also looking to:

- potentially support three possible new bathing water applications being brought forward by Castle Point Borough Council. These are for Thorney Bay, Concord Beach and the beach at Labworth.
- submit proposals as part of our business plan for 2025-2030 for a significant amount of investment to support Essex County Council with its Green Streets initiative which looks to introduce roadside rain gardens.