

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

28 November 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Yeates (Chair), Lury (Vice-Chair), Bower, Elkins, Huntley, Long, McAuliffe, Mrs Stainton and Tandy

301. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Partridge and Councillor Goodheart.

302. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

303. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 18 September 2024 and 26 September 2024 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

304. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

There were no urgent items presented at the meeting.

305. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

306. SOUTHERN WATER DRAFT WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (WRMP) CONSULTATION (11 SEPTEMBER TO 4 DECEMBER 2024)

The Interim Head of Planning Policy was invited by the Chair to present the report. He outlined the report that provided details of the key messages from the consultation and the Council's proposed draft response, at Appendix 1, to the Southern Water Revised Draft Water Resource Management Plan (SWRDWRMP) consultation taking place until 4 December 2024. He drew attention to paragraph 4.9 that set out the key headline ambitions of the in the SWRDWRMP, to ensure there was a safe and suitable water supply available in its catchment area. He referred to the Government's ambitious housing growth targets, which will put more pressure on the region's water supply. It was hoped that the Council would be involved in positive engagement around those projections, including through the Local Plan process. He advised that in general officers were able to support the contents of the SWRDWRMP in principle subject to safeguards being in place.

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He referred to proposed amendments to the Council's response that had been tabled at the meeting by Councillor McAuliffe. Officers considered that the proposed amendments supported the officer response without changing the meaning.

A typographical error was corrected at Appendix 1, paragraph 3: Replace '110l/h/d' with '110l/p/d'.

The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Tandy and seconded by Councillor McAuliffe.

The Chair invited the Committee to make comment and ask questions, as follows:

- Reference was made to Southern Water's Water for Life document and it was asked if Southern Water's projected housing figures had been correlated with the Council's own trajectory. Could reference be made in the Council's response with details of what the variations might be? Members were advised that officers could put information together setting out the numbers relating to the Council's own projected identified housing growth trajectory. This was subject to the caveat, as the SWRDWRMP covered a period of 50 years and the projected housing supply numbers, as the outcomes of the consultation on a revised National Planning Policy Framework, were still unknown. The Water for Life document was an adaptive document that would take into account matters, such as population growth and future climate change, with different scenarios for each.
- Responding to a question concerning the impacts and lack of detail currently available regarding the proposed extension to the Littlehampton Wastewater Treatment Works, the Interim Head of Planning Policy advised it was hoped that the delays to both this scheme, and the desalination plant, would enable an opportunity for engagement on the required consents and planning permissions. He undertook to raise the matter at his next stakeholder meeting with Southern Water.
- A view was expressed that the Council's Local Plan should identify the proposed extended Wastewater Treatment Works to inform residents of its implications, such as its potential location and environmental issues i.e. required buffer zones.
- Concern was raised regarding the increasing year on year costs to the public identified by Southern Water to provide the initiatives whilst the public being asked to reduce their demand on the water supply. Could Southern Water endeavour to capture rain water, which had increase in recent years, reducing the pressure on drainage and sewerage systems? The Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that no direct discussions had taken place with Southern Water. However, Southern Water had proposals for a new reservoir and the use of ground water sources and advised the issue of capturing rainwater could be added to the Council's response.
- The Interim Head of Planning Policy responded to a question concerning the location of the proposed reservoir. He advised that the new Havant Thicket reservoir would be located in Hampshire.

- A member drew attention to Southern Water's key strategy to provide a new reservoir on the Adur extraction area due for implementation between 2035 and 2050.
- The urgent need for Southern Water to invest in infrastructure to ensure it met the needs of the housing trajectory numbers. The Interim Head of Planning Policy confirmed that reference had been made at paragraph 4 of the Council's response, to make it clear that if enhanced targets are introduced Southern Water will need to reassess its population growth forecast much earlier. Support was given to officers to add further emphasis on the urgent need to progress schemes and have no further slippage.
- The need to enable new housing development sites to be able to use recycled grey water when washing cars and watering gardens etc.
- Residents should be encouraged to use water butts in their gardens.
- Concern that Southern Water's proposals were reactionary and lacked an urgent response.
- In terms of turning treated wastewater into purified recycled water that can be used as a source of drinking water supplies, this may be difficult to encourage residents to accept.
- Concern was expressed of using recycled seawater for drinking water due to Southern Water's discharges into the sea currently taking place.
- It should be noted that the public would face increased charges to enable Southern Water to implement the SWRDWRMP.
- It was asked if a public education programme would be in place to strengthen their understanding of how precious this water resource was. The Interim Head of Planning Policy confirmed that officers can stress to Southern Water that a public education programme was needed.

He referred to the comments made about water butts and advised that this would be in the gift for Councils to require through the Local Plan process.

During further discussion further comments were made on the proposals:

- An additional £50 per year added to customer's water bills equated to a 10% year on year increase and should be highlighted.
- The desktop study undertaken that had identified the Havant Thicket reservoir, had also identified 85 other locations that could be used for additional surface water storage. The implementation of these would also help biodiversity in those areas.
- The use of energy intensive technology without any indication of how it would be delivered at net zero.
- Waste disposal was an issue. The final water treatment effluent would be used for the reverse osmosis technology, as an additional process. This would result in an increased concentration of minerals in the water supply and had to be removed. It was possible that it would be discharged into the River Arun or as outfall into the sea and if that was the case then an impact assessment should be undertaken.
- The reduction to 110 l/pp per day consumption by household customers was not an ambitious target.

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- In terms of water safety other countries, such as Singapore, recycled their wastewater into drinking water efficiently to ensure it was pure. However, it was noted that it also removed the minerals which would need to be replaced to also improve the flavour.

Councillor McAuliffe then proposed his amendments to the Council's draft response to the SWRDWRMP consultation, which were seconded by Councillor Lury. The amendments are indicated in **bold** and deletions indicated in ~~strikeout~~:

- Paragraph 3: Arun supports the proposed measures to reduce leakage from the network ~~through~~ **and** the reintroduction of a more ambitious target for reducing per capita consumption by household customers to 110lp/h/d under dry conditions by 2045. **Arun District Council does however support greater ambition for daily household consumption and note that Authorities in other areas are working towards 95l/ph/d to other** ~~as this will facilitate greater~~ **climate change** ~~resilience to the impacts by communities~~ **and help mitigate risks** ~~prevent harmful impacts to sensitive designated nature sites.~~
- Paragraph 5: Arun welcomes the extension of the earliest delivery date for the proposed water recycling scheme at the Littlehampton Wastewater Treatment Works (WTW) at Ford from 2027 to 2030. It is hoped that this will allow for greater engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including landowners and developers whose land will be affected, **and for additional necessary information to come forward, such as detailed environmental impact assessments.**
- Paragraph 6: Arun is aware that Southern Water only controls the land immediately around the treatment works, while the surrounding lands form part of a strategic housing site in the adopted Arun Local Plan 2018, which has outline approval. Accordingly, mitigation of **environmental impacts issues**, particularly odour and noise **and carbon emissions above net zero**, should be incorporated into the planning and delivery of the scheme.
- Paragraph 7, bullet point 2: Sites of importance for nature conservation around West Beach (e.g. Climping SSSI and Arun Valley SPA) **and sensitive local offshore habitats (e.g. Sussex Kelp Restoration Project);**
- Paragraph 9: There is also a lack of certainty around the need for the tidal River Arun desalination option, given that it appears in only two of the nine supply-demand scenario options. Whilst Arun appreciates that Southern Water's adaptative planning approach seeks to manage such uncertainty, Arun is at the preliminary stage of reviewing its Local Plan to cover the period 2023 to 2041. Accordingly, the council looks forward to proactive engagement around the planning for this facility so that it can be appropriately considered. **It should be noted that Arun District Council does not support desalination in the absence of measures to achieve net zero carbon. Likewise, projects resulting in environmentally damaging waste concentrate disposal would not be supported; especially in relation to the River Arun and waters off the Arun coast.**
- Paragraph 11: In summary, whilst Arun District Council is **would be** broadly supportive of the WRMP24 and the proposed supply side options that may

impact the district, **if high energy elements achieve net zero carbon equivalent emissions and waste discharges are environmentally non-damaging**. Early and effective engagement is **therefore** considered to be critical, particularly in respect of the plans for the Littlehampton water recycling scheme and the desalination plant on the tidal River Arun, **should this come forward**.

Following a vote the amendments were CARRIED

The Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that the recommendation would be revised to give delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Policy Committee to make final amendments to the letter.

He undertook to amend the Council's draft response to include Councillor McAuliffe's agreed amendments and summarised the additional points that members would like added to the Council's response following their discussion, as follows:

- Additional narrative to ensure effective surface water drainage and rainfall capture.
- A focus on recycling grey water more effectively and reusing it for appropriate means.
- The need for a public education programme which should go hand in hand.
- It was hoped that Southern Water will bring in measures to ensure any impacts of poorer households would be mitigated lower household incomes.
- The inclusion of a summary sentence at the end of the Council's response to the effect that whilst the proposals are agreed in principle by the Council, action was required now and Southern water must do their best now to avoid further slippage.
- The need for Southern Water to invest in infrastructure to ensure it met the needs of the housing trajectory numbers.
- Southern Water must use the most up-to-date population and household growth predictions available.

The Interim Head of Planning Policy confirmed that once he had amended the Council's response, the draft letter would be sent to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for approval.

The Committee

RESOLVED to

Agree the proposed response to the Southern Water WRMP24 (Appendix 1) and agree that delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Policy Committee to make final amendments to the letter.

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307. BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER UPDATE

The Interim Head of Planning Policy was invited by the Chair to present the report that updated the Committee on Arun's' Brownfield Land Register 2024 (BLR) and any changes to it since it was published in 2023 before being used as the basis for the annual BLR statistical return to Government required by national legislation. Nine new sites had been added to the Register and four sites had been removed as they no longer met the criteria. The sites on the register comprised approximately 13.35 hectares, which could deliver over 600 new dwellings.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Lury and seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The Chair invited the Committee to make comment and ask questions.

The Chair suggested that the list of sites in the BLR should be re-ordered into Parish headings and to add the total numbers to the end of the "Site area (ha)" and "No. of dwellings" columns.

The Interim Head of Planning Policy clarified that site NEWFG2 Land Rear of Henty Arms, Ferring Lane, Ferring (NCD) at paragraph 4.7, had been removed from the BLR as the status had changed to not currently deliverable. He undertook to provide Councillor Elkins with further details by email.

A question was asked about the number of brownfield sites that had previously been industrial sites and asked if assessments had taken place concerning ground contamination and pollution, which could prevent them coming forward for development. The Interim Head of Planning Policy replied that it was too early in the process and at this stage it was a high-level assessment identifying land that could potentially come forward. If the Council became aware of contamination that could not be mitigated or cleared up it would make the site unviable it would not be included in the BLR. As part of the planning process a minimum of a desktop study would be required to be undertaken and phase 2 Geotech surveys would also likely be undertaken.

Further to the Chair's suggestion to reorder the BLR into Parish order, he advised that the public BLR register was an online searchable register.

The Committee

RESOLVED to

1. Note the 2024 Brownfield Land Register (Part 1); and
2. Keep the Brownfield Land Register under review regarding preparation of a (Part 2) register and 'permission in principle' (including the carrying out of consultation and publicity requirements), should any suitable

sites be identified, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 (as amended).

308. WORK PROGRAMME

Arun Biodiversity Action Plan: This item, due to be considered at the next meeting on 28 January 2024, would be considered at a later date to allow further work and evidence testing of the biodiversity net gain targets.

Members noted the number of items on the agenda for the next meeting and therefore it was important to manage the agenda carefully due to the number of important items, especially concerning affordable housing via the Section 106 process. It was suggested that timings should be added to each item. In response to a concern raised of placing a time limit on members' comments, the Chair advised that if timings were used they would only ever be used as a guide to help manage the meeting so that all items were considered, whilst still allowing members time to debate the items fully. It was noted that a special meeting could be convened if necessary.

The Committee noted the Work Programme for 2024/25.

(The meeting concluded at 7.30 pm)