



# MINUTES

## Community Focus Scrutiny Committee

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| <b>Date:</b>                      | Thursday, 18 January 2024   |
| <b>Venue:</b>                     | Town Hall, St Annes.  |
| <b>Committee Members Present:</b> | Councillor Vince Settle (Chairman)<br>Councillor Frank Andrews (Vice-Chairman)<br><br>Councillors Martin Evans, Joanne Gardner, Gail Goodman JP, Gavin Harrison, Paul Hodgson, John Kirkham, Andrew Redfearn, Michael Withers.  |
| <b>Other Councillors Present:</b> | Councillor Karen Buckley - Leader of the Council<br>Councillor Richard Redcliffe - Deputy Leader of the Council<br>Councillor Tommy Threlfall - Lead Member for Environment   |
| <b>Officers Present:</b>          | Allan Oldfield, Paul Walker, Darren Bell, Adam Sugden, Gemma Broadley, Lyndsey Lacey- Simone  |
| <b>Other Attendees:</b>           | Simon Holding - Chief Environmental Officer (United Utilities)<br>Iain Pilling - Area Engagement Lead (United Utilities)<br>Steve Kenyon - County Business Leader for Wastewater Services (United Utilities)<br>Andrew Seward - Bathing Water Technical Specialist for Cumbria and Lancashire (Environment Agency)<br>Nicki Rushton - Environment Manager in Cumbria and Lancashire with oversight of Bathing Waters (Environment Agency) |
| <b>Members of the Public:</b>     | 5 members of the public attended the meeting  |

### 1. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. No interests were declared on this occasion.

### 2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Community Focus Committee meeting held on 12 October 2023 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

### 3. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 23 (c):

Councillor Joanne Gardner substituted for Councillor Damian Buckley.

Councillor Andrew Redfearn substituted for Councillor Peter Anthony.

#### 4. St Annes Bathing Waters 2023

The Chairman invited Darren Bell (Head of Technical Services) and Adam Sugden (Principal Engineer) to introduce the report. In doing so, members were advised that a similar report would be presented to the Committee on an annual basis.

In summary, the report (which was listed to follow on the agenda) provided an update of the water quality at the two controlled bathing waters in St Annes (one at St Anne's Pier and the other is St Anne's North adjacent to North Beach Car Park) following the 2023 bathing water season.

Members were advised that during the bathing season (between 1st May to 30th September), the Council are responsible for the provision of public information about the bathing waters being displayed in an easily accessible place in the vicinity of the bathing waters. This included the provision of public information to prevent exposure to pollution during short term incidents and advise against bathing where the bathing water does not meet the sufficient standard.

The report set out the respective responsibilities/duties of the Environment Agency and United Utilities. In addition, it highlighted the requirements of the revised Bathing Water Directive which sets guideline standards for 2 types of bacterial indicators: Escherichia Coli and Intestinal Enterococci. The new standard has four classifications: Excellent, Good, Sufficient and Poor.

Members were advised that the Fylde coast has eight bathing waters, and the table included on the agenda provided details of the current and previous sample results and included Southport for comparison.

It was explained that in general terms, E.Coli should not exceed 500cfu per 100ml based upon a 90-percentile evaluation of samples and Intestinal Enterococci should not exceed 185cfu per 100ml based upon a 90-percentile evaluation of samples. Included at Appendix 1 of the report was bathing water sample data for St Annes North Beach and St Annes Pier for the last 3 years. This provided details of the samples during the 2021 -2023 period.

It was further reported that the bathing water classification for St Annes is classed as Sufficient and St Annes North is classed as Poor for 2023. Mr Bell stated that the deterioration of the water quality at St Annes and particularly at St Annes North is of concern to the Council and the Environment Agency. As a result the Environment Agency has identified St Annes and St Annes North as priority bathing waters for action to improve water quality.

Andrew Seward (Bathing Water Technical Specialist for Cumbria and Lancashire) at the Environment Agency (EA) was then invited to further expand on the details of the report and in doing so, referred to Appendix 2 of the report which provided details of the bathing waters history/characterises; pollution sources; partnership working opportunities together with details of work undertaken so far to tackle the issue. In addition, Mr Seaward provided a summary of the Environment Agency Action Plan for St Annes and St Annes North Bathing Waters. He advised that planned actions are focussed on water company regulation and targeting agricultural sources.

At this juncture, Mr Bell referred to the section of the report about the Turning Tides Partnership. He advised that this is a partnership between Environment Agency, United Utilities, North West Local Authorities and the Rivers Trust whose aims are to improve bathing waters across the region. In addition, to move bathing water quality forward at Fylde, a Technical Bathing Water group had been established comprising of the Lead Member of the Environment, Fylde council officers, United Utilities, Environment Agency, Ribble Rivers Trust and UK Health Security Agency. Members were advised that the group meet on a quarterly basis to better understand and interpret the bathing water data.

Further to the above, the Chairman then went on to invite Simon Holding (Chief Environmental Officer) at United Utilities (UU) to present a PowerPoint presentation to members and respond to members' questions.

The presentation covered the following areas: an overview of the bathing waters from UU's perspective; how the wastewater system works including Combined Storm Overflows (CSOs) and the wastewater sewer network; Fylde CSO's and what UU are doing to reduce CSO spills. In addition, the presentation included details of the investment taking place in the Fylde area and the wider CSO investment across Lancashire which would contribute to improvement in river quality and ultimately bathing water on Fylde coast.

In summary, it was reported that UU had already invested £691m to improve bathing water quality for the Fylde coast and that this investment would continue. The source apportionment data showed that this is a complex and multi-faceted issue. It was explained that all relevant agencies would work together to address this issue and the ideal vehicle for this is the Turning Tides partnership, which UU strongly support.

It was suggested that UU will continue to address the impact their operations have on bathing water over the next 6 years and will look to spend a further circa £130m on solutions for 8 combined storm overflows in the Fylde constituency alone; A total of 90 combined storm overflows across the whole catchment will receive investment of circa £730m. (including Fylde schemes).

Following presentation of the information, the Chairman invited questions. These related to the following areas: whether the number of spills had increased over the last 5 years and if it correlated with an increased amount of rainfall; monies invested in the project and the ringfencing arrangements for Fylde; the ability to raise public confidence in bathing waters which has been severely damaged in the last 12 months; issues at Liggard Brook; future proposals for combined sewers; national/local picture; storm overflow reduction plan; impact of new builds; commitment to actions/follow up the action plan; harm to the tourism economy/ reputation of the area; charging for surface water and samples/ readings taken on beaches linked to watercourses. In addition, the worsening situation was highlighted by the Leader of the Council who suggested that improved data sharing with local authorities would be an excellent basis for proactive working. Members also enquired how the Council could best support the work of Turning Tides and what Fylde Council could do (practical measures or monitoring) to help improve bathing water quality. Mr Seward and Mr Holding addressed each point in turn as appropriate.

The Chairman thanked the representatives of United Utilities and the Environment Agency for their attendance at the meeting.

Following consideration of this matter it was RESOLVED:

1. That the Executive Committee be requested to consider making an annual financial contribution towards the Turning Tides Partnership to assist in its work in improving the quality of bathing waters.
2. That an updated report be presented to the committee (within a three-month timeframe) detailing progress made of the actions identified in the report.

5. Flood & Surface Water Management Annual Report 2023

Adam Sugden (Principal Engineer) was invited to present the Flood & Surface Water Management Annual Report 2023. In doing so, he advised that the report provided the Committee with the opportunity to monitor progress with implementation and delivery of the flood risk and surface water management action plan.

A copy of the Flood and Surface Water Management Annual Report 2023 was included as an appendix to the report. This suggested that during the year, significant progress had been made on the recommendations in the Flooding Review Report. Further details of the performance were set out in the report.

In his report, Mr Sugden referred to the work undertaken by the former working group appointed to review flood risk and surface water management which had resulted in 30 recommendations (including an additional staff resource). It also referred to partnership and engagement opportunities; climate change; the significance of the Supplementary Planning Guidance Document and matters associated with the identification of flood hot spots together with communication and engagement matters. The collaboration undertaken with landowners and other bodies was also highlighted.

Following the presentation, the Chairman invited questions. These related to the following areas: the resolution of drainage issues involving detailed site investigations; Flood & Surface Water Management Group actions; the mapping of riparian landowners and how the Council could help to raise awareness of riparian responsibility. In addition, clarification was sought on the management and maintenance of ditches and watercourses; the source of funding to deliver flood alleviation projects and initiatives and the Council's role to respond to flooding in an emergency. Details relating to the Flood Recovery grants for residents and business and how the Council can influence government at County and national level to improve access for this help from residents and businesses was also sought. Each point was addressed in turn by Mr Sugden and Mr Bell as appropriate.

Steve Kenyon, County Business Leader for Wastewater Services (United Utilities) was invited to comment on the details of the report.

Following consideration of this matter it was RESOLVED:

1. That the Executive Committee be requested to consider establishing an annual revenue budget to enable drainage surveys and site investigations to be undertaken to deal with flooding issues in the borough.
2. That an interim report be presented (within a three-month time frame) to the scrutiny committee setting out the Council's arrangements for responding to flooding emergencies including any support to residents and businesses who may be affected.
3. That the above report also includes details of any enforcement action (including prosecutions) undertaken by the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority (Lancashire County Council) in Fylde of riparian owners.

#### 6. Swimming Provision

Further to the resolution of Council on 2 October 2023, Paul Walker (Interim Scrutiny Manager) and Gemma Broadley (Head of Corporate Services) provided an update on the practicable options identified to date to support public swimming provision and the role that the Community Focus Scrutiny Committee could play in delivering a resolution to the matter.

In summary, the report made reference to the background to the matter including matters associated with the YMCA closure notification (10 August 2023), the subsequent Disposal Plan and the decision of the Executive Committee on 5 December 2023. The report also provided an overview of the work undertaken and commissioned to date.

Mr Walker emphasised that the key parts of the resolution are to look at all practicable options to work with partners and stakeholders to support public swimming provision. He went on to say that in order to look at all practicable options it was considered essential to understand (a) the need and demand for swimming facilities in Fylde (b) The estimated (i) capital cost of making the existing Kirkham pool fit for purpose, (ii) capital cost of building of a new fit for purpose swimming pool on another site and (iii) revenue cost of operating a fit for purpose swimming pool and (c) what partnership opportunities there are for operating a fit for purpose swimming pool.

Members were advised that the Executive Committee had further resolved at its December meeting to approve expenditure for Active Lancashire to consult with key local stakeholders and existing swimming providers in Fylde to understand the existing position, potential challenges and opportunities for the short, medium and long term. Gemma Broadley (Head of Corporate Services) was invited by the Chairman to further expand on this matter.

Included as an appendix was a copy of the Swimming Pool Facilities in Fylde - An indicative report of swimming facilities quality, quantity and accessibility across Fylde (Active Lancashire).

The timeframe for the project was further explored by the Committee.

Following consideration of this matter, it was RESOLVED:

1. To note the work undertaken and commissioned to date and agree to the approach for addressing the resolution as set out in the report.
2. To agree to receiving a further report to consider the options to support public swimming provision.

#### 7. Reports of Various Outside Bodies

It was reported that in line with the Protocol for Members on Outside Bodies (Part 5f of the Council's Constitution), members serving on an outside body are required to provide an update to the committee every six months. The reports of the Council's appointed representatives to the various bodies were included within the report.

A late report submitted by Councillor Martin Evans was circulated at the meeting.

Following consideration of this matter, the Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

#### 8. Ongoing Scrutiny Workplans 2024

The Committee was provided with an update on the current work programme of the two scrutiny committees.

The various changes to the workplan that had been made since the publication of the agenda were highlighted at

the meeting.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to note the report and make the amendments to the workplan as outlined at the meeting.

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