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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 3.4.2014

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 3 APRIL 2014

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Toby Simon, Alan Sitkin, Alev Cazimoglu, George Savva MBE and Rohini Simbodyal, Joanne Laban (Substituting for Edward Smith), Andrew Stafford and Doug Taylor

ABSENT Michael Rye OBE and Edward Smith

STATUTORY CO-OPTES: *1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), Mr Simon Goulden (other faiths/denominations representative), Mr Tony Murphy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor representative) - Italics Denotes absence*

OFFICERS: Mike Ahuja (Head of Corporate Scrutiny & Community Outreach), Andy Ellis (Scrutiny and Outreach Officer), Clare Bryant (Scrutiny and Outreach Apprentice)

Also Attending: Andy Love MP, Nick Butler (Senior Project Manager- Deephams Sewage Works Upgrade, Thames Water), Mark Mathews (Town Planning Manager)

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WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Michael Rye OBE and Councillor Edward Smith.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest registered in respect of any items on the agenda.

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DEEPHAMS SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT

Thames Water explained that the planned upgrade to Deephams Sewage Works was a multi-million pound project aiming to improve water quality and help regeneration. The upgrade of Deephams is required to replace old, worn out tanks and equipment as well as to cater for population growth. Thames Water acknowledged that addressing the odour is the biggest priority for residents.

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A short presentation was given which set out the plans for the sewage works at Deephams. The presentation included details on why the upgrade is needed, how the upgrade will be built, community benefits, proposed odour mitigation, results of the cost benefit analysis and plans for odour reduction. Information was provided on a Site Tour on Saturday 17 May. This is an opportunity for 120 people to find out about proposals for the upgrade and what is currently occurring on site.

The benefits of the upgrade will be to improve the energy produced on the site that is used to help run the plant to lower customer bills. Thames Water hopes to maximise educational opportunities and sustainability in the borough. During the upgrade, local contractors and suppliers will be used to create jobs in the borough. It is planned that at the very least 20% of the labour used during the upgrade will come from local providers and residents.

The proposed odour mitigation consists of covering the smelliest parts of the works to control the odour. This will be done by covering the Primary Settlement Tanks and Inlet Works, and catching the air to remove the odour. More extensive covering would also be possible but was not currently proposed. Charts were shown of the relative costs and effectiveness of each option. By the end of the upgrade there should be a 94% reduction in affected properties compared to the 2013 baseline.

During Thames Water's Phase 2 consultation letters, leaflets and postcards were sent to over 18,000 properties in the most affected area. Over 9,000 residents had been engaged with during 11 drop in sessions where 2400 leaflets were handed out. Proposals for the sewage works had been presented to over 150 people at 8 community meetings and groups. A feedback report from the consultation will be provided in May 2014. Following this a planning application on the building works for the sewage works will be sent to Enfield Council in June 2014.

Odour intensity can be described using 'odour units'. Odour from the sewage works is assessed by collecting a sample of air which is then taken to a laboratory where trained assessors smell samples of the diluted air.

This method is applied in the laboratory and is done by a series of suitably trained panelists/observers who have been trained to appropriately define intensity.

The Chair noted that an Environment Agency publication advised that the maximum acceptable odour intensity should be 1.5 odour units for most offensive odours, 3 odour units for moderately offensive odours and 6 odour units for the least offensive odours. Thames Water thought that Deephams' odours met the moderately offensive odour category.

A debate around how people's views were collected regarding the smell and specifically on how much people would be willing to pay to reduce the odour. A customer survey of Thames Water customers considered how much people would be willing to pay a year to omit the smell. The potential benefits are evaluated by capitalising the value per property and multiplying by the number of properties.

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Concerns were raised that if the survey was of people not affected by things such as smell they would not prioritise these. Thames Water informed attendees that the survey was sent to households within 1km of a sewage works.

Complaints to Thames Water were rarely received beyond the 3 odour units area. Thames Water stated that it is not financially viable to eradicate the entire smell as it would cost up to £100 million to cover the entire works and even with that there could be no guarantee the odour would be completely removed.

Thames Water said that since the 2013 Phase 1 Consultation they have seen the need to include reducing the smell in their plans. It was suggested that if the £100 million cost was spread over the catchment area for people using the plant the extra cost would be minimal. Thames Water stated that they have to have their plans fit into OFWAT's requirements or they could get into a position where OFWAT decline their bid for funding.

The following questions were raised:

Q) Edmonton has a large amount of underground streams and is on a fault line. It was asked if the infrastructure of the plant is strong enough or whether it would be better to have smaller sewage plants because of this?

A) Thames Water specified that the Phase 1 Consultation had looked into all the potential possibilities for the sewage work and found that upgrading the existing sewage works was the best option. With the upgrade new taller tanks will be built on the plant which will be resistant to all conditions. More storm tanks will be on site so the plant is prepared for increased flow.

Q) Will the upgrade make the Sewage Works bigger? If it is going to be bigger will there be more sewage and will this affect the smell?

A) The sewage plant will deal with the existing zone, whose population is growing, so the volume of sewage will increase. However, the site will be more compact so the smell should be more contained as there is less surface area for it to cover.

Q) Is it possible to burn off the emissions from the Sewage Works?

A) It is not possible to burn off the emissions as they are too dilute. Gas from the Sludge Digesters can be burnt and is used to generate electricity for the site. The odour cannot be burnt. The upgrade will include a chemical scrubbing of the air and then mixing it with carbon. Using lime sludge has happened in the past but it often made the odour worse.

Q) As Thames Water is a service provider why aren't residents paying for the upgrade? Could the profits Thames Water made be used to pay to omit the odour?

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A) The upgrade is being used as an opportunity to reduce the odour for Enfield Residents. Thames Water has looked into removing the odour as much as possible. Thames Water informed residents that there is no sewage plant in the UK that can say it has 0% emissions.

Q) How is it possible to determine that the waste smell is from Deephams and not from the North London Waste Authority EcoPark or other sources?

A) A representative from North London Waste accepted some odour came from their site in 2005 when it opened. They had received a large number of complaints about the smell from the site and within 6 months the relevant site was covered. The waste is only uncovered when moving from one part of the site to another. Waste is moved less when the weather conditions are hot and during weekends so that if a smell occurs it has minimal effect. Since the plant has been covered there have been very few complaints.

Q) It seems that odour has not been centre of the upgrade project and the odour has been a second thought. How does the proposed upgrade to Deephams compare to the Sewage Plant in Reading?

A) Deephams and Reading have similar plans. Deephams will have a chemical scrubber and a carbon filter. Reading Council and Thames Water both invested money to have the Reading Plant moved.

Councillor Simbodyal felt that Thames Water's consultation had not given an adequate picture of the scope for odour reduction and the marginal costs and benefits of various mitigation measures, with which the committee concurred.

The Chair informed attendees that Enfield Council has a degree of control on the extent of the upgrade as it can refuse planning permission if it feels Thames Water has not done enough to try to reduce the odour. He thanked Thames Water and everyone else for attending the meeting.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the programme of dates for potential Call-ins:

Tuesday 8 April

Tuesday 15 April

Tuesday 6 May