

Agenda Item No: 9

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 5 January 2015

Report Title: Scrutiny Review of Bathing Water Quality

Report By: Simon Hubbard
Director of Regeneration

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on actions taken to address the quality of Hastings bathing water and meet the new European bathing water standard in 2016.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That Cabinet acknowledge the work of all partners and the continued interest of the Scrutiny Review team.**
- 2. That Cabinet support ongoing efforts for further improvements by 2015 and the realisation of a long term sustainable solution thereafter.**
- 3. That a further report be brought to Cabinet at the end of the 2015 bathing season.**

Reasons for Recommendations

The management response to the Scrutiny Review of Bathing Water Quality was presented to Cabinet at your 31st March 2014 meeting. The resolution arising from that report requested that further discussion take place at Cabinet at the end of the calendar year.

Progress has been made as a result of action by Southern Water, the Environment Agency and the Borough Council. However, the risk of failure at Hastings Pelham Beach remains and further actions are planned over the winter and spring.

Introduction

Background

1. A new European Bathing Water Directive will replace the current measures of bathing water quality in 2016. The new directive effectively doubles the current quality standard that bathing waters must reach. There are two designated bathing beaches in the Borough, Hastings Pelham and St. Leonards Warrior Square.
2. As reported to Cabinet before the 2014 summer season, St. Leonards beach is expected to be classified as 'good' under the new standard whilst Hastings beach is likely to be considered 'poor'. Poor beaches will be required to post signs warning bathers of possible health hazards.
3. The outfall of the Alexandra Park stream on Pelham Beach is the conduit for pollution. The source is diffuse, meaning that it is a combination of household and business misconnected sewer pipes, sewer overflows and surface water run-off in wet weather flowing into the stream and thus carried to the beach.
4. Over the past year, the Council has worked closely with the Environment Agency and Southern Water to address water quality problems in Hastings. An Executive Group, chaired by the Leader of the Council and attended by the MP's representative and all partners, meets regularly to review progress. The Scrutiny Review undertaken earlier this year has also been reconvened.

Current Assessment of Hastings Pelham Beach

5. Following the 2014 bathing season, both Hastings and St. Leonards beaches continue to meet the current water standards, Hastings at the minimum level and St. Leonards at the higher level. However, the Environment Agency's reassessment of likely results under the 2016 standard concludes that St. Leonards will be classified as 'good' and Hastings remains 'poor'.
6. As the new standard is calculated on a 4 year rolling average, this assessment masks the fact that Hastings is improving year on year but is still hampered by the inclusion of very poor 2011 results. 2011 results were poor all along the South Coast for reasons that are not clear. This is the last year in which 2011 will be included in the calculation.
7. If 2015 results were consistent with 2014, for example, Hastings would meet the new standard. Whilst this is encouraging, it is clearly not reliable enough and work must continue to address pollution of the watercourse.

Actions Completed and Underway

8. Over the last 18 months, the Environment Agency and HBC have jointly funded a programme of investigations into misconnected households in areas where pollution has been identified. This work has now been picked up by Southern Water, whose teams are working through all of the Alexandra Park stream catchments, particularly those areas where recently adopted private sewer

networks may be in greater need of maintenance. Southern Water is capping dual manholes, where foul sewers can contaminate surface water flows in bad weather, and detecting misconnections, where HBC Environmental Health officers then deal with householders to make rectifications.

9. In Alexandra Park, Buckshole Pond 1 has been re-engineered to provide filtration and silt traps to treat water flowing into the park from the north. At various points in the stream, planting has been introduced to filter contaminants from the water. Reservoirs and ponds have been treated to cleanse bacteria from silt.
10. The bathing water monitoring point has been moved 200 metres to the east of the beach outfall, by agreement with the Environment Agency, following surveys confirming that the majority of bathers are found in that area. Measures to dissuade people from bathing near the outfall have been generally successful.
11. The Clean Seas Please Campaign, run by Hastings and Rother Voluntary Action Associations, and its education outreach programme, the Shore Academy, have run a series of successful events to educate children about what should and should not be poured into household drains, where the water goes and what effect it has on our beaches.
12. The first stage assessment of longer term options to provide year on year certainty about bathing water results have been provided by Southern Water. The two options still under consideration after the initial feasibility assessment are an extended outfall, perhaps to 500 metres, or the diversion of the Alexandra Park stream into the sewer network in dry weather.

Actions Planned

13. It is crucial that further actions are completed before bathing water monitoring restarts in May 2015.
14. Southern Water has committed to an accelerated programme which should address most catchment sewer issues before May. There may be exceptions where extensive engineering is required.
15. A major intervention is planned for lower Alexandra Park in early spring. This will involve a diversion of the stream through the ponds and the boating lake. Water flows will be engineered to ensure filtration by 'floating islands' of greenery before re-entering the stream below the boating lake.
16. The longer term options - outfall extension and stream diversion - will be subject to an independent external assessment which will also provide a set of actions, a timetable and costs for the most feasible solution.

Financial Implications

17. Southern Water is funding its programme of investigations and rectifications. The final cost is estimated at £11 million.
18. During 13-14 and 14-15, the Environment Agency has transferred £208,000 to HBC as part funding of the misconnections investigations and Alexandra Park works.

HBC has contributed £100,000 to this project, which will be fully spent. It is anticipated that further funding may be necessary from the EA and HBC reserves as future projects emerge.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No

Background Information

Officer to Contact

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