

## **Environment Sub-Committee**

**8 November 2017**

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)  
Councillors L Bell, K Clark, D Cox, D Drummond,  
E Hodson, M Huscroft, G Madden and A Percy.

### **E18/11/17 Apologies**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor W Lott.

### **E19/11/17 Substitute Members**

There were no substitutes reported

### **E20/11/17 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

### **E21/11/17 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2017 be confirmed.

### **E22/11/17 Northumbrian Water Limited**

Consideration was given to a presentation from Mike Madine, the Head of Asset Management and Transformation at Northumbria Water Limited (NWL) which explained that every five years water and sewerage companies such as NWL had to go through a price review with the regulator, OFWAT. The current review was to set the prices for the period 2020 to 2025 and sets price controls for 6 separate parts of the water and sewerage business.

It was explained that there were individual price controls for 6 segments of the business:

- Water Resources
- Water network
- Sewer network
- Sewage Sludge
- Household Retail
- Non Household Retail

The Regulator wanted to introduce an element of competition in to the market to drive down costs which meant that other providers could offer to provide services for non household retail premises. An example given was that a provider could bundle gas, electricity and water in to a single package.

It was explained that further guidance was awaited on proposed changes to the household retail element of the service which would allow people to change their water retailer. The water would still be provided by NWL but charged for by another provider.

Members were advised that core services would not be changing and therefore the work the company did with the Authority would not change. Reference was made to the flagship Killingworth/Longbenton project which was being led by NWL and who had obtained funding for the scheme. It was also explained that the company would be investing in infrastructure to allow development.

Clarification was sought on how the NWL charges compared with other water companies. It was explained that the charges in the North East were the second lowest in the country. It was also explained that standards for water quality had increased year on year and currently stood at 99% nationally

Reference was made to various sources of the water provided by NWL. It was explained that the company owned a number of surface water sources, such as at Kielder Water and Derwent Reservoir. They held licenses from the Environment Agency to extract water from rivers and also extracted water from a number of boreholes, mainly along the coast.

It was explained that NWL carried out climate forecasting to enable them to design schemes to deal with changes to the climate and also growth. He explained that the company did a lot of work with its partners, including the Authority, to manage flood risk such as re-profiling becks and letches to create more capacity. He also explained that schemes were over designed. The industry standards were generally for schemes to be developed to cope with a 1 in 30 year event and schemes in the NWL area were designed to cope with a 1 on 40 year event. Members were advised that developers were only required to build to a 1 in 30 year event standard.

Reference was made to the removal of outflow pipes at Whitley Bay and clarification was sought as to whether this removal had led to the build up of sand/sediment in the mouth of Cullercoats harbour. It was suggested that the outflow pipes had previously acted as groynes, trapping sand on the beach. The representatives of NWL agreed to make some enquires and report back.

The Chair thanked Mr Madine for his report

It was **AGREED** that the report be noted.

### **E23/11/17      Air Quality Update**

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the air quality status report sent to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the progress being made on the development of an air quality strategy, the introduction of

a clean air zone to tackle NO<sub>2</sub> and odour issues at the sewage treatment works at East Howdon.

Tony Baines and Steve Robson from Northumbria Water Limited (NWL) attended the meeting to outline the steps taken to eliminate odour emissions from the treatment plant at East Howdon. It was explained that site treated water from an area of 145 square miles on both sides of the River Tyne and from a population of around 1.1 M. The site treated up to 12.12 cubic metres of sewage per second and was the largest sewage treatment works on the east coast.

It was explained that due to odour issues in 2007 NWL had appointed a consultant to carry out a detailed study into the performance of the plant. As a result NWL had invested £11M in measures to control odour from the site. This had led to a decrease in complaints from local residents about the site from around 300 per year. It was explained that the site now had 14 chemical scrubber systems in place to remove odours from the site. Gas generated by the plant was now supplied to the national gas network.

In 2012 the system for the treatment of sludge had changed from a lime based process to a thermal hydrolysis process. An advanced anaerobic digestion process and a combined heat and power system had been installed at a cost of £26M which had significant environmental benefits. In addition the new process was less odourous, due to a 60% reduction in ammonia and a 75% reduction in sulphur.

During 2016 a £6M project had commenced to refurbish the primary tanks including the renewal of the tank covers and the installation of a dedicated odour scrubber.

The Sub Committee was advised that when a complaint was received a check was made to see if everything at the plant was working correctly. The wind direction was also checked as there were other sources of odours which did not come from the NWL plant.

It was also explained that the site had an odour management plan which included daily checks at various locations around the site. The Environment Agency was responsible for monitoring the central part of the site and Environmental Services monitored the rest of the site. In addition checks were made to ensure that the site operated within the terms of its planning permission.

Members were advised that environmental health staff had carried out monitoring of the site over the summer and had highlighted one issue which required attention. It was explained that the service had only received 2 complaints about the site over the previous 10 months. One related to an issue regarding an odour at the Royal Quays development. It was explained that monitoring had identified odour issues which had been the result of plant breakdowns. A hairline break in a foul gas line in the bio-digester plant had been identified by NWL, repaired and additional maintenance checks instituted.

A Member explained that on occasions the smell around East Howdon was very unpleasant for the residents. As it had been such a long running saga many of the residents appeared to accept the smells as part of living in the area. The representatives of NWL explained that they had not been getting feedback on the problems which made it difficult to investigate and resolve any issues. It was

explained that NWL attended a residents' forum where issues could be raised. Members agreed to encourage residents to raise concerns with NWL or Environmental Services either at the forum or individually as issues arose. This would ensure that all parties were fully aware of the concerns in the area and that steps could be taken to address those concerns.

The Chair thanked the representatives from NWL for their report.

Consideration was also given to the Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2017. This report showed the air quality status in North Tyneside and identified any strategies employed by the authority to improve air quality. It was noted that the authority had not had to declare an air quality management area in the borough as a result of the monitoring of Nitrogen Dioxide and Particulates carried out by the authority. Reference was also made to the identification of a number of new monitoring points mainly based around road junctions.

It was explained that the authority also operated 2 real time monitoring stations in the borough, the first at the East Howdon treatment works and the second on Wallsend High Street.

Members were advised that the authority was required to have an air quality strategy in place to identify the measures that the authority would implement over a 5 year period to reduce the concentration and exposure to air pollutants which would be harmful to health.

It was explained that the review of the strategy had been put on hold to allow for works to address an issue where the limit in Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) at the kerbside of A1058 at Wallsend had been exceeded. This had been identified following the publication of the Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide in UK. DEFRA had published a revised action plan on the 26 July 2017 which had identified that road vehicles contributed approximately 80% of the NO<sub>2</sub> pollution at the roadside and the growth in the number of diesel vehicles had exacerbated the problem along with the failure of a number of motor manufacturers to meet Euro Standards for emissions in their vehicles. Air quality modelling had been revised to take account of the lower reductions in pollution emissions expected from vehicles and revised road traffic data. This revision had resulted in an area of approximately 800 metres along the coast road where it borders with the Newcastle City Council area that currently exceeded and was expected to exceed the annual NO<sub>2</sub> limit of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> until 2022. The authority had been directed to carry out a feasibility study within 18 months to identify the options to reduce NO<sub>2</sub> at the location within the shortest possible time. It was explained that a joint steering group with representatives of Newcastle and Gateshead councils had been set up to consider the options and complete a joint feasibility study. In August 2017 additional NO<sub>2</sub> monitoring had commenced at the site to provide data on the success or otherwise of actions taken to address the issue. The exceedance had also provided an opportunity for the authority to bid for funding under the Clean Bus Technology Fund to retrofit buses which used the A1058 with technology to reduce NO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It was explained that retrofitting buses to Euro 6 standards required the support and agreement of the bus companies involved and would reduce emissions by 95% but would incur increased fuel and maintenance costs for the operators.

Members sought clarification on whether the improvements to the Coast Road had led to a reduction in levels of NO<sub>2</sub> and particulates. It was explained that data on this would become available over the coming year. It was also explained that monitoring of queuing traffic was carried out at Earsdon.

Clarification was also sought on whether the air quality strategy would cover all oxides and particulates. It was explained that the authority was only required to report NO<sub>2</sub> to the Environment Agency and DEFRA.

The Chair thanked the officers for their report.

It was **AGREED** that the report be noted

(Prior to consideration of the above item Councillor Clark advised the Sub-committee that during the course of her employment she worked with residents in the East Howden area)