

Report from District Councillor Greaves - Long Man PC - Monday 13th November 2023

1) WDC's Overview and Scrutiny committee raised certain questions with South East Water following their 11th September meeting.

Points responded to are as follows:

- SEW have a plan to significantly improve their capability to respond to incidents
 - ensuring adequate resources for prompt incident response
 - improved provision for vulnerable customers (currently for approx. 35,000 people - they expect to have 100,000 people on their priority services register by 2024/25)
 - improved response capabilities for premises such as schools, farms and care homes through use of bowsers (mobile and fixed)
- SEW have a plan to be able to respond to 35,000 customers impacted with no water (required by DEFRA as a reasonable worst case scenario for water companies). There have been 3 incidents which have impacted greater numbers of customers so have requested funding to increase planned response capabilities from 35,000 to 100,000 customers.
- SEW have held a number of meetings with Ofwat to discuss the adequacy of their infrastructure to meet customers' demands. A formal funding submission has been put forward to Ofwat but this was not accepted. Further discussions are taking place.
- The question of dividend payments to shareholders was made – but the simple fact is that without a return on their investment (i.e. dividends) shareholders would not be prepared to invest and no infrastructure would result.
- A question was raised about forward planning for housing / population / households. SEW responded that they work with a specialist demographic forecasting company. Huge analysis takes place in arriving at a plan.

2) An Extraordinary Full Council meeting has been called for 8th February'24 to consider the WDC draft Local Plan.

3) The Government has confirmed that weekly waste food collections will take place from March 2026. WDC have been reviewing the latest announcements from DEFRA on simpler recycling and food waste collections and has already started the planning process for this.

4) WDC (in partnership with ESCC) have applied for funding from Sport England's 'Swimming Pool support Fund' second phase. (The application for funding within Phase 1 failed). The emphasis of this 2nd phase is to introduce significant energy saving measures at the pools in Hailsham, Crowborough and Uckfield.

5) Significant work has been carried out to improve and develop digital services (we would identify this as the 'My Wealden' website service). As usage (by the public) for the services has increased significantly the underlying site has not evolved to meet the needs of customers. Huge effort has gone in to introducing technical improvements throughout the site.

6) The Council are boosting their cyber security capabilities alongside the above

7) Council Tax collections are up 1.75% on last year.

8) Recycling rates are up from 41.9% in Q1 of 2022-23 to 52.2% for Q1 of 2023-24

9) Note - the A27 between Beddingham and Firle will be closed overnight for roadworks between 6th November and Friday 1st December 2023

10) Flooding – weekend of 4th/5th November: I was in touch with Michael Lunn (Chair of Pevensey and Cuckmere Water Levels Management Board) and Maria Caulfield on Thursday 2nd Nov. Maria confirmed that she obtained funding to stop the area being turned into a natural flood plain and we have for the first time in decades had regular dredging of

the mouth of the river which is apparently clear at the moment. What we don't have is dredging of the Alfriston section of the river.

The local emergency team had been working on the Alfriston stretch all week and had been trying to fix the broken valve of the sluice gates which is preventing the water flowing to the mouth of the river. The Environment Agency had been out with their emergency pump since Tuesday (31st Oct) constantly pumping the water from the car park which has helped keep the levels down. The Litlington Road has struggled but the main access to the village has been maintained although high tides again during the week pushed the water back up stream.

The issue we have is with Natural England rather than the EA as they are refusing permits to dredge the Alfriston section and to permanently repair the valves.

Emergency services were on site and had been for most of the week .

Maria has been working hard on this matter and is in touch with the parish to organise a meeting asap to get a long term plan for Winton Street too as this has been plagued with traffic with the main route closed because of flooding.

David Greaves

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