

Southern Water Presentation cover report

Overview and Scrutiny Panel	14 March 2023
Report Author	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Status	For Recommendation
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Executive Summary:

A member of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel requested that an item on the interruption of water supply be added to the agenda for a future Panel meeting. They debated the item at the February meeting and agreed to invite Southern Water representatives to come and discuss the water supply infrastructure related questions and later respond to questions from Panel members and members of the public.

Recommendation(s):

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are being asked to provide some steer on the matter.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

There were no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal

The role of scrutiny is set out in section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000. The council must also have regard to the statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny from the ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government when exercising its functions.

Furthermore, according to the Council's Constitutional Rules of Procedure, Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8a; "Any member of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel shall be entitled to give notice to the Committee Services Manager that they wish an item relevant to the functions of the Panel to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Panel."

The Overview and Scrutiny panel can scrutinise the activities and services provided by external bodies or other agencies operating in the local area covered by Thanet District Council. However the Panel cannot oblige those external bodies to act upon their findings.

Risk Management

There were no corporate risks arising directly from this report.

Corporate

This report is to introduce an item that was requested by a Member of the Panel to discuss an issue that was raised by a resident. The Panel then agreed at the meeting on 16 February to invite Southern Water to attend the March meeting to discuss the matter. The Panel can scrutinise any matter that affects the wellbeing of Thanet residents.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

1. To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

No implications arise directly but the Council needs to retain a strong focus and understanding on issues of diversity amongst the local community and ensure service delivery matches these.

It was important to be aware of the Council's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and show evidence that due consideration has been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Environment
- Communities

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Democratic Services received an email request from Councillor Heather Keen requesting that an item be added to the next Overview and Scrutiny Panel agenda to

discuss residents' concerns regarding water supply interruptions in parts of the district.

- 1.2 The item was added to the OSP meeting of 16 February 2023. At that meeting the Panel agreed to invite Southern Water representatives to this meeting to discuss the following:

What was Southern Water's long term infrastructure development plan for the district?

This question was asked in the context of the multiple water supply interruptions faced by residents in some parts of the Thanet and future housing development.

What was Southern Water's view about paying compensation to those residents affected by the multiple water supply interruptions between December 2022 and January 2023?

This question was asked in the context of reports that some residents who deserved being paid compensation were not paid, whilst some residents who had not been affected by the interruptions were paid. This information if correct would call into question the accuracy of the Southern Water customer database.

2.0 Options

- 2.1 After listening to the Southern Water presentation and engaging their representatives in debate, Members could opt to make some recommendations for consideration and decision by Cabinet.
- 2.2 The Panel could opt not to take any further action.

3.0 Next Steps

- 3.1 If the Panel came up with recommendations, these would be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration and final decision as this matter is an Executive function.

Contact Officer: *(Charles Hungwe, Senior Democratic Services Officer)*
Reporting to: *(Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager)*

Annex List

None

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance:

Legal: