



## Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 22 March 2023  
at 10 am at County Hall Norwich

### Present:

Cllr Steve Morpew (Chair)

Cllr Carl Annison

Cllr James Bensly(substitute for Cllr  
Lana Hemsall)

Cllr Phillip Duigan

Cllr Barry Duffin

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Cllr Keith Kiddie

Cllr Brian Long

Cllr Ed Maxfield

Cllr Jamie Osborn

Cllr Brian Watkins

Cllr Tony White (substitute for Cllr Lesley  
Bambridge)

### Also, present (who took a part in the meeting):

Jonathan Glerum

Dr Robin Price

Emily Linsdell

Henry Cator OBE

Rachael Storr

Joel Hull

Mark Ogden

Kat Hulatt

Peter Randall

Tim Shaw

Regional Flood & Coastal Manager, Anglian Water

Director of Quality and Environment, Anglian Water

Regional Engagement Intern, Anglian Water

Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance

Environment Agency

Assistant Director - Waste and Water Management (Community  
and Environmental Services)

Flood & Water Manager (Community and Environmental  
Services)

Head of Legal Services

Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager

Committee Officer

## 1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Lesley Bambridge, Cllr Richard Price, Cllr Lana Hemsall, Ms Helen Bates (Church Representative), Giles Hankinson (Parent Governor) and Mr Paul Dunning (Church Representative).  
An apology was also received from Eric Vardy, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Public Question Time**

3.1 There were no public questions

### **4. Local Member Issues/Questions**

4.1 There were no local member issues/questions.

### **5 Call In**

5.1 The Committee noted that there were no call-in items.

### **6 Combined Sewer/Storm Water Overflows**

6.1 The annexed report (6) was received.

6.2 The Scrutiny Committee received a report that provided an update on the issue of combined sewer/storm water overflows (which had previously been considered by the Committee in November 2022) and explained the activity carried out by both Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to monitor and prevent sewerage and drainage issues.

6.3 During discussion of the report with Jonathan Glerum (Regional Flood & Coastal Manager, Anglian Water), Dr Robin Price (Director of Quality and Environment, Anglian Water), Emily Linsdell (Regional Engagement Intern, Anglian Water), Henry Cator OBE (Chair of NSFA0, Rachael Storr (Environment Agency), Joel Hull (the Assistant Director Waste and Water Management (Community and Environmental Services), and Mark Ogden (Flood & Water Manager (Community and Environmental Services) the following key points were noted:

- The representatives of Anglian Water and the Environment Agency were questioned about sewage discharge incidents that had taken place across the county and how they intended to prevent them in future.
- In reply to questions from the Chair about how long it would take before Norfolk no longer had raw sewage discharges into rivers and the sea, the representatives from Anglia Water said that the company was due to publish data shortly that would show spills from storm outflows had decreased significantly during the last 12 months.
- In reply to questions from Councillors it was pointed out that pollution from sewage was ranked on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being the worst type of pollution. In making an assessment as to the ranking of sewage discharge, the impact on the local community and tourism were important considerations. Steps needed to be taken to educate communities on the right things to flush down the drainage system.
- Councillors stressed the importance of Event Duration Monitors (EDMs), their installation and maintenance, especially as they tended to be in volatile locations. The representatives of Anglia Water said that all water companies provided the Environment Agency with EDM data every year as part of their regulatory annual return to fulfil their permitted conditions to discharge from storm overflows under the Environmental Permitting Regulations. The data was available on the DEFRA data services platform. The 2022 return was currently being verified by the EA.

- Figures at this stage across the region had shown a reduction of 54% in the total hours of spills compared to 2021, with an average of 14 spills per overflow down from 25 in 2021.
- Anglian Water was investing £811 million between 2020-2025 as part of their Water Industry Natural Environment Programme to improve the environment and river water quality. This was the largest investment of any UK water company.
- Anglian Water was engaged with local communities on a wide range of local issues to improve water quality. For example, Anglian Water worked closely with Coastal Partnership East on the protection of coastal water assets.
- Anglian Water are supporting local innovative projects to drive change such as the County Council's Reclaim the Rain, at three sites in Norfolk aimed at improving water resilience. The use of slow-release water butts and large water storage within local communities was being explored as part of this project. An update on this project could be provided at a later date.
- By working together with partners Anglian Water hoped to come up with new ideas and concepts to reclaim excess water and deal with sewage discharges. Most of that which storm overflows released was rainwater.
- Anglian Water was working towards 26 new wetlands by the end of the decade.
- There was a flagship wetland project at Ingoldsthorpe, created in partnership with Norfolk Rivers Trust which Councillors were welcome to visit.
- There was also an Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW) site at Stiffkey that included a sustainable, low-carbon, natural wastewater treatment system that also boosted biodiversity and Councillors were also welcome to visit this site.
- Wetlands were a natural flood defence. Barriers to introducing additional wetlands were discussed, specifically issues about acquiring land given that took land away from agricultural use which was not always well received by the local farming community.
- Anglian Water was taking steps to investigate where new reservoirs might be introduced in the area.
- A nature-based approach to water management solutions was also being taken in urban areas.
- Both the Committee and Anglian Water welcomed the Government's announcement earlier this year about a consultation on the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and for a direct and adequate funding stream for the work of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance. This issue had been previously considered by this Committee in 2022, the aim being to make Sustainable Drainage Systems mandatory and remove the automatic right to connect which would help to reduce storm overflow activations.
- The Committee also noted the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee had published its report entitled 'The affluent and the effluent: cleaning up the failures of water and sewage regulation' on the day of this meeting, which found that under investment, insufficient government strategy and poor coordination has resulted in the failure to protect the water environment. It was too early for the Scrutiny Committee to give any consideration to this report at today's meeting.
- Councillors said that in the past some of the water management projects introduced by Anglian Water had lacked scale and required more linkages between government funding and public and private sources of funding. Partnerships with the local planning authority, local Rivers Trust, farmers, landowners, and highways authorities were seen as being vital to improve river

health and reduce storm flow activations.

- The representatives from Anglian Water said that the company planned to make Norfolk the first area in Europe to take a blended approach to obtaining partnership funding for changes in land use that made for better water management.
- Councillors said there was a tendency for funding to be geared towards projects in areas that would benefit the most people, the consequence being that areas with smaller populations were not as well supported.
- Anglian Water had a map on their website (which was constantly being updated) that showed the location of sewage outflows across the county. Work was being done on the map to allow it to show changes in real time.
- There was a drive for innovation and pooling of data between partner organisations.
- Members were informed as to why outflows were permitted, to protect homes and local businesses from damage that could be incurred by flooding and sewage. It was for this reason that Anglian Water took a measured approach to the issue of revoking permits.
- It was acknowledged that when overflow pipes were designed and introduced in the days before Anglian Water, the environmental thinking behind allowing them was flawed. Many of the issues that arose from their design and use today were not unique to Norfolk.
- Water obstruction and nutrient levels were regarded as issues that were as significant as storm overflow levels in relation to achieving good ecological status of rivers.
- Where beaches were not meeting the required standards, the reasons behind this were investigated in conjunction with the Environment Agency.
- There were issues concerning the discharge of sewage into the river Wensum where bacterial levels were higher than the permitted levels.
- The Committee highlighted the provision of waterbutts by NCC as a viable option for encouraging water recycling. The Chair pointed out that the Committee had previously made a recommendation to the Cabinet Member on this matter and suggested that the Cabinet Member should be asked to provide Councillors with an update on the current position. Anglian Water representatives said that they would be happy to work with the County Council and other partner organisations to set up a campaign to help provide water butts.

## 6.4 **RESOLVED**

### **That the Committee**

- 1. That the Committee note the nature and speed of progress made with flood prevention activities in Norfolk and the desire by all partners to have more done faster, done better and done together.**
- 2. That representatives of Anglian Water and the Environment Agency be invited to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in one year's**

time to provide an update on progress with sewage and stormwater overflow issues and flood prevention activity.

3. That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste be invited to provide an update for members on plans to implement the widest possible use of slow release water butts to store flood water and make them available for use by agriculture, industry, communities, and the environment. It was noted that Anglian Water had offered to assist in this matter.
4. That Members of the Scrutiny Committee welcome the steps being taken to create more wetlands and other partnership projects and take up an offer from Anglian Water to visit the site of the wetland project at Ingoldsthorpe and the Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW) site at Stiffkey.

7. **Update from the Chair of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership (NCCSP) Scrutiny Sub Panel**

7.1 The annexed report (7) was received.

7.2 The Scrutiny Committee received an update from the Chair of the NCCSP Scrutiny Sub Panel, Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris.

7.3 The Committee agreed to endorse the report and the progress being made by the Scrutiny Sub Panel.

8 **Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme**

8.1 The annexed report (8) was received.

8.2 **RESOLVED**

**That the Committee:**

**Note the current forward work programme as set out in the appendix to the report.**

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm

**Chair**

