

Report Title:	<b>Resident Scrutiny Suggestion – Pollution of the River Thames</b>
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No - Part I
Meeting and Date:	Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 21 June 2022
Responsible Officer(s):	David Cook, Scrutiny Officer
Wards affected:	All

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

- The report outlines a suggested topic submitted by a resident for consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Topics can be suggested by residents and then considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel for further consideration (criteria outlined in paragraph 1.1.) Residents are able to access the criteria on the [council's website](#).
- Details of the resident who has submitted this topic have been anonymised.
- The suggested topic received as follows: “Review the water quality of the River Thames and how poor (below bathing standard) quality water impacts the residents of RBWM.”
- It is recommended that this topic is considered by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

### **1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the report and considers whether any further scrutiny of the issue is required.

### **2. CRITERIA OF ASSESSMENT FOR SUGGESTED TOPICS RECEIVED BY RESIDENTS**

2.1 Residents should only submit topics that relate to **a service, event or issue** which affects the social, environmental or economic wellbeing of a group or community of people in the Borough.

2.2 What makes a good scrutiny topic?

- **Scope** – is it an issue of concern to our local communities and other associated organisations?
- **Significance** – could a review of this issue improve the Council’s (or other organisations) processes or performance and make a positive difference to the lives of our residents?

- **Appropriate** – is this review timely and does it avoid duplicating other work?

2.3 Items that will not be considered include:

- Individual service complaints for which there is a corporate complaints procedure (please click [here](#) for more details)
- Topics outside of the remit of the council or where the council has no powers or influence to change an outcome
- Issues which scrutiny has considered in the last 12 months
- Areas relating to quasi-judicial functions e.g. planning, licensing and standards

### 3. INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF SUGGESTED TOPIC

#### Scope:

- 3.1 The responsibilities for river water quality lie outside the remit of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Environment Agency (EA) carries out water quality assessments of the waterbodies across England including its rivers and regulates discharge licenses of wastewater to those waterbodies. It works closely with water companies to ensure that they are closely monitoring and reporting back on their discharge activity. Water quality measurements are regularly carried out within the EA sampling regime and the data published, with chemical or biological results above the thresholds of the discharge permits investigated.
- 3.2 Sampling data is available here: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/water-quality/view/landing>
- 3.3 Individual Water Companies would each have their own business continuity arrangements and licenses to ensure that they stay within the agreed discharge limits from the EA.
- 3.4 A simple tool to help residents find the water companies for each area is available at [www.dwi.gov.uk/consumers/find-your-local-water-company/](http://www.dwi.gov.uk/consumers/find-your-local-water-company/). The [www.discoverwater.co.uk/](http://www.discoverwater.co.uk/) website has good interactive data provision on the issues raised in this question.
- 3.5 Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has no specific remit for water quality monitoring and has not specifically asked the EA for an assessment of water quality for any of the rivers within its borders. However, individual teams and officers do work closely with EA on local issues and particularly with the Catchment Partnership. The catchment partnership is a multiagency group designed to help waterbodies achieve good status under the Water Framework Directive.

#### Significance:

- 3.6 An inquiry was completed in January 2022 regarding the water quality of rivers by central Government which came out with some recommendations for

National Highways, Ofwat and the Environment Agency. There were also recommendations for Local Authority Highways departments to consider diffuse pollution from public roads through surface water drainage.

- 3.7 There are steps that could be reviewed within RBWM however a large number of the questions would need to be directed to the EA as the regulator.

**Appropriate:**

- 3.8 As above, an inquiry has been completed in January 2022 and has been widely reported in the national and local news.
- 3.9 The Environment Agency has taken steps to set out its plan to improve water quality in the UK including the requirement of Drainage and Waste Water Management Plans from Utility companies. As the EA are the regulator there is no scope for RBWM other than to consider how it manages pollution from areas under its ownership or management.
- 3.10 Further detail below:

[Water industry strategic environmental requirements \(WISER\): technical document - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107222/water-industry-strategic-environmental-requirements-wiser-technical-document.pdf)

[Water Quality in Rivers - Committees - UK Parliament](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/water-quality-in-rivers/)

[Water Quality in Rivers \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/water-quality-in-rivers/)

**4. CORPORATE PRIORITY AREAS**

- 4.1 When assessing a topic it is important to understand whether this item would fall under one of the key objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2021-2026, which has the overarching vision of ‘Creating a sustainable borough of opportunity and innovation’. It has been assessed that this topic would fall under the following objectives and priorities:

- **Inspiring Places:** Supporting the borough’s future prosperity and sustainability.
- Taking action to tackle climate change and its consequences, and improving our natural environment

**5. CONSULTATION**

<b>Name of consultee</b>	<b>Post held</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date returned</b>
James Thorpe	Service Lead – Sustainability and Climate	03/02/22	13/05/22
Ben Crampin	Flood Risk Manager	13/05/22	25/05/22
Michael McNaughton	Environmental Protection Officer	12/05/22	12/05/22
Chris Joyce	Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability & Economic Growth	08/06/22	09/06/22

Alysse Strachan	Head of Neighbourhood Services	08/06/22	
Andrew Durrant	Executive Director of Place Services	08/06/22	

## REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
For the Panel to consider if further scrutiny is required.	No	No

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