

EASTBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL – 15 NOVEMBER 2023

AMENDMENTS ON MOTIONS

In order of business to be considered:

Agenda Item 10d – Motion on Bylaws

Councillor Maxted will move the following amendment:

“Eastbourne Borough Council will continue to enforce its bylaws. We ask that the Scrutiny Committee consider the current bylaws and make any recommendations for repeal, amendments, or enforcement to a future Full Council meeting”.

Agenda item 10(a) – Motion on Southern Water

Councillor Murray will move a slightly amended motion to add in point 3e:

3. Calls on the Government:

‘e) To appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities’

Councillor di Cara will move the following alternative motion / amendment:

To delete the text as shown leaving in the one sentence in bold:

~~“Southern Water was responsible for 16,888 sewage spills in 2022. In Eastbourne during last year alone, sewage was discharged into the sea by Southern Water for a staggering 434 hours. It is time that we hold those responsible to task for this tsunami of human waste polluting our sea water.~~

~~This volume of waste and the frequency of discharges show that the discharges have become routine, rather than an emergency response to exceptional conditions.~~

The Government has stated that ‘Climate change has led to increased rainfall and water infrastructure has not kept pace with development growth’.

~~In addition to having a negative impact on local wildlife in our rivers and beaches, it is also having a devastating effect on our tourism and the health and wellbeing of our residents who use sea swimming to support their health.~~

~~We must work together to hold those responsible for these travesties to account, stop allowing them to profit at our expense and ensure that they improve the infrastructure to stop this happening in the future.~~

The Council:

- ~~1. Calls on the Government and Southern Water to accelerate the capital programme to stop the risks of untreated sewage discharges into our rivers and~~

~~seas and to stop this assault on nature, our economy and our basic human rights.~~

~~2. Calls on the Government and Southern Water to enable the widespread deployment of nature-based solutions for flood mitigation and improved water quality.~~

~~3. Calls on the Government:~~

~~a. To ensure a better resourced Environment Agency in its role as regulator, in order that enforcement and monitoring is improved.~~

~~b. To stop enforcing unrealistic housing numbers on local councils and force Southern Water to meet the costs of the required disposal of water from new homes once it is at street level, to improve the existing sewers to make them fit for purpose.~~

~~c. To reform the Regulated Asset Base model, and significantly reduce the weighted, adjusted cost of Capital, to stop rate paying households underpinning company debts.~~

~~d. To make CEO's of water companies personally responsible for excessive sewage discharges.~~

~~4. Asks the Chief Executive and Leader to write to relevant Government Ministers and Southern Water to call for these changes.~~

- Notes that whilst the use of Combined Storm Overflows are unacceptably high across the water industry, due to the strong action taken to date through measures such as the Environment Act and the Governments 'Plan for Water' all water companies, including Southern Water, have been required to publish Storm Overflow reduction plans. This has already seen a fall in the number and volume of overflows and lead to £7.1bn of investment in to improving the environment across the industry for the 2020-2025 period and £56bn of further investment over the next 25 years. Southern Water have committed to a record £7.8bn over the 2025-2030 period.
- Notes that in 2022, Southern Water committed to spending £50m on a number of pilot projects, including trialing nature-based solutions at the Stapleford Wasterwater Treatment Works with the ambition to cut carbon emissions and increase biodiversity. One of these pilot projects, on the Isle of Wight, saw the roll out of 6000 slow drain water butts and saw a 70% fall in the number of storm overflows releases.
- Notes that the Environment Agency's 'Environmental Resource Budget' has almost doubled in recent years, from £56 million in 2020/21 to £96m in 2022/23.
- Notes that government housing targets have been scrapped and were only relevant to local councils who had failed to maintain an up to date local plan.
- Notes the key role the Regulated Asset Base Model has played in enabling £47bn of infrastructure investment into the water industry since privatisation, that has seen supply interruptions fall 5 fold, leakage fall 3 fold and pollution entering rivers and the sea fall 85% - with 93% of bathing waters now rated

good or excellent, up from 76% in 2010. The loss of the RAB model would result in either infrastructure investment having to be cut substantially or very large increases to customer bills.

- Notes that the Environment Agency already has the powers to criminally prosecute chief executives and in partnership with OFWAT is currently carrying out the largest criminal investigation into the water industry, with the government now granting OFWAT the power to issued uncapped fines.

The Council commits to:

- Creating an action plan for sustainable drainage across all council owned buildings in the borough.
- Carry out an audit of all council owned buildings to ensure their sewage systems are not 'misconnected' to the surface water system in light of the previous failures in this area.
- Officers reporting back quarterly to the scrutiny committee on their work, in conjunction with Southern Water, to tackle illegal misconnections to the surface water network.
- Working with all relevant partners to support the roll out of storm attenuation measures in Eastbourne's parks and open spaces and the roll out of 'green roofs' on Council owned buildings.
- Reaffirms its support for the Regulated Asset Base model, in line with the national policy of both the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Partys.
- Using its communication channels to promote Eastbourne's MP's campaign to roll out free slow drain water butts for residents, funded by Southern Water.
- Using all available planning powers to ensure new developments in the town offer fully sustainable drainage.
- Writes to Southern Water to outline our desire to work with them on any future pathfinder/nature-based solution pilots.

Agenda Item 10b – Motion on Local Plan

Councillor Smart will move the following alternative motion:

“This Council recognised that it has been without a Local Plan for almost 6 years since 2018. That has left it vulnerable to developers experiencing the lack of a 5 year land supply to the Planning Inspectorate.

This Council welcomes the recent Bill which abolishes mandatory housing targets and contains other progressive measures; and

This Council welcomes the Government’s introduction of ‘Commencements Notices’ that will set out the timescales for build-out and allowing planning permissions to be revoked in instances of non-compliance; and

The Council will exercise the new discretionary power to charge 100% increased Council Tax on homes that have been empty for 1 year, holiday lets and AirBnB’s.

This Council will move expeditiously to prepare a Local Plan with an increased focus on employment growth and the related profession of infrastructure, amenities and housing to meet current and future residents’ needs.

With respect to housing, the Council should declare publicly how many homes should be built.

In the specific case of the much-delayed Bedfordwell Road site, if a business case cannot be developed to justify grant funding then the Council should seek to dispose of its interest to a developer capable of delivering the affordable homes Eastbourne requires on this site.”

Agenda Item 10c – Motion on Housing and Homelessness Challenge

Councillor Small will move the following amended motion:

“This Council notes:

Local Authorities spent £1.7bn on temporary accommodation in the last financial year.

Homeless presentations to the Borough have more than doubled over the last 3 years.

The net cost to the Borough has increased from **£1.5m** in 2021/22 **and £2.2m in 2022/23**, to a projected figure of well over £3m this year.

Private sector rents are at their highest on record, with available housing supply at its lowest.

Lack of secure housing has a wider socio-economic impact on health, productivity and communities.

The recent cross-party summit hosted by this Authority alongside the District Councils' Network and attended by 158 local authorities (half of all local authorities in England) to tackle the national crisis relating to homelessness and temporary accommodation.

Ordinary working families are caught up in a housing crisis that is no fault of theirs.

This Council urgently requests that the Government:

- Raises Local Housing Allowance rates to a level that will cover at least 30% of local market rent and commit to annual uprating.
- Provides urgent additional funding to local authorities for Discretionary Housing Payments of £100m in 2023-24 and £200m in 2024-25.
- Provides a £150m top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2024-25.
- Reviews the cap for housing benefit subsidy rate for local authority homelessness placements.
- Develops new policy to stimulate retention and supply in the privately rented sector.
- Gives councils the long-term funding, flexibility and certainty needed to increase the supply of social housing.”
- Allows Councils the option to charge an additional levy on top of Council tax if local authorities are otherwise unable to meet the costs of providing temporary and emergency accommodation.
- Or alternatively, takes sufficient measures within the welfare and health systems to reduce the demand for Council homelessness prevention services.

And the Council commits to:

Increasing focus on employment within the draft local plan and growth strategy.

Taking measures to bring forward the currently stalled developments at Bedfordwell Road and The Old Dairy as a matter of urgency and regrets that stronger action wasn't taken to deliver housing upon Site 7A.

The Council notes that the wider solution to the challenge of homelessness can only come through increasing employment levels and incomes relative to housing costs. It is regretful that Eastbourne saw no increase in employment between 2010 and 2019, despite this being a time of record employment growth nationally and has averaged a net increase of 162 homes a year between 16/17 and 21/22 with less than 5% of these being affordable, despite this being a time of record house building nationally.

The Council also notes with regret, that despite core spending power being at an 8-year high and having benefited from 1.6m and 4.9m in government grants since March 2022 to help tackle homelessness for Eastbourne Borough Council and East Sussex County Council respectively, the Council's borrowing level has risen to

£181m with subsequent debt servicing costs rising several million and inviting speculation as to Councils ongoing ability to provide its services.