

Member Motion on Sewage: Council, 5 December as proposed by Councillor Sell and seconded by Councillor Dean

Council notes that despite repeated calls to put a stop to the dumping of raw sewage into our precious rivers and chalk streams, the latest annual assessment by the Environment Agency showed “totally unacceptable” performance on pollution for most of England’s water and sewage companies. Thames Water was given just 2 stars for performance for 2022, meaning that they require significant improvement.

Council therefore resolves to call on the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment to strengthen the legislation on the discharging of raw sewage into our rivers by:

- 1) Tightening and clarifying the regulations and law on the circumstances in which discharge of sewage might be permitted.
- 2) Requiring prompt prosecution and fining of all offending companies.
- 3) Requiring the Environment Agency to audit the Water and sewerage companies regularly, every year, to ensure that they are reporting their operations accurately.
- 4) The Council also requests the Government to bring forward the date by which Water Companies are required to reduce their discharges by 50% -to bring it forward from 2048 to 2030.
- 5) This Council authorises the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment and to our Member of Parliament to make these four requests.

Explanatory Notes:

The Environment Agency reported that in 2022 raw sewage was released into open water in Uttlesford hundreds of times in 2022.

Figures from the Environment Agency show storm overflows were used 321 times within Uttlesford's local authority boundaries in 2022, discharging for a total of around 3,045 hours.

Of these, 185 were from Thames Water's network, while 136 were from facilities operated by Anglian Water.

The Environment Agency has called on Thames Water and all the other Water Companies together to invest £56 billion to upgrade their sewage treatment plants and storm overflows, but it is allowing them 25 years in which to do this. We welcome that the Stansted and Takeley sewage works are to be upgraded by Thames Water.