

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
16 AUGUST 2023
18.30 - 18.51 PM**



Present:

Councillors Pickering (Chair), Welch (Vice-Chair), C Eberle, Haffegge and McLean

Present virtually:

Councillors Barnard, Egglestone and Watt

Also Present:

Councillors Cochrane (virtually) and Penfold (in person)

In Attendance:

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, Bracknell Forest Council

Ann Moore, Assistant Director: Democratic & Registration Services, Bracknell Forest Council

11. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Michael Forster, Cllr McKenzie-Boyle, Cllr Cath Thompson, Cllr Webb and Victoria Hill

12. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 6 July 2023 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

13. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Christoph Eberle declared an interest as his job occasionally involves work on commissions with Thames Water.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

14. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

15. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

16. Council recommendation on Thames Water

The Chair of the Commission, Cllr Pickering, explained the meeting was called for commission members to consider the recommendation, agreed at Council on 12 July 2023, that Overview and Scrutiny should work with other local authorities across the

Thames Valley to challenge failures of Thames Water and minimise environmental damage. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer, Kevin Gibbs, introduced the technical report. This outlined three recommendations for members to consider. Option A, to approve the recommendation drafted at Council, option B, agree a scrutiny review on Thames Water with a revised scope or to option C to reject the referral from Council.

A technical question was asked to explain in simple terms the difference between option A and option B. It was clarified that option A would agree the exact wording at Council. Option B would allow the panel, through the Commission, to develop its own scope but with a focus on elements of Thames Water.

A debate of the recommendations took place. The following points were raised:

- Support for the topic shown by Council was acknowledged and it was noted that due to the complexity of the matter a revised scope would be beneficial and so option B was favoured.
- It was important to note that the interest from Council in this matter was not to undermine the work of the Commission but to ensure that Thames Water would be scrutinised. It was indicated that the support on the matter from Council could be used to leverage access to people within Thames Water to scrutinise.
- Support was given for the proposal to work with Scrutiny Panels across Berkshire to ensure accountability was taken for water courses across the area which pass through Bracknell Forest.
- Support was given for option A due to the strong interest on the topic from Council, it was felt that this would ensure the report would be completed in accordance with the requirements set out at Council.

The Chair of the Commission summed up with support for the topic, agreed that it should be investigated by the appropriate panel and confirmed a vote for Option B.

Recommendations were put to the vote:

- Option A received one vote.
- Option B received four votes.
- Option C received no votes.

RESOLVED – that Option B was followed, a scrutiny review on Thames Water with a revised scope.

CHAIR