

Somerset Council  
Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee  
– 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023



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Update on the Recovery of Water Quality in Somerset

Lead Officer: Kirsty Larkins

Author: Kirsty Larkins

Contact Details: [kirsty.larkins@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:kirsty.larkins@somerset.gov.uk)

Executive Lead Member: Cllr Dixie Darch

Division / Local Member: All

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** As requested by the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee on 19 July 2023, this item will provide information on the respective roles and responsibilities of organisations in delivering good water quality in Somerset.
- 1.2.** The Committee will also receive testimony from expert witnesses on how the data on water quality is gathered and monitored.

## **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1.** To note the presentations provided by the various organisations and the expert witnesses.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1.** At the meeting of 19 July 2023 there was a request from the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee to hold a meeting substantively dedicated to the recovery of water quality issues within Somerset and beyond.
- 3.2.** It was originally planned that this item would also cover the issues concerning Phosphates and Nutrient neutrality that are currently causing significant problems within the planning system within Somerset. However, due to the Government's recent suggested amendments to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill to potentially remove neutrality requirements from developments, there is still much confusion on the implications for Somerset. As a result, this part of the item will come back to this Committee at a later date, once the implications and next steps become clearer.

- 3.3.** During this item, the Committee will hear from expert witnesses Dr Paul Lunt, Associate Professor in Environmental Science, Plymouth University and Dr Andrew Clegg of the Parrett and Yeo Phosphate Pollution Study (PYPPS) regarding the data surrounding water quality, locally.
- 3.4.** The Committee will then receive presentations from representatives from Natural England, Wessex Water and the Environment Agency who will describe the roles and responsibilities of the respective organisations in delivering and recovering good water quality across the system.
- 3.5.** The organisations will describe how the organisations work, their targets and objectives, how they are monitored and regulated and how they are resolving water quality issues within Somerset.
- 3.6.** Whilst the presenters will not go into detail about phosphates, nutrient neutrality and the implications for the planning regime due to the uncertainty of recent announcements, a discussion will be held regarding the known point and diffuse sources of phosphates in Somerset and the longer-term plans for resolving water quality issues within the county.
- 3.7.** This item will not cover the role of the Flood and Coastal Team within Somerset Council, the role of the Lead Local Flood Authority, nor the role of the Somerset Rivers Authority in the system of water management within the county. An update on the role of these teams and authorities will be brought to the next available meeting of this Committee.

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1.** N/A

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1.** N/A

#### **6. Background papers**

- 6.1.** Presentations will be tabled on the day and will be made available after the meeting

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author