

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WATERSIDE COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr Stephen Collis (Chairman & Colchester Borough Council)
Jay Reagan (Colchester Borough Council)
Councillor David Bragg
Councillor Robert Jenkins
Councillor Sylvia Wargent
Councillor Sophie Weaver
Mr S Belbin (Coast Guard and Angling Boats rep)
Mike Berry (West Mersea Yacht Club)
Malcolm Clark (West Mersea Yacht Club)
Ms J Elmer (Beach Hut Committee)
Mrs F French
Mr R Haward - Oysterman
Mr Moffett
David Murr (Windsurfer and Kite Surfer Club)
Paul Reynold (Windsurfer and Kite Surfer Club)
Mr and Mrs Vince
Martin Wade (Royal National Lifeboat Institution)
Michael Wheeler (West Mersea Yacht Club)

IN ATTENDANCE: Belinda Silkstone (Environmental Protection Manager, Colchester Borough Council)
Rebecca Bromley (Coastal Catchment Officer, Anglian Water Authority)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Clements, Councillor Moore, Town Clerk Petra Palfreyman, Mr D Jarvis and Mrs M Phillips.

2. BATHING WATER QUALITY

Belinda Silkstone reported that bathing water at West Mersea has been re classified as 'sufficient' by the Environment Agency this year rather than 'good'.

Revised Bathing Waters Directive (2006/7/EC) which replaced the 1976 Directive. Following the introduction of the classification in 2015 West Mersea's bathing water was reclassified from 'excellent' to 'good'.

Coastal water classifications are based on four years' worth of data with 20 samples being taken by the Environment Agency across the bathing water season each year (May to September).

The revised Directive also saw the introduction of a new, more stringent assessment, based on bacteriological levels of E. Coli and Intestinal Enterococci.

The classification system for Bathing Water used by the Environment Agency is 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient' and 'poor'.

Following the reclassification of the bathing water in 2015 Anglian Water, Colchester Borough Council and the Environment Agency created the West Mersea Bathing Water Partnership in an attempt to collaboratively investigate the decline in bathing water quality at West Mersea.

Current Situation.

Following samples taken by the Environment Agency this year, the bathing water at West Mersea is to be classified as 'sufficient' rather than 'good'. A classification of 'sufficient' is compliant with the requirements of the Bathing Water Directive.

The Partnership has sought to identify possible pollution sources, investigate and implement solutions and where possible to address the issues identified.

The actions undertaken so far have included;

- A review by Anglian Water of the maintenance of the lagoon, pumps and storm tanks at the Mersea Water Recycling Centre (WRC) the sewage treatment works on the island.
- Anglian Water have carried out a misconnections survey of the island
- Attendance at the Mersea Island Regatta, and a behavioural change campaign work regarding dog deposits, by Anglian Water, CBC Animal Services and the Zone teams.
- The Environment Agency have audited all the significant permitted private discharges from caravan parks and other commercial sites over the last 2 years, and have been working with the permit holders to identify and make improvements to sewage collection and treatment standards on an ongoing basis since this. A number of caravan parks have installed new sewage systems or are planning to do so.
- The Environment Agency have undertaken a monitoring programme of all freshwater inputs to the sea between East and West Mersea.

The Environment Agency and Anglian Water, will be undertaking the following: -

- Anglian Water have carried out a tracer study to help identify the source of the pollution. The sampling has been completed and the data is currently being analysed. Once the results are known this will inform future projects.
- The Environment Agency will continue to audit the Caravan Parks and work with permit holders.
- Installation of two beach clean boards either at Cudmore Country Park or within the caravan parks.
- Engagement with caravan parks and food establishments for Anglian Waters 'Keep it Clear' campaign.
- Promotion and distribution of Anglian waters private treatment behaviour leaflets.
- Continuing of the behavioural change campaign regarding dog fouling on the beach.
- Ongoing sampling and monitoring of the area.

Colchester Borough Council will continue to work with partner agencies to seek improvements in the bathing water quality at West Mersea.

It was raised that there is a bad smell of sewage on Coast Road near the pontoon. This has been reported before to Anglian Water. Rebecca Bromley would investigate to see what action has been undertaken, and she will report back to the group.

Rebecca, also said there is a regular problem of cleaning the sewers on Coast Road for there can be a build up of fats etc. from cooking. Rebecca will be visiting all food related businesses speaking about the problems of fats.

Paul Reynolds from the Windsurfer and Kite Surfer Club reported that on occasions they can smell sewage on the air when they are out on the water and it can be quite pungent. Rebecca said if the information could be fed back to Stephen Collis or her directly, with times, date, weather conditions they will look into the problem.

Rebecca Bromley also has a number of leaflets that promote better water quality. West Mersea Town Council and West Mersea Yacht Club would put this information on to their websites.

The hyperlink below is to the bathing water page for West Mersea which shows all the data collected for bathing water and gives an overview of the risks to the water, and the work undertaken:

<http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?site=ukh3306-11750>

3. TO DISCUSS THE ALLEGED ABANDONED BOATS AT THE VILLAGE GREEN LAUNCH AREA BESIDE THE DABCHICKS SAILING CLUB

Mr and Mrs Vince attended the meeting to ask about the management of the Village Green near the Dabchicks Sailing Club as they were not able to use the slipway as it was blocked with boats, some of the vessels appear to be abandoned.

The land in question comes under the management of West Mersea Town Council, the Chairman asked if West Mersea Town Council could visit the site and ascertain if formal notices could be put on the allegedly abandoned boats asking for owners to remove them, if they are not claimed then the Council will look to remove them.

The Chairman was informed that there is meant to be some new signage for the area, West Mersea Town Council would report back on this.

4. REPORTS FROM COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL OFFICERS AND MEETINGS:

(a) Water Bailiff update

Jay Regan gave an update on the works that were undertaken by the Water Bailiff. There will be no Water Bailiff, but the duties will be undertaken by the Colchester Borough Council Zone Wardens.

Last summer the Zone Wardens were on duty during the week, the review that is being undertaken will look to make staff available at weekends and Bank Holidays. Part of the review is to look at the times that it would be good to have staff present on the waterfront.

By late March 2018, a plan should be ready for the forthcoming year.

(b) Widening of the Pontoon

Stephen Collis gave an update on the proposal which is to mirror the current crabbing area on the other side of the pontoon to be able to give more room to the crabbers.

The Marine Management Organisation has given a licence for the works to be undertaken.

Planning Permission has been granted but is going back to the Planning Committee on the 11 December 2017 for amending for the works to be undertaken in March 2018.

There was concern about people falling off the pontoon and being washed under the pontoon. The Councils Health and Safety Officer has looked at the risk of drowning due to persons becoming trapped under the pontoon (raised by committee). If people fall in their immediate reaction would be to keep above water and not immediately sink, if they do go underwater, they would stay in position unless there was a strong current, which would take them out the other side of the pontoon. As discussed, the actions suggested (barriers/wire under pontoon) by the committee are not a practical solution. In regard to risk controls, we would first look to reduce the chance that persons can fall in. By widening the pontoon this will help spread the people out making it safer.

An order has been raised for the installation of a gate onto the hammerhead. The gate will be installed under the height barrier as you enter the hammerhead, this is to stop members of the public entering the area when not going onto the water. The gate will deter people crabbing on the outside edge and coming into conflict with boats coming onto the hammerhead.

To help keep the main walkway free on the pontoon a suggestion was made to a install key clamp handrail for 43m in 6m section with 1m gaps between sections. There was a general agreement for this to be undertaken.

A proposal was raised that the pontoon instead of being widened at the top, that the current crabbing area be extended toward the land. Stephen Collis informed the Committee that the Planning Permission and the license from the MMO was for widening at the top if it was going to be altered the process would need to be started again. A vote was undertaken for the proposed change, the committee members attending wanted to stick with original proposal. A vote was undertaken to see if the widening of the pontoon should be undertaken, the majority of committee members voted for the project to be undertaken.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their time and their thoughts regarding the widening of the pontoon.

5. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.15pm.