

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Monday 8 February 2021 at 6.00pm

Questions for Southern Water in respect of flooding in Deal

- Q1 Over the last twenty years we have seen a couple of thousand houses built, over that time how much money has Southern Water invested along the main corridor pipeline running along Albert Road to accommodate the extra flow and how much is planned to be spent in future years. Can we also know the details of the major work undertaken?
- Q2 Despite the 11 floods in 15 years and the repeated risks of flooding necessitating in Southern Water having to position tankers in case of flooding when do Southern Water plan to increase the capacity of the Albert Road foul water drains?
- Q3 As houses get built in the Deal region the flooding seems to be getting worse. E.g. Church lane. Southwall road, Allenby road, the bottom of Mill Road where it meets Manor road, middle Deal Road near Grange Road, Park Avenue under the railway bridge and Station Road Walmer near the station just to name a few. As a resident looks like the system cannot cope anymore when heavy rainfall occurs. So why is Southern Water not fixing the situation and why does Southern Water have not recommended refusal on each housing application in the area on the grounds that the network cannot safely accommodate it without flooding elsewhere in Deal
- Q4 The manhole cover are loose and when we get flooding they are lifting and moving. This presents a real danger until Southern Water or Highways appear. Why can they not be fixed with small opening to allow the water under pressure to escape?
- Q5 When can the residents of Deal and the Albert road residents in particular be able to sleep easily free from the fear of flooding?

Questions submitted by Councillor T A Bond on behalf of members of the public

- Q6 DDC's statutory obligations when considering whether to approve an application is to ensure that flooding risk is not increased elsewhere (NPPF paragraph 163). We need information regarding whether there is sufficient capacity before approving an application in order not to contravene official policy. For planning application DOV/19/01260, DDC's principal planner requested information on a desk study carried out by SW, but SW refused to cooperate and provide this data. What are your reasons for this non-cooperation when it is an official policy requirement? Residents have reported this non-cooperation to OFWAT.
- Q7 For planning application DOV/01260, SW found that increased flows from the new development could increase the risk of flooding. Please provide the full study data to DDC.

- Q8 How far from the site of a new development do you assess capacity? Do you look at the wider network, in particular, areas prone to flooding (DDC to list these areas, but should include Albert Road, Southwall Road, Middle Deal Road etc). Do you look at capacity along the main route that waste water is carried towards the pumping station? This information is essential for DDC to ensure that there is not a breach of NPPF 163.
- Q9 What is SW's reason for not wanting to lock down manhole covers?
- Q10 There have been nine foul water floods on Albert Road alone since 2007, when Greensands Holdings took over ownership. This is in addition to innumerable flood warnings. Yet Southern Water has not even been courteous enough to explain to customers the causes of flooding except in 2014 and 2015, when it was thought to be pumping station failures. Please provide information on causes of flooding and remedial action taken:

| Date of flood | Cause of flooding* | Remedial action taken* | Expenditure on remedial action |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jun-07 | | | |
| Jan-08 | | | |
| Nov-09 | | | |
| Aug-10 | | | |
| Dec-13 | | | |
| May-14 | | | |
| 22 nd September 2015 | | | |
| 5 th January 2016 | | | |
| 28 th August 2020 | | | |

* Please provide the detailed report from your investigation of the incident.

- Q11 With regards to the flooding event in August 2020, a resident wrote to SW to enquire about the pumping station. The resident was informed that the storm pump was active. If, indeed, that was the case, and foul water was being pumped out to sea, why did the sewer on Albert Road become overloaded and discharge foul water to roads and into houses? This suggests either that the storm pumps or storm tanks do not have adequate capacity to cope, or that it was not working as it should to pump out excess foul water to sea. The response from SW was particularly worrying as it stated that "the storm pump would have been forwarding excess water to sea". We would like clarification and evidence that excess foul water was being pumped out to sea.
- Q12 SW have fitted sewers with monitors to assess foul water levels in order to provide a warning if a flood is imminent on Albert Road. This would allow emergency measures to be deployed in a timely manner. However, in August 2020 there was no flood warning, and upon calling SW customer service, they were not aware of any flooding issues i.e., there was a total failure to protect many homes from flooding. How did this failure arise? It would suggest that the monitors have no value in terms of protecting customers. We have further evidence regarding this, as SW customer service has taken to looking at the weather forecast and to advise customers to put up flood barriers at the slightest possibility of rain since the August 2020 incident.

Why such a low tech and inappropriate approach if investment has been made in a reliable warning system?

- Q13 What was the reason for the failure to warn residents, and to deploy emergency measures, on 28th August 2020? As a number of homes were flooded internally, to not provide even an explanation for such a major failing highlights SW's disregard for customers. Please provide residents of Albert Road with a written explanation for this failure.
- Q14 Why does SW deploy its emergency measures so often? There have been six warning to residents since the August 28th flooding incident where residents have to put up flood barriers and use sandbags. SW also deploy pumping tankers to empty sewers during these measures. Why is this necessary if the system has capacity, especially as the rain was not always heavy on some of these occasions? Based on SW's reported system resilience to OFWAT, we should, on average, have deployment of these measures once every 50 years instead of the 18 incidents in one year that is actually happening. Why this major discrepancy?
- Q15 Please provide information on the drainage network and capacity so that we can review it.
- Up-to-date drainage map for the wider Deal area including Walmer, Sholden, North Deal etc.
 - For the network identify, all upstream pipes that ultimately feed into the Albert Road sewer.
 - What estimated volume of wastewater does Southern Water use when calculating wastewater from each household i.e. the current figure used by SW in determining capacity.
- Q16 Please provide data for your capacity assessments for planning applications approved for developments of greater than 10 dwellings in Deal in the last 10 years. More specifically, what residual capacity remains in the Albert Road sewer after each major development? We would expect this residual capacity to fall as new developments are built.
- Q17 What average revenues (gross income) does SW realise from every 200 new homes that it connects to its wastewater network? Include initial connection fees as well as customer charges over a 5-year period.