

Revised Southern Water Water Resource Management Plan Consultation

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee	6 November 2024
Cabinet	20 November 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Lead Head of Service	Karen Britton (Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development)
Lead Officer and Report Author	Tom Gilbert (Principal Planner, Strategic Planning)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Boxley Downs Ward

Executive Summary

This report covers a further consultation on the Southern Water Revised Draft Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) following consultation in 2023 and feedback received. The consultation runs from 11 September to 4 December 2024.

The response was considered by Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee on 6 November 2024.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Cabinet;

1. That Maidstone Borough Council's ("the Council") response to Southern Water's Water Resource Management Plan consultation, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is submitted to Southern Water.

Revised Southern Water Water Resource Management Plan Consultation

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve its corporate objectives.</p>	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected. <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives.</p>	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Risk Management	Risks are set out in Section 5 of the report.	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic

		Development
Legal	<p>There is no specific legal requirement for Borough Councils to respond to Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) consultations. However, they are strongly encouraged to participate in the consultation process to ensure that local needs and perspectives are considered in the planning.</p> <p>The Water Industry Act 1991 mandates water companies to consult with relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, but it does not impose a legal obligation on these authorities to respond. The participation of Borough Councils is important for comprehensive water resource planning, but it remains a voluntary engagement rather than a statutory duty.</p>	MKLS (Planning)
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information the Council processes.	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Crime and Disorder	There are no implications to Crime and Disorder	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Procurement	On accepting the recommendations, there are no procurement needs at the present time.	Karen Britton –

		Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and aligns with action 5.7 of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan to strengthen water supplies and other critical infrastructure to be prioritised alongside ensuring more resilient settlements in respect to longer term climate projections including heat waves, droughts, and water scarcity.	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development

- 2.1 This report covers a further consultation on the Southern Water Revised Draft Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP). The consultation runs from 11 September to 4 December 2024. A previous consultation took place between 14 November 2022 and 20 February 2023 on an earlier version of the document.
- 2.2 This report summarises the latest consultation. The consultation has a standard template to collect responses. The Council’s proposed response to the consultation is attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 There are two water companies that operate within Maidstone Borough. These are Southern Water and South East Water. These do the following:
- Southern Water – water supply to the north of the Borough around Bredhurst and wastewater to the rest of the Borough
 - South East water – water supply to whole borough minus northern part and no wastewater supply
- 2.4 This consultation only affects water supply by Southern Water. Thus, only residents in the north of Boxley Downs Ward. As such wastewater issues are not the focus here as they fall outside of the remit of this consultation. A separate letter to Southern Water on the issue of poor water quality caused by wastewater contamination and the problems in the wastewater system is intended to be sent from the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Management.
- 2.5 For South East Water their WRMP was approved by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and adopted August 2024.
- 2.6 A WRMP is: *'a legal document that describes the steps we need to take to make sure there is enough water for everyone in our region, now and in the future, and to protect and enhance our shared environment.'* They are required every 5 years, and the present plan is to maintain water supply

over the timeframe 2025-2075. The plan covers the Southern Water supply area see figure 1.



Figure 1 Southern Water Supply Area

3. CONTENT OF THE CONSULTATION

3.1 The full technical WRMP report can be found via the link in background document 1. Below is a summary of the document.

3.2 The WRMP includes the following:

- Explanation of what a WRMP is
- Progress since the previous WRMP was adopted
- The plan for the time period 2025-75
- What the demand situation will be 2025-75
- An appraisal of the options
- The proposed revisions since the last consultation

3.3 In summary the plan proposes the following:

- Reducing leakage by 53% by 2050
- Reducing average daily water usage to 110 litres per person by 2045
- A 9% reduction in non-household water use by 2038
- Water recycling
- More water transfers and pipelines
- Improving groundwater sources and developing new ones
- New desalination schemes
- Developing a new reservoir
- Improved partnerships to help maintain water supply
- Storing more water underground
- Short term resilience measures in Hampshire
- Ending the use of drought permits and orders after 2041

3.4 The main changes since the last WRMP consultation are:

- Updated growth forecast (population & households)
- Updated water supply forecast
- Removal of desalination plant on the Sussex coast
- Revisions to the delivery timescale of some of the proposed projects
- The removal of a recycling scheme
- Reduction on the reliance of drought measures in Hampshire and Sussex after 2030.

3.5 Specific schemes summarised between 2025-27 local to Maidstone Borough are as follows:

- Reduction of leaks
- Reduction of water usage
- To apply for drought permit/order on the River Medway to continue abstraction during dry weather
- To recycle water from a water recycling plant near Aylesford and release it into the River Medway from where it will be abstracted and treated at a water supply works
- Catchment schemes to address nitrates and pesticides and improve the resilience of our water sources.

4. SUMMARY OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE

4.1 A draft response to the consultation has been prepared using the consultation questionnaire and this is attached for consideration at appendix 1 of this report. Also outlined below is a summary of the proposed responses.

4.2 The Council is supportive overall of the approach taken by Southern Water. Upon responding to the consultation, it has used the following adopted strategies of the Council: Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review 2021-2038, Maidstone Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy, Maidstone Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan, Maidstone Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

4.3 In summary the Council response notes the following:

- Water efficiency should be promoted (Maidstone Biodiversity and Climate change Strategy and Policies LPRSP14(c) and LPRQD1 of the Local Plan Review 2021-2038).
- Water supplies should be maintained (Maidstone Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Action 5.3)
- Water quality should be maintained (Maidstone Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Action 6.5 and Policy LPRSP14(a) of the Local Plan Review 2021-2038)

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1: That the Cabinet approve the Council's draft response (at Appendix 1) to the consultation. This would allow the response to be submitted by the consultation deadline.

- 3.2 Option 2: That the Cabinet approve the Council’s draft response (at Appendix 1) to the consultation, subject to further comments and changes. Depending on the extent and timing of the receipt of these comments, this would allow the response to be sent by the deadline.
- 3.3 Option 3: That the Cabinet do not approve the Council’s draft response (at Appendix 1) to the consultation. However, this could mean the response would not be sent and the Council’s views on the consultation would not be duly submitted.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1: That the Cabinet approve the Council’s draft response (at Appendix 1) to the consultation. This would allow the response to be submitted by the consultation deadline.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risk associated with the recommendation, including the risks should the Council not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council’s Risk Management Framework.
- 5.2 If agreement is secured, per the recommendations, then we are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council’s risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 N/A
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If approved, the response provided as Appendix 1 will be submitted to Southern Water on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Draft Southern Water WRMP Questionnaire Response
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Background Document 1- Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024: Technical Report (July 2024) - [02-WRMP24-Technical-Report.pdf](https://www.southernwater.co.uk/02-WRMP24-Technical-Report.pdf) ([southernwater.co.uk](https://www.southernwater.co.uk))