

**UPGRADING OF SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS AND INTRODUCTION
OF SERVICE CHARGING TO CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES**

- 1) FRANKLEY GREEN LANE, FRANKLEY GREEN
- 2) FOCKBURY ROAD, DODFORD
- 3) DUSTHOUSE LANE, TUTNALL

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor P J Whittaker
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Parry - Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services (Interim)
Report Author	Job Title: Engineering Team Leader Contact email: pete.liddington@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 534108
Wards Affected	Belbroughton and Romsley, Perryfields and Tardebigge Ward
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green
Non-Key Decision	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND that: -

- i) **A budget of £72k be added to the 2023/2024 Capital Programme, for the agreed contribution for upgrading of the 1) Frankley Green Sewage Treatment Plant, to be funded from borrowing or balances following consideration as part of the medium-term financial plan review;**
- ii) **A budget of £69k be added to the 2024/2025 Capital Programme, for the agreed contribution for upgrading of the 2) Dodford Sewage Treatment Plant, to be funded from borrowing or balances following consideration as part of the medium-term financial plan review;**
- iii) **A budget of £57k be added to the 2025/2026 Capital Programme, for the agreed contribution for upgrading of the 3) Tutnall Sewage Treatment Plant, to be funded from borrowing or balances following consideration as part of the medium-term financial plan review;**

- iv) **An annual service charge be introduced, subject to agreement with Bromsgrove and District Housing Trust (BDHT), for all contributing properties to the three Sewage Treatment Plants from 1st April 2024, equivalent to the annual sum payable to Severn Trent Water Ltd for sewage treatment, if the property was connected to the public foul water sewerage system.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The three existing Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) (refer to Appendix 1) serve three individual rural area communities. In the main, these communities consist of properties that were originally owned as housing stock by this Authority, although presumably a number of private dwellings are also connected to these facilities, without prior consent. The STPs were obviously installed many years ago and have probably been 'marginally improved' to some extent over the years. With the transfer of the Council's housing stock to BDHT, informal arrangements were implemented whereby this Council would maintain these assets, with BDHT contributing towards such maintenance costs.
- 2.2 However, over recent years it has become apparent that these facilities do not function consistently, and on a number of occasions this Council has dealt with incidents whereby our speedy remedial action has fortunately prevented pollution of the receiving watercourses. Any failure to react, may have resulted in serious conflict with the Environment Agency (EA), as of course each STP obviously must operate within the terms of a valid consent, issued by the EA.
- 2.3 As a consequence of concerns with these STPs, a detailed inspection has been undertaken of these facilities, the results of which give cause for concern, particularly Frankley Green STP. Unlike the other two STPs which are both a more acceptable format, that being a 'Rotating Biological Contactor' (RBC), although very dated versions, Frankley Green comprises a 'rotating arm over a trickling filter,' circa 1960s. An extract from the detailed report on this latter facility highlights its operational inefficiency, as it states, *'at point of discharge into the watercourse there is a notable change in the watercourse bed due to the deposition of dark solids. This may be due to the poor general performance of the treatment through the filter bed.'*
- 2.4 Whilst investigating the operational frailties of the STPs themselves, Officers also arranged for a CCTV survey to be undertaken to the contributing foul sewers serving each plant, as the age of such assets usually warrant some form of maintenance work to be undertaken.

Again, the results of these CCTV surveys give cause for concern. The diameter of the majority of the foul water systems is 150mm, but each length between manholes shows signs of a combination of pipe deformation, root infestation, severe longitudinal pipe cracking etc. There is a possibility that in some locations a pipe collapse may occur in the near future due to its deteriorating condition. It is therefore recommended that these sewers are relined, which will preserve the pipelines integrity for future years, and more importantly avoid the need for open trench replacement, which is particularly costly where reinstatement is concerned through private land/gardens.

- 2.5 In view of the condition of all of these assets, and the need to bring them up to an acceptable standard and to be fully operational on a day-to-day basis, without the need for irregular attendance to try and rectify the failures of aging systems, such assets need to be upgraded. All three STPs need to be replaced with new 'Rotating Biological Contactors' (RBCs) (Klargesters), with all contributing sewers being relined, where deemed necessary. The design and works can be spread over this and the next two financial years, with Frankley Green being undertaken this year due to its unacceptable condition.
- 2.6 In accordance with the formal agreement between BDHT and the Council, BDHT have full responsibility for these assets.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Preliminary consultations have of course been held between officers from the Council and BDHT on these upgrading works. The agreement states that the Council contributes 60% towards the cost of maintenance works and those works necessary to upgrade the plants to ensure their compliance with the current EA licences.
- 3.2 The contributing properties to these STPs currently do not pay for the treatment of their foul waste, unlike, if they were connected to a public foul water sewer, where Severn Trent Water Ltd would automatically instigate a sewage treatment charge. There is absolutely no reason why such a charge should not be implemented, and such monies can be used to finance an approved maintenance plan. Prior consultation has already taken place with householders to determine if they are connected to the STPs, or use other means of treatment/disposal, such as cesspits/septic tanks.
- 3.3 Borrowing costs will be addressed going forward into future years in the Authority's budget process.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The agreement between the Council and BDHT states the following:

- a) **BDHT holds, and will continue to hold the Environmental Permits for these Pumping Stations** (the agreement has used incorrect terminology referencing both pumping stations and filtration plants, when they actually mean sewage treatment plants);
- b) **The Parties agree and BDHT accepts, that from the date of this Agreement it has full responsibility for the maintenance of the Pumping Stations;**
- c) **BDHT acknowledges that the Pumping Stations need to be properly maintained and their condition improved to allow their transfer to the Appropriate Authority** (when the agreement was formulated it was envisaged that at some time in the future the STPs could be transferred to Severn Trent Water Ltd (STW), providing the standard of each STP was upgraded to an acceptable condition. However, this course of action has been discussed with STW, and they have no desire or legal justification to accept these assets).

4.2 For disposal of treated effluent to a watercourse, a valid Permit is required to be issued by the EA. Currently these are:

- a) Permit MI/S/06/04580/S/001 – held by BDHT – 23.09.1960
Frankley Green PSP
(Note. refers to this facility as a Pumping Station, which is incorrect)
- b) Permit MI/S/07/05651/S/002 – held by BDC – 18.03.1992
Dodford STP
(Note. Permit was revoked 28.11.2004)
- c) Permit MI/S/07/05653/S/001 – held by BDHT – 02.10.1970
Curtis Close SDW
(Note. refers to this facility as a Sewage Disposal Works, which is acceptable)

As a consequence of these irregularities with the Permits, it is inevitable that the EA will require up to date submissions to be made.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 *Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained and Green* – with the upgrading of these sewerage assets, the instances where pollution to receiving watercourses will be practically eliminated, particularly with the provision of a proven maintenance regime being instigated.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no Climate Change implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 There are no Equalities and Diversity Implications

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Referring to 5.1, the need for the Council's Minor Works Team to regularly inspect the STPs and undertake necessary emergency remedial works to the current dated installations will be curtailed.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The risk of enforcement action by the EA for the illegal discharge of untreated effluent to a watercourse is practically removed. In addition, the provision of new security fencing to these sites will prevent unauthorised entry, thereby reducing possible vandalism.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- i) Appendix 1 - Sewage Treatment Plants - Location Details

Background papers

- ii) Agreement – (This Background Paper may contain exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended)
- iii) Detailed Inspection Reports of Sewage Treatment Plants

- iv) CCTV Reports of associated Foul water sewers

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor P J Whittaker	27 Sept 2023
Lead Director/Head of Service	Simon Parry - Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services (Interim)	20 Sept 2023
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter Director of Finance	20 Sept 2023
Legal Services	Claire Green Principal Solicitor	26 Sept 2023
Policy Team	Emily Payne Engagement and Equalities Advisor	20 Sept 2023
Climate Change	Matthew Eccles Climate Change Manager	18 Sept 2023