

Committee: FULL COUNCIL

Date: 15 February 2022

Title: Wessex Water Proposals

Purpose of Report

For members to be informed of the proposals from Wessex Water regarding plans for reducing sewerage overflows in Ilminster

Recommendation:

Members to resolve to agree to allow Wessex Water to site a sewerage overflow tank on the recreation ground and to delegate authority to officers to negotiate and oversee the project

Background:

1. Members were brought details of a proposal from Wessex Water to reduce the level of sewerage overflow within Ilminster at the 25 January Meeting 2022.
2. It was agreed that the item would be brought back to a future meeting once drawings of the proposed works could be brought before members. Officers have now received these drawings and these are attached as appendices 11a to 11d.
3. In the report brought before members the following information was provided.
4. On 30 November 2021, Wessex Water sent an invitation to the Town Clerk and a South Somerset District Council (SSDC) representative to meet at the car park on Wharf Lane on 12 January 2022 to discuss which of three potential sites to install an underground sewerage storage tank.
5. Wessex Water's options were numbered in order of their preference: 1. Under the car park. 2. Located near the public toilet block on the recreation ground. 3. Under the recreation ground close to the corner of The Mead and Orchard Vale.
6. The Deputy Town Clerk attended the meeting on 12 January 2022 and Wessex Water gave an explanation of their proposal. The Environment Agency has requested Wessex Water reduce the number of sewerage overflows from around 50 per annum to around 20 per annum. These overflows affect the local waterways around Ilminster.
7. The proposal to install the underground sewerage tank would assist by holding some of these overflows and reduce the pollution in the local waterways.

8. The project to install the tank would take approximately six months and will need to take place at some point from May 2023 but must be completed by April 2025.
9. The three options were discussed and concerns raised for each option as follows:
 - (1) The car park – this is Wessex Water’s preferred option due to the location of the existing pipework underground. However, SSDC raised their concerns relating to losing the use of the car park and subsequent income for six months, the effect of losing car parking for local residents, and the possible disruption to the parents and children who attend Greenfylde School.
 - (2) The area sited on the recreation ground close to the toilet block would require Wessex Water to apply to have a layby installed on Canal Way to allow them access to the site for future maintenance. The pipework would need to run underground to the existing pipework under Orchard Vale. This would mean the removal and reinstallation of both sets of swings and the new path into the recreation ground. Deputy Town Clerk raised concerns about this particular site, stating that the local residents would likely object to the park being closed for six months and the bad publicity it may cause if the play equipment and path were removed as the £300k playpark refurbishment had only been completed a short time ago. Deputy Town Clerk also told them about not having vehicles on the recreation ground during the winter months as they would get stuck due to the water levels.
 - (3) The third option (Appendix 13c) was discussed, and I informed Wessex Water about the underground drainage that runs along the recreation ground in parallel to The Mead, and that the fair come twice a year, highlighting that they have a right to do so.

Wessex Water suggested that they could install a dropped kerb on Orchard Vale to allow access to the site and put down a road for vehicles. The Deputy Town Clerk told them that a road probably would not be accepted by the Town Council, however, the Councillors may consider a hard surface that allows grass to grow through. This would help the area to remain looking green and also help with the fair vehicles using that area of the recreation ground.

10. Having discussed all three options, it became clear that option 2, the site near the public toilet block was not feasible and the Deputy Town Clerk, SSDC and Wessex Water all agreed. This was also noted by members at the January Meeting.

Report

11. Contained in the appendices provided with this report is greater initial information from Wessex Water on how they envisage the tanks and ancillary pipework would be located.

12. It is clear that, whichever site is chosen, there will be for approximately 6 months significant works undertaken to install the tank. During discussions with SSDC officers it is clear that the level of disruption to the car park would be significant if the tanks were situated in the car park.
13. Wessex Water have indicated that they would be more than willing to consider supporting some community initiatives. Whilst it would be very helpful for them to look at the replacement of the pipework around the toilet block on the recreation ground that may not be tangible enough for them.
14. Members may wish to consider that a more permanent access pathway could be created onto the recreation ground directly off Orchard Vale. This would benefit the residents along The Mead who at various times have vehicles for events driving past in order to access the path that leads down to the Warden's Buildings. Advice has been received that whilst in the short-term concrete grass grids may work well over time these may not be suitable and as such a tarmac access may be preferred.
15. Clearly this would need to take into account any future plans for a fitness trail that are currently under consideration for the recreation ground. There will also need to be some consideration given to the Public Right of Way that exists on the Recreation Ground.
16. Other projects could be considered and it would be helpful for members to notify officers so that they can be compiled into a list for consideration in any negotiations with Wessex Water that might take place if members agree to the proposed siting on the recreation ground.
17. As a result of the discussions with SDDC, their officers have offered to assist ITC if there any factors that arise during the project that ITC officers might need assistance with.
18. There will need to be investigations carried out to ensure that there are no covenants on the land that would preclude the siting of the tank in the recreation ground
19. Members to resolve to agree to allow Wessex Water to site a sewerage overflow tank on the recreation ground and to delegate authority to officers to negotiate terms and oversee the project.

**Mark Tredwin
Town Clerk
February 2022**