MEDIA RELEASE

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Local authorities meet to pledge action on Southern Water's failings

An inaugural meeting of local authorities has taken place to continue to hold Southern Water to account for delivering the vital infrastructures that communities need.

Wealden District Council is co-ordinating the Southern Water Local Authority Stakeholder Group, which includes representatives from more than 40 councils across the south east including neighbouring Eastbourne, Hastings and Rother councils.

It was set up in the aftermath of a catalogue of issues including flooding, sewage seeping into people's homes, gardens and roads, the ongoing problem of discharges into rivers and waterways and the inability to deal with additional development.

It also follows the July 2022 Full Council motion by Wealden District Council to demand better quality information from Southern Water when it considered planning matters.

The meeting was held on Tuesday 31 January when the group discussed action and experiences to date across the full Southern Water network.

Southern Water is responsible for waste water across the region and for drinking water in other parts of the south east.

Leader of Wealden District Council, Councillor Ann Newton said, "It is not just Wealden council which is appalled and frustrated at the issues and concerns which lead back to Southern Water's failings.

“All those at the inaugural meeting were united in their pledge to hold Southern Water to account and press for immediate action particularly in relation to upgrading and investing in the sewerage systems.

“We were able to explain what our planning officers have been doing on live application casework. All those attending were very interested in how officers have been able to persuade Southern Water to comment much earlier in the development process. Calling Southern Water to Overview and Scrutiny Committee is likely to be followed by partners in the group.

“Unfortunately we do not have the direct power to regulate Southern Water or require it to address its rather lengthy list of failings. But as local authorities working together, we can do our utmost to apply pressure to seek the required action needed to end this catalogue of failings.

“It was a very positive meeting and we have agreed to meet regularly moving forward.”

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