

WATER SECURITY SCRUTINY REVIEW – SCOPING FRAMEWORK

Section 1 - Terms of Reference

To review the current condition of and planned investment in Reading's water supply and waste water infrastructure, and consider how the impact of planned and emergency works can be minimised.

Section 2 – Reasons for the Review

Thames Water have carried out a number of investments in their infrastructure over the past few years which have had an impact on the transport network in Reading over recent months. Whilst this investment is essential in providing secure water supplies and waste water capacity, the impact of these improvement works can be significant.

More recently Thames Water have identified a number of structural failures with their infrastructure (primarily emergency repairs resulting from water leaks or sewer collapses). The negative impact of these works is significant – for example the closure of the A4 Bath Road for four weeks during May 2014 due to a major sewer collapse.

Councillors and residents have raised concerns at the perceived frequent infrastructure failures and the disruption caused by planned works. The combination of emergency closures and the impact of the mains replacement programme in the Town Centre and on the IDR is significant and has been a cause of traffic congestion in Reading.

Flooding and drought events are becoming more common and the resilience of the water infrastructure against these is another significant issue to consider.

Section 3 - Key Objectives of Review

The review will consider the following questions:

- What are the reasons for infrastructure failures and how resilient is the current infrastructure?
- What investment in Reading is included in Thames Water's 2015-20 Business Plan and how was this decided?
- Will the planned investment be adequate to address the ongoing infrastructure failures and will the remaining Victorian mains and sewers be replaced before they become unfit for purpose?
- How can the level of disruption and the impact of both emergency and planned works be minimised, and how can the Council work pro-actively with Thames Water to help achieve this?
- How resilient is the current/planned infrastructure against flooding and drought events?

Section 4 - What will not be included in the scope (and why)

The previous scrutiny review in 2012 considered water security with a more long-term and regional focus, and also looked at how the Council and partners can help reduce demand and promote water efficiency. These will not be considered in this review which has a more specific focus on the resilience of the local infrastructure in Reading and the impact of infrastructure failures and improvement works.