



Surrey Heath Borough Council
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Shaun Macdonald
Leader of the Council

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Alastair Cochran - Interim Co-Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer
Cathryn Ross - Interim Co-Chief Executive Officer
Thames Water Utilities Limited
Clearwater Court
Vastern Road
Reading RG1 8DB

9 November 2023

Dear Alistair and Cathryn

Thames Water Sewage Treatment Works Camberley – A betrayal of trust

I am writing in relation to the persistent and intolerable stench that was forced upon the residents of Surrey Heath throughout the Summer. This was the direct consequence of the decision made by Thames Water to import sewage sludge into their Camberley Sewage Treatment Works and hold this in open tanks during one of the hottest Summers on record, without any odour mitigation in place at the time of import of the sewage sludge and was only then installed after repeated requests by members of this Council.

Our residents in St Michaels and Watchetts Wards were directly impacted by foul odour with records indicating that complaints were received by the Council as early as June 2023 and continued until the sludge processing was finally completed on the 25 September 2023. The 11,600 residents and adjacent businesses were all detrimentally affected by the actions of Thames Water with many people unable to open windows or enjoy the summer weather due to the offensive and relentless odour emanating from Thames Water's Camberley Plant.

Elected Councillors representing St Michaels and Watchetts Wards and our local MP met with representatives of Thames Water on the 27 September. During that meeting the impact on residents was clearly articulated by Surrey Heath Councillors and in response to this, representatives from Thames Water gave their commitment that a meaningful financial contribution would be provided to recognise the devastating impact the company's actions have had on the lives of local residents. The financial contribution was to fund a project to benefit young people living in the affected wards.

In October, Councillors received a letter from James Bentley, Operations Director at Thames Water reneging on the verbal agreement given to our Councillors and instead offering "labour in support of a project". This substitute offer is quite frankly insulting and will be seen as a further betrayal of trust by Thames Water. It fails to recognise the unbearable summer for so many of our residents due to the inconsiderate and inappropriate actions of Thames Water. We firmly believe that had it not been for the intervention of our Councillors and Officers, Thames Water would have continued to disregard the impact of their actions on our community. By your company's admission, Thames

Water's communication with those affected and the Council was poor and unfortunately, the company's disregard for the welfare of local residents has been equally poor.

Given what has happened, and following a motion to our full Council last week which was agreed by all Members, I formally request in the strongest terms that Thames Water honour the commitment already made to make a financial contribution to a local community project. Given the summer of misery that has been caused so many of our residents this relatively small gesture is the least that Thames Water should do. I am also writing to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to express my dissatisfaction with the way that Thames Water has handled this issue.

On a more positive note, James Bentley has agreed to attend Surrey Heath's External Partnerships Select Committee on the 28 November. I know that our Councillors will appreciate his attendance and the ability to raise questions, on behalf of local residents on Thames Water's management of this matter. I certainly hope that James will use this opportunity to confirm that Thames Water will honour their commitment to make a meaningful financial contribution to a community project in the local area.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Macdonald', written in a cursive style.

CLlr Shaun Macdonald
Leader of the Council