

FROM: **PORT HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
23 NOVEMBER 2021

TO: **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
16 DECEMBER 2021

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

Discharge of sewage into the Thames

Following significant recent media coverage, a Member was concerned by the discharge of sewage into the River Thames and requested an update to ensure the Committee understood what was happening.

Members were informed that the Thames Tideway Tunnel, the main scheme for central London, was already underway and would go some way to relieving the pressure on the Thames, but the latest estimate was that it would not be operational before 2025. It was also noted that Officers had provided evidence for the Thames in a recent study which included discharges into the river.

Members were advised that enforcement around sewage was not a PHES or City Corporation responsibility, it was the responsibility of the Environment Agency. Officers confirmed they had been in contact with the Environment Agency, who were also concerned, and it was recommended that the Committee express their concern over the Government's response by making a representation through the Policy & Resources Committee.

A Member noted that there had been media interest in whether the size of pipes of the Thames Tideway Tunnel would be sufficient in managing extreme rainfall and weather events in the future. Members were informed that the tunnel was based on previous projections prior to the ZSL study findings, and it was likely this would have an impact in the future.

In response to a query regarding whether there was any data on how often sewage was dumped into the Thames, Officers confirmed that the Environment Agency had relevant data on the number of discharges and the quantity which could be shared with Members.

Members expressed serious concern over the number of occasions on which raw sewage has been discharged into the River Thames and the devastating impact this could have on the biodiversity of the river. It was agreed that a formal resolution from the Committee go to the Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) expressing Member's concern and calling on P&R to make representations, as appropriate, to the relevant authorities calling for stricter controls over the discharge of sewage into natural waterways.

**RESOLVED** – That a resolution be made to the Policy & Resources Committee demonstrating the Port Health & Environmental Services Committee's concern regarding the discharge of sewage into the Thames and request for representations to the relevant authorities regarding the Government's response.