

## AMENDMENT Administration Business – Motion 2 – No More Profit Over Pollution

KEY:

RED- ~~DELETE~~

GREEN- ~~INSERT~~

Proposed by Cllr Lewis Quigg

Seconded by Cllr Dave Arnott

Across the borough of Oldham, our rivers are treasured by residents, as vital waterways that supported Oldham's growth during the industrial revolution. Water from the Tame, Medlock and Irk contributed to our mills, our canals and help connect us to our neighbouring towns.

~~Since the failed experiment in privatising our water utility in 1989, residents have seen bills go up, yet have suffered with issues getting water delivered to their homes, with leaks and water shut offs increasing in frequency whilst shareholders increase their dividends.~~

United Utilities was identified in 2022 as the worst water polluter in the UK, with "10 of the country's 20 pipes that spilled the most sewage in 2022 were owned by United Utilities" (The Guardian, April 2023). The River Trust identified 31 sites in Oldham where raw sewage is discharged into rivers.

One of Oldham's MP's has raised this issue in their ~~former~~ role as Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, ~~James Ignatius O'Rourke McMahon~~ ~~and the government have voted against parliamentary measures to stop sewage being pumped into our rivers.~~ — put forward a bill in March 2023 which was then voted upon on April 25<sup>th</sup> 2023. The Labour Party ABSTAINED on their own bill and were unable to vote in favour of reducing sewage discharges. It was only thanks to Conservative MP's that these proposals were passed, voting in FAVOUR, of reducing sewage discharges. Indeed, claims by the Sun Newspaper that the Labour farce in Parliament resulted in Labour MP James Ignatius O'Rourke McMahon being overheard saying: "We've been made to look like t\*\*ts".

The Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, published in August 2022, set out stringent targets to protect people and the environment, backed up by up to £56 billion capital investment – the largest infrastructure programme in water company history. The government announced on Tuesday 25th April 2023 that its target to reduce storm overflows will be enshrined in law.

This builds on:

- The requirement for all storm overflows to be fitted with monitors by the end of 2023. 91% currently have them fitted, up from only 7% in 2010. It is as a result of this monitoring that the government is able to see the extent of what is happening and take action to address it.
- The recent Plan for Water – the government’s five year strategy on water – which includes bringing forward £1.6 billion investment, with £1.1bn specifically on storm overflows
- Proposals for unlimited penalties to be imposed on water companies that break the rules. More than £142 million has already been levied in fines since 2015. Money from those fines and penalties will also now be channelled back into the environment.
- The commission from the Secretary of State to ask water companies to provide action plans on every storm overflow.
- The legally binding targets that already exist through the Environment Act 2021 to cut 80% of total phosphorus pollution from sewage treatment plants by 2038.

Sampling at the River Tame near Pingle Mill in Delph found 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid, PFOS, and pFoctanoate. These are all chemicals that are harmful to both humans and wildlife, showcasing that pollution in our rivers is extremely harmful to the residents of the borough.

This Council notes:

1. The data from the River Trust that shows details of 31 raw sewage discharge into rivers and streams across Oldham in 2022, including along the River Tame in Saddleworth, the River Medlock at Bardsley and the River Irk in Royton.
2. Water sampling at Pingle Mill in Delph found 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid, PFOS, and pFoctanoate.
3. ~~That despite United Utilities reporting £788m profits in the year to 31st March 2023 and paying dividends of £300m to their shareholders, UU proposes to add the costs of any clean-up to our bills.~~ United Utilities operations generated £788m of net cash, more than 15% lower than a year earlier, as inflation pushed its costs higher and its customers used less water. United Utilities also recorded a fall in both revenue and pre-tax profit, which tumbled by over 40% to £256m.
4. The £114 million United Utilities invested between 2014 and 2017 for a cleaner River Irk, and building a new works at the Oldham wastewater treatment plant in Chadderton, off Foxdenton Lane, with a new pipeline running from Royton to Chadderton to handle greater volume.

This Council Resolves to:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to United Utilities requesting that they respond to each of these ~~3~~ points separately, giving detailed plans, including a timetable, to ensure these discharges into our local waters are prevented in future and calling for the clean-up costs to be met by United Utilities and their shareholders and not paid for by customers.
2. Write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asking for the government to strengthen environmental protections around sewage discharges, including increasing fines for discharges and stronger regulatory action including mandatory monitoring of all sewage outlets.
3. Write to the Borough's 3 MPs asking them to confirm;

-Whether Labour will indeed keep to its 2019 manifesto promise to nationalise water companies in England and confirm how much it would cost taxpayers to nationalise water, as well as clearly identifying the economic impact on pensioners who have their pension funds invested with water companies.

-To work with ~~pressure~~ the Government to require mandatory monitoring of all sewage outlets and an increase in fines for sewage discharges.

This Council further resolves to:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to United Utilities to confirm if they have plans to expand the sewage treatment works in Chadderton, and what capacity they would need in terms of storage and land in the medium to long term to avoid future sewage discharge.
2. For the Council to specifically consider the impact of further house building on local infrastructure, such as water and sewage across the Borough. More house building means more people, which naturally means more sewage.
3. Confirm how much it would cost taxpayers in Oldham for Oldham Council to set up its own Municipal Water Company.

## MOTION SHOULD READ:

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