

Report on Bristol Water to NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

I sit as NSC's representative on the Bristol Water Challenge Panel. This a summary report from the last meeting of that body on 20th September.

Water and sewage services in North Somerset are provided by Bristol Water and Wessex Water respectively, but are billed together.

Key points:

- Bristol Water (BW) have recently been taken over by the Pennon Group, who also own South West Water (SWW), and Bournemouth Water (BW).
- The process of implementing the organisational and governance changes within the group has begun.
- A condition of the takeover was that pricing within the Bristol Water catchment area would continue to be calculated and applied separately. This is important as SWW prices are higher than BW prices.
- The pricing process (PR24) is underway to fix prices and controls from 2024 to 2029 in collaboration with OFWAT.
- Bristol Water are permitted to raise retail prices under OFWAT rules for the next year by 13-17% assuming 11.6% inflation but have elected to cap these at ca 10% in response to the Cost of Living crisis, subject to board and OFWAT approval.
- Pennon are just starting their 25 year vision – this needs to be aligned with our local plan.
- Water stocks are currently sufficient to avoid any restrictions, and steps are being taken to increase sources including taking water from the River Axe.
- NSC are working with BW on ways to share data so that we can better identify and help vulnerable customers. Officers have noted BW work well to help customers in need.
- A range of KPIs are reviewed at each meeting. BW are performing well in most categories.

I recently arranged a separate meeting with Wessex Water to discuss Storm Overflows. I am happy to discuss this with those who could not make it, but one key point was that the installation of water butts and appropriate soak away would avert much of this problem.

Geoff Richardson