

Motion D: Bring Thames Water back into public ownership

Proposed by Councillor Early; Seconded by Councillor Arciszewska – altered by proposer*

Words added in red text

Words removed in ~~strikethrough~~ text

This Council notes:

- The Recent Channel 4 docudrama 'Dirty Business' was shown in February 2026 and featured pollution of rivers in West Oxfordshire.
- The River Windrush was polluted by sewage discharges from Burford Sewage Treatment Works (STW) for a total discharge duration of 338 hours in 2024, which equates to around 14 days. (Estimates based on Thames Water data, <https://top-of-the-poops.org/waterway/thames-water/river-windrush>; accessed 16 March 2026).
- Five STWs in the Evenlode catchment each discharged untreated sewage for over 2000 hours in 2024, which equates to more than 83 days. Data from Thames Water STW 'Event Duration Monitors' (<https://earthwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Water-Quality-in-the-Evenlode-Catchment-2024.pdf>; accessed 16 March 2026).
- During a cross-party EFRA Committee hearing in September 2025, Emma Hardy (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Water and Flooding in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)) clarified the high threshold for special administration, stating: "If it comes to special administration... it's if a company can't perform its basic duty, so if your water doesn't come out your taps and your sewage isn't being taken away". Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Tuesday 9 September 2025.
- There was a serious interruption to water supply in the OX7 and OX29 postcodes due to a burst water main in March 2026 that caused severe water supply interruptions (low pressure or no water) for thousands of residents and businesses in Oxfordshire. (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq6qp0146ggo>; accessed 16 March 2026).

This Council further notes:

- Raw sewage contains dangerous pathogens, including E. coli, hepatitis A, and parasites, which pose severe risks through direct contact or ingestion. Exposure causes gastrointestinal infections (vomiting, diarrhoea), skin/eye/ear infections, and respiratory issues. It is a major cause of waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery.
- Thames Water are responsible for 72 billion litres of sewage discharged into rivers since 2020, with 2024 data indicating a 50% increase in raw effluent dumped.
- Thames Water have paid out £7.2bn to shareholders since 1989, including £158.3m in 2024.

This Council believes:

- **That the next step is to bring** Thames Water ~~should be brought~~ into a special administration regime (SAR) and then ~~back into~~ **some form of non-profit**, public ownership.

This Council resolves:

- To request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Prime Minister calling for Thames water to be brought into public ownership.

- To request that the letter to the Prime Minister also asks that in the meantime no dividends should be made to Thames Water Shareholders, nor bonuses to Thames Water Management until all rivers in the region meet all clean water standards.
 - To request that ~~the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly invites Thames Water to~~ report **on a quarterly basis to WODC** on how much raw sewage has been pumped into West Oxfordshire rivers and the progress towards preventing this.
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**Council Procedure Rule 14.8 Alteration of Motion:*

With the consent of the seconder, and the Council, signified without discussion, a Member may alter: -

- *a motion of which they have given notice; or*
- *a motion which they have moved without notice; or*
- *an amendment to a motion they have moved.*

Only alterations which could be made as an amendment to the motion may be made.