

COUNCILLOR MARK ALLISON
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
(Labour, Lavender Fields Ward)



London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden SM4 5DX

Ms Bentley
CEO Thames Water
Clearwater Court
Vastern Road
Reading
RG1 8DB

Tel: 020 8545 3424 (Civic Centre)
Email: mark.allison@merton.gov.uk

Date: 15th July, 2021

Dear Ms Bentley,

I'm writing to request Thames Water's urgent response to tackling the severe flooding that continues to cause serious disruption and damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure in Merton.

Large parts of Raynes Park town centre were again under water on Monday evening, impacting hundreds of residents and businesses yet again.

In particular, Coombe Lane, Worple Road, Abbots Avenue and the railway underbridges at Approach Road and Lower Downs were completely inaccessible and both were closed by the police. Vehicles were left floating and abandoned. Water entered a large number of premises causing significant damages to homes and businesses trying to recover from the Pandemic. In some areas, such as Worple Road, residents again reported sewage coming up into their homes through toilets.

Merton has worked collaboratively with Thames Water since the previous flooding that occurred last year. However, the occurrences of flooding in Raynes Park have happened every summer for the past five years and now significant investment is required from Thames Water to upgrade assets which are not maintained regularly and are not fit for purpose.

We understand that most sewers are designed to accommodate rainfall for events up to the 1 in 30 years, but given the regular and repeated incidences of flooding on storms which are below this magnitude, it is clear that your infrastructure requires upsizing.

The Council has to date undertaken detailed section 19 flood investigations, including facilitating road closures, Traffic Management, full CCTV of the network and parts of your sewers. Furthermore, we identified that the sewers were completely silted which enabled you to remove 21 tonnes of silt under our road closures in part of Coombe Lane by the railway station but the problem remains. To ensure the highway drainage network operates effectively, we have installed 4G gully sensors which are remotely monitored and have increased frequency of gully cleansing regimes.

The Thames Water pumping station at Abbot Avenue has failed every year for the past five years and has resulted in sewage spills and manhole surcharging foul water across the entire road.

In addition, residents and businesses have again complained this week that they are unable to log sewer flooding complaints or issues via your website. They have had to endure call wait times in excess of an hour to get through to your call centre and have been dissatisfied with the level of service from your contractors. As a joint infrastructure provider, we have also not been able to get in contact with you and have to use your call centre in the same way as the public.

We understand that future asset investment is informed by number of reports of flooding to you. However, your sewer flooding questionnaire is inaccessible due to the requirement to print and scan or post a paper PDF form – not the easiest thing to do when your home is flooded.

It is now critical that Thames Water sets out how it intends to alleviate these issues before residents suffer any further disruption.

I am keen to hear your proposed approach to managing this issue.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Allison

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Allison', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Mark Allison
Leader of the Council

Copy to: Matt Richardson, Alice Keeping