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## LETTER TO ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Dear Geoff,

I am submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> Sep 2020.

I was aghast to learn of the dire situation of some of the council owned ponds during the summer which was widely reported in local press, social media and on other platforms. In particular, Falmer Pond, which the council still owns despite it being outside of the city's boundaries, dried up to such an extent that many of the fish in the pond died and others had to be moved after an emergency visit from the Environmental agenda [1] [2]. I have also become acutely aware of the concerns with Stanmer pond after discussions about this at my meetings with the Stanmer Preservation Society over the past year and think there may be a wider problem to address with our ponds that goes back a number of years.

From what I've read and after discussing with ecologists, I understand that with the dew ponds in the city, which also were drying up and about which I was personally contacted by several concerned residents, it is best to follow the guidance stated on the council website which says that '*low water levels in many ponds ... is a regular and naturally occurring event which actually benefits some of our specialist pond wildlife*' and to "*not fill the ponds with mains chlorinated drinking water or to attempt to rescue pond wildlife - even ponds which look dry can mask deep mud underneath which could be dangerous.*" [3] Although I accept this, I know some people in the wider public may interpret this as inaction and be unhappy at leaving the wildlife to perish so I'm asking if there can be some more done to communicate and educate on the issue of dew ponds. Furthermore, the guidance is to not let dogs in the dew ponds because of the disturbance they cause, and I think this is a side issue which needs greater awareness raising, or action to prevent this from occurring such as natural fences around the dew ponds. Certainly, I did not know about this until I did some research so I'm hoping that this letter will bring this matter to the attention of all councillors on this committee, who can communicate with residents in their own wards.

Regarding the other ponds, I'm asking that the committee commits to do what we can to prevent us from getting into the situation that we got to this year. Does the council have a plan to manage the ponds we own? If not, can we put these in place,

after consulting with experts such as 'Pete the Pond' and the community, and add them to the website so that everyone can see? The ponds listed on the council website are: Rottingdean, Falmer, St Ann's Well and Preston Park and a strategy for each would seem appropriate given the unique characteristics of each.

This all feeds into the greater question of the water supply to the city and something which I hope is a priority for all members on the committee. Water is vital to all life and as all of our water supply is directly linked to the hydrogeology of the chalk aquifers that exist in the South Downs, it is essential that we have a strategy in place to protect this. It is reassuring to know that the council has been working with partners on the Greater Brighton Water Plan and collaborating with the Brighton Chalk Integrated Catchment Management Partnership (ChaMP) [4] and I would appreciate if an update of ongoing work could be sent to me, and ETS Committee members.

Best wishes,

**Cllr Martin Osborne**

[1] Argus article, Stuck Falmer fish die as village pond evaporates in heat , 14<sup>th</sup> Sep: <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/18650617.stuck-falmer-fish-die-village-pond-evaporates-heat/>

[2] Argus article, Falmer fish disaster: Brighton council was warned months ago, 18<sup>th</sup> Aug: <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/18657692.falmer-fish-disaster-brighton-council-warned-months-ago/>

[3] Council website with information about ponds <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/dew-ponds>

[4] 2030 Carbon Neutral Programme Initiation Document <https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s147081/2030%20Carbon%20Neutral%20Programme%20APX.%20n%201.pdf>