

# **Protecting, Preserving and Promoting the River Itchen in Southampton Scrutiny Inquiry - Terms of Reference and Outline Inquiry Plan**

## **1. Scrutiny Panel membership:**

Councillor Savage  
Councillor A Bunday  
Councillor Cooper  
Councillor Moulton  
Councillor White

## **2. Purpose:**

In partnership with stakeholders to identify opportunities to protect, preserve and promote the River Itchen in Southampton.

## **3. Background:**

- The River Itchen in Hampshire is an example of a chalk stream, rivers that rise from springs in landscapes with a bedrock of chalk. It is approximately 28 miles in length.
- The source of the river is just south of the village of Cheriton, and the river becomes tidal after it passes under Woodmill Bridge in Swaythling.
- The Itchen has been the lifeblood of Southampton since Roman and Saxon times, it divides the city in two and is an important commercial and natural resource.
- Marinas, wharves, and quays are located at the lower reaches of the river and businesses line its banks. In Southampton the river is also used by numerous clubs involved in water sports as well as SWAC (Southampton Water Activities Centre) and Woodmill Activity Centre.
- Areas of the River Itchen in Southampton are identified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) and as the Itchen meanders through Southampton it does, in places, offer opportunities for communities to access the waterfront and enjoy being by the water.
- The river is subject to use by numerous, and, at times competing interests that can create pressure on the natural environment and tensions between user groups. In addition, ownership and oversight of the river is complex and the responsibility of a number of different organisations.
- Reflecting their importance to communities, across the UK there are examples of local approaches where stakeholders are working in partnership to protect, preserve and promote urban rivers.

## **4. Objectives:**

- a) To identify the various different users and uses of the River Itchen in Southampton and the challenges this presents.
- b) To understand existing plans and opportunities to address the identified challenges.

- c) To identify good practice being employed to protect, preserve and promote urban rivers elsewhere.
- d) To identify what initiatives and approaches could work well in Southampton to protect, preserve and promote the River Itchen.

## **5. Methodology:**

- a) Seek the views of residents and stakeholders
- b) Undertake desktop research
- c) Identify best practice

## **6. Proposed Timetable:**

Seven meetings between October 2022 and April 2023

### **Meeting 1: 6 October 2022**

- Introduction, context and background
  - Ownership
  - Responsibilities
  - Rules governing the river
  - Uses of the river
  - Feedback from resident's survey

### **Meeting 2: 17 November 2022**

- The condition of the river and plans for improvement
  - Water quality
  - Habitat and biodiversity
  - Chessel Bay case study

### **Meeting 3: 1 December 2022**

- Economic importance of the river (Understand the role of the river in the local economy and recognise the impact of some commercial use)
  - Wharfs
  - Marinas
  - Hazards / Wrecks
  - Business along riverbanks
  - Housing and transport developments
  - Planning policies and development

### **Meeting 4: 19 January 2023**

- Flood Risk Management
  - River Itchen Flood Risk Alleviation Scheme

### **Meeting 5: 16 February 2023**

- Recreation / Community use and access to the river (How can more people enjoy the river?)
  - Water sports / Anglers
  - Friends of groups
  - Houseboat residents
  - Riverside walks and access

**Meeting 6: 2 March 2023**

- Review of best practice (What urban areas have sought to address the challenges raised?)

**Meeting 7: 20 April 2023**

- Consideration of the final report