

Subject: **Written representations from the public**

Report to: Full Council, 4 February 2026

Report of: Town Clerk

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 To receive and consider written representations received.

2. Background

2.1 Under Standing Order 3e, members of the public may make representations, whether in writing or verbally. Authors of written representations are invited to ensure that they are with the Town Clerk by 12noon two days before the council meeting to enable them to be circulated in good time. At the Mayor's discretion, an author may also address the Council verbally for up to 5 minutes.

3. Main considerations

3.1 The following written representations have been received.

- Kay Rowan, 21 January: item 6
- District Councillor Ginny Boxall, 30 January: item 6
- Janice Montgomerie, 30 January: item 6
- John Grace, 31 January: item 6
- Louise Hilton, 1 February: item 6
- Rob Smith, 1 February: item 6
- Alison Reynolds, 1 February: item 6
- Sarah Quick, 1 February: item 6
- Paul Ebbutt, 2 February: items 6 and 9
- Chris Chappell, 2 February: items 6 and 9
- District Councillor Suzie Burns, 4 February: item 6

4. Recommendation

4.1 The Council is recommended:

To note the written representations received.

Kay Rowan, 21 January 2026

Dear Councillors,

I am writing to formally request that Alton Town Council explores all viable options to conserve and protect the most valued features of our rivers and ponds. These natural assets are integral to Alton's character, environmental health, and quality of life, and any decisions affecting them should be approached with the utmost care and balance.

I am deeply concerned by the influence of a small but vocal minority seeking to impose their views without a clear or representative mandate. The poll scheduled to take place today, which I have been unable to access, does not in my view adequately reflect the breadth or diversity of opinion among the wider electorate. Decisions of such significance should be informed by genuinely inclusive and transparent engagement.

I am also troubled by reports that an individual member of the Council is being personally targeted. Those who stand for public office do so in good faith, with the responsibility to represent all residents. They should not be subjected to undue pressure or intimidation to align with the views of any particular group, however persistent that group may be.

Alton deserves thoughtful, evidence-based decision-making that balances environmental stewardship with fairness, democratic legitimacy, and respect for those who serve the community. By doing so, we can foster an environment that residents are proud of—one where people genuinely want to live, work, and spend their time.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

District Councillor Ginny Boxall, 30 January 2026

Alton Town Council must now be able to conclude its investigations into the feasibility of separating the River Wey from Kings Pond and give proper, urgent consideration to the dredging-plus option.

Continued delay risks ongoing ecological harm and undermines confidence that meaningful action will be taken.

This matter has gained added urgency following the recent motion adopted by East Hampshire District Council to protect the rights and integrity of chalk streams and rivers.

The River Wey is a nationally rare chalk stream and demands decisive, evidence-based management that actively restores and protects its natural function. Alton Town Council should set out clear conclusions and a timetable for action, demonstrating leadership and alignment with the growing commitment to safeguard our rivers for present and future generations.

Janice Mongomerie, 30 January 2026

I am in favour of pursuing the two options for King's Pond by continuing to the conclusion of Stage 1 and by holding a public consultation.

Since much time and money has already been spent to get to the current stage, it would be a waste of effort and resources to stop now. The Task & Finish Group must be allowed to complete their objectives: whatever happens to King's Pond must be backed up by the best available scientific evidence, otherwise the Council's decision will be open to justified criticism.

I believe this will be the only transparent and democratic way forward as I, along with the rest of Alton's residents, need to read all the relevant information before being able to make a judgement on the best way forward in a public consultation.

John Grace, 31 January 2026

My personal preference regarding the future of Kings Pond is that it be retained as it is in size and shape. In short, I like it the way it is and has been for the last 43 years that I have lived in Alton.

However the Alton Town Council have taken a responsible attitude regarding Kings Pond, which they own, and have set in motion a right and proper process looking at what options for the future good health of the Kings Pond are available.

The results of the Parish Poll held on Jan 21st 2026 and instigated by just 6 electors are inconclusive and non-binding but have been duly noted by Alton Town Council and the residents of the town.

ATC have concluded that they should further explore 2 options.

A) keeping the Kings Pond as it is and dredging it every 25 years.

B) changing the size and shape of the pond, creating wetland areas for increased biodiversity, with the river Wey flowing through it, without the need for regular dredging.

ATC need now to fully cost both these 2 options, lay out all the pros and cons of these 2 options and ask the residents of the town in the full knowledge of this information, what their preferred choice is, in a democratic and legally binding manner. This could be achieved by a public consultation, a tried and tested method.

I fully concur with this approach and will agree whichever option is chosen in spite of my own stated preference.

Louise Hilton, 1 February 2026

The parish poll only had a 6.9% turnout of electors. Questions 5 and 6 asked very similar questions albeit worded differently but the results of those questions were contradictory demonstrating a lack of understanding of the options. Therefore, I do not believe the poll can be considered to represent the views of the majority of Alton residents. Further, I think the most appropriate approach to achieve the best outcome for Alton is to allow the work to continue to look at all options, so that we can then make a decision on the best available and objective information.

Rob Smith, 1 February 2026

Thank you for reading this and for the work you do on behalf of our community.

I am unable to be at the meeting on Wednesday 4 February, so I am writing instead.

I wish to add my support to the decision made to evaluate the different options for the future of King's Pond; I think that the only way that a decision that is best for Alton as a whole (and not just what suits a minority) will be reached is if more than one option is looked at in detail by those who have open minds and are willing to consider and weigh in the balance all the issues.

I would also like to offer my support for Cllr Don Hammond's handling of this difficult and divisive issue. At such times one needs clear and calm leadership, which he has demonstrated. I am sure that this has come at the cost of much unfair and unnecessary personal abuse. The skills he has shown may not be rated highly on social media, but they are nonetheless vitally important.

Alison Reynolds, 1 February 2026

I wrote to Councillors Hammond and Treacher in August to express my support for the approach the town council has been taking towards evaluating the future options for Kings Pond. I am dismayed at the actions of a small group of individuals who have set out to disrupt this process, both by social media and the parish poll.

I have lived in Alton for 25 years and although not professional, I have volunteered in the outdoor environment throughout my adult life including with the Friends of the Flood Meadows. Today I walked along the stretch of river besides Majestic Wine and observed how clear, fast and healthy it looked, it concerns me that this beautiful river has to pass through the pond and all its silt and pollution. Therefore when I heard last year that an option to separate the river from the pond was being considered I read all the information the council provided and found myself broadly in favour of this option. Specifically I am concerned that if the pond is dredged the next generation of Altonians will be back in the same position in 20

years time. However I support the council's position that such an important decision cannot be made without a full, expert evaluation of both options.

I am unable to attend the council meeting on Feb 4th, however I would like this email to be taken into account.

Sarah Quick, 1 February 2026

Unfortunately I'm unable to attend the town council meeting this Wednesday but I would like to provide this written input instead, regarding King's Pond.

I am writing to support the continuation of stage 1 to fully examine both options for the future of King's Pond so that a fully informed decision can be made for its future, and to provide full facts for consultations with local residents.

In my view the parish poll was a distracting and costly exercise which unsurprisingly showed very divided and emotive public opinion on the route forward. Decisions should only be made based on objective factual data from professionals in the field, for the benefit of sustainability, future generations, flora and fauna.

Paul Ebbutt CEng FICE FPWI MiStructE MCILT, 2 February 2026

By Paul Ebbutt – Chartered Engineer, Resident of Alton and volunteer member of the Kings Pond Task & Finish Group.

Item 6 - Parish Poll (Kings Pond)

Personally I found it disappointing that the turnout was only 7% of the electorate and as a consequence in my opinion this can hardly be considered to be a true and satisfactory representation of the local community in Alton. However, what I see is clear from the results is that the community wish to be consulted. I also conclude that the community wish to be properly informed to aid an informed decision. I had many local people ask me what the vote was about and what did the poll questions mean? It was evident to me that most people were not clear.

I remain strongly of the opinion that a proper review of the two options under consideration should be developed to preliminary design (I suggest RIBA stage2) to enable a proper cost, programme, environmental and risk evaluation. This should enable fully informed consultation and decisions for the local community. This exercise will provide ATC with the underlying evidence for robust debate and sound expert support for decisions.

Yes, this preliminary design stage costs money and time, however only by following established construction industry project process can sound, justifiable and inclusive decisions can be made.

The documented conclusions and supporting evidence should help ATC with future challenging discussions with all parties and help counter any disappointed stakeholder following final decisions. And of course, the output will aid progress of the community decisions and help to arrest the unfortunate divisive local debate.

Item 9 – Kings Pond Task & Finish Dispute

Investigating and dealing with pollution and run-off surrounding Kings Pond and into the river Wey.

Yes, this is a significant concern, however it affects both the options being considered for Kings Pond Task & Finish Group. I anticipate this to be a complex and expensive exercise and yes needs to be done at some stage and must be done in collaboration with numerous stakeholders – not an easy or quick exercise. I suggest it is not essential to do as part of the current KP options review – but yes something needs to be done one day.

However, should ATC councillors decide to progress this now as part of the current exercise, this task will undoubtedly increase immediate costs and significantly delay any further informed decisions regarding the pond ambience and environment; something the town so desperately needs.

Chris Chappell, 2 February 2026

I include a few words for the council meeting this Wed Feb 4th and apologies that I can't be there.

I am in favour of pursuing the two options for King's Pond by continuing to the conclusion of Stage 1 and by holding a public consultation.

I also note the dispute over whether to try and assess and reduce run-off to reduce further silting. Although this seems a sensible idea, in reality there are so many homes and business involved that it is not realistic option. Run off will occur more frequently with climate change increasing rainfall and we can only mitigate the impacts.

I suggest the council publicises this link and encourages local people to accept a citizen's duty, by reporting blocked drains. E.g. just type 'HCC Report a Problem' for easy access to their 36 problems that need sorting. We can't expect (and it would be crazy to fund) council staff to continually drive round looking for problems. We can all play our part in maintaining our well-loved town. <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem>.

District Councillor Suzie Burns, 4 February 2026

Councillors, I am writing with some thoughts on the decisions which fall ahead of you in your forthcoming meeting. The matter of Kings Pond has been one that has now been rumbling on for some years now and I hope that this council is able to reach a solution that is both long term, sustainable and environmentally focused for the benefit of our community and local wildlife.

I was very disappointed to see such leading and personal questions on the Parish Poll the contradictory nature of several questions with contradictory responses makes the very nature of the poll highly questionable and some may suggest void. I would certainly be encouraging council at this stage to continue with the fact finding Stage One so that decisions can be made based on fact and evidence and not opinion, rhetoric and emotion. This is the obligation that the Town Council owes to its community. You would not build a house without thorough investigation, planning into all aspects on offer before being able to draw any conclusions, you would consult experts, architects, designers and obtain quotes to determine your final plan. To make a decision when not in full possession of all information would be short sighted at best!

I would like to also note my disappointment at the personal nature of one poll question directed towards a highly committed and capable councillor. Sadly the personalisation of the matter is not a new thing, personal attacks on those volunteers who dedicate their time to their communities is something that those who are so keen to prevent the exploration of a range of options, fact finding and possible solutions at Kings Pond seem to be quite practised in. I would like to express my thanks to all Town Councillors who continue to give the most precious commodity, time, to the council and the town.

As a resident and tax payer, I hope that the Town Council are able to find a solution that will look beyond the short term future and consider that we are custodians of our open spaces for not just the now, but future generations of Altonians. With an uncertain financial future for local government it is important that this also means we are not committing younger generations to a long term commitment - it is therefore more than ever vital that the fact finding continues so that those in the future are able to make informed decisions also.