

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

4 December 2013

Meeting held at Committee Room 4a - Civic
Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Michael White (Chairman), David Yarrow (Vice-Chairman), Lynne Allen, Shirley Harper-O'Neill, Kuldeep Lakhmana (Labour Lead), Carol Melvin and David Payne</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Steven Maiden (Democratic Services Officer), James Rodger (Head of Planning, Green Spaces and Culture) and Victoria Boorman (Flood & Water Management Specialist)</p>
34.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2013 (TO FOLLOW) (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2013 would be considered at the meeting to be held on 21 January 2014.</p>
35.	<p>MAJOR REVIEW ON WATER CONSERVATION - THIRD WITNESS SESSION (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman advised that a number of Members from the Committee had attended a site visit to Heathrow Airport on 29 November 2013. The visit had comprised a presentation on the airport's approach to water conservation and a visit to Terminal 2 which was currently being developed. The major points from the visit were highlighted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The airport had drilled three boreholes at a cost of £500,000 each. Two of these had not yielded any water and one had not yielded as much as had been hoped. Nonetheless, the supply from this borehole had been used effectively as a non-potable water supply at the airport and had reduced dependency on external suppliers.▪ There had been a trend of declining water consumption over recent years which had been attributed, in part, to the redevelopment of Terminal 5 which was more sustainable than older terminals. The use of better, more efficient water consuming assets such as taps, urinals and toilets across the airport had also helped to reduce consumption.▪ One of the most effective ways that the airport used to reduce leakages was through smart metering. Smart meters were those that provided hourly consumption data and fed this information into a software package. With this almost real-time data, it was much easier and quicker to locate and repair leaks.▪ Colleagues from the airport had advised that it was difficult and expensive to retrofit buildings to use grey water as this required an independent piping system to keep grey and mains water separate. To make grey water systems cost efficient, they needed to be considered from the very outset of a development.

Witnesses

To assist the Committee with this review James Rodger, Head of Planning, Green Spaces & Culture and Vicky Boorman, Flood & Water Management Specialist were present to provide evidence.

A summary of the evidence provided to the Committee is set out below:

Water and Planning

It was noted that there were a number of useful, non-local policies and guidelines on water available to the Council including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Mayor's London Plan. These were comprehensive and useful documents that provided much of the guidance required on areas such as the retrofitting of buildings and on water use and supply. Consequently, witnesses did not think these policies needed to be duplicated and suggested, instead, that any gaps where these policies did not apply for Hillingdon be filled.

Although the Council had a wide range of its own local policies in place, it was noted that there was no single, comprehensive document in which they were brought together. However, such a document was currently being developed in the form of the Local Plan Part 2 which was currently being shaped to include more guidance on water conservation. The policies currently in use on water conservation, particularly policy EM1, required major developments (10 units or more) to consider the full water cycle including consideration of water consumption. However, the fact that this was limited to major applications meant that current policy technically only applied to 5-10% of new developments in the Borough, even though officers were trying to apply it wider than this.

Witnesses then outlined planning conditions that were used where developers had to undertake water conservation works as part of their planning approval. The standard condition being imposed (coded RES15/COM15 and RES16) required various water conservation measures. However, crucially, these could be challenged at appeal due to the Council's existing policies only covering major developments. RES16, for instance, required developments to achieve Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes which, due to being insufficiently backed by policy, had been challenged in the past and led to the Council backing down on water conservation requirements placed on developers.

However, it was noted that the Council could point developers to good practice in the Borough with examples of buildings that had been through the planning process and those that had not. The Committee was provided with the examples of the Brunel Eastern Gateway Building which had been through the planning process and the Coca Cola building in Uxbridge which had been retrofitted without the need for planning approval.

Water efficiency

The Committee heard that there were two officers in the Council who were responsible for dealing with water conservation and flood and water management. Much of their time was spent negotiating with developers to ensure that new buildings did not have a negative impact on the environment or lead to an increased risk of flooding.

According to the London State of the Environment Report, Hillingdon had been a

higher than London-average user of water but recent work had managed to bring this in line with other Boroughs. However, the fact that the Borough was located in the South East – an area of serious water stress – and was using higher than average amounts of water provided the Council with a compelling reason to ask developers to introduce water efficiency measures.

Witnesses noted that the Council had introduced water efficiency measures within its housing stock such as smaller baths and flow-restricted taps. However, many tenants replaced these measures as they could be inconvenient to use. Consequently, it was suggested that such efficiency measures needed to be supplemented by the use of at-source collection. The Code for Sustainable Homes was a helpful resource in achieving some efficiencies but it was acknowledged that it had some significant problems and was currently being reviewed. The development of the Local Plan Part 2 was also seen as an effective way of achieving water efficiencies in the Borough.

Discussion

Members asked whether existing policies were applied equally to all developments.

Witnesses noted that the larger residential developers often made cheaper houses more water efficient so that more expensive houses on the same site could be afforded more water usage. It was emphasised that this was why a more comprehensive code was required to ensure that all developments were making as many efficiencies as possible.

With regard to the use of smart water meters, the Committee was advised that the Council's Energy Manager was working with Affinity Water to have itemised billing so that a more detailed breakdown of water usage across the corporate estate could be provided. Furthermore, it was noted that Thames Water was currently undertaking a programme of installing smart meters and it was expected that this programme would be expanded. It was noted that this was not the water company covering Hillingdon and that officers needed to investigate further whether Affinity Water were undertaking a similar programme.

The Committee heard that one of the major challenges in reducing water efficiency was in the need for old and inefficient buildings to be retrofitted so as to improve water efficiency and general sustainability. As the Council did not have oversight of retrofitting, it was more difficult to achieve these efficiencies than in new developments.

It was noted that the Council could be doing more to communicate how it was seeking to achieve water efficiencies and what measures residents could use to conserve water. It was suggested that more information could be put on the Council's website for this purpose.

With regard to a question raised at a previous meeting, witnesses noted that officers had liaised with colleagues at GLL and Fusion to ascertain whether they had regular meetings with Affinity Water. They had informed officers that they did not meet with the company and that they would appreciate the opportunity to do so. It was suggested that a recommendation of the review could be for the Council to facilitate regular meetings with Affinity Water and key water users in the Borough.

Members asked witnesses what further recommendations they would like to see in the final report. Witnesses suggested that recommendations could surround the following areas:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The introduction of stronger and clearer policies on sustainable drainage in the Borough including the use of at-source collection. ▪ Encouraging the Borough's schools to undertake their own efficiency work by implementing small projects to reduce water usage. ▪ The introduction of regular officer meetings with the Greater London Authority to discover more about best practice and liaise over what could be done to decrease water usage. ▪ Asking officers to liaise with Affinity Water to ascertain whether they were obliged to provide smart meters free of charge. ▪ The possibility of more extensive use of water butts throughout the Borough. <p>It was agreed during discussions that officers would provide the Committee with examples of other local authorities that excelled in water efficiency as well as a full breakdown of the water usage data of other London boroughs.</p> <p>Following the departure of witnesses, Members suggested that a simple way to amend policy EM1 point 11 would be to remove the word "major" and thereby make it applicable to all developments in the Borough. Members also asked that officers clarify the status of the proposed borehole at the Rural Activities Garden Centre.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officers investigate whether Affinity Water had a programme to provide free smart water meters in the Borough; 2. Officers provide a detailed breakdown of water usage data from other London boroughs; 3. Officers investigate the status of the proposed borehole at the Royal Activities Garden Centre and report findings back to the Committee in due course; 4. Officers provide the Committee with examples of other local authorities that excelled in water efficiency.
36.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
37.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.30 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steven Maiden on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.