



# HILLINGDON

LONDON

## Policy Overview Committee Review Scoping Report 2013/14

### Using Our Water: Improving Efficiency and Developing Long-term Strategies

#### Aim of review

The aim of this review is to contribute to the following three areas of the Council's current water usage practices:

1. The use of water in the Borough's green spaces;
2. The current use of water across the Council's corporate estate; and
3. The Council's existing water conservation strategies and policies.

In investigating these areas, it is hoped that the Committee will be able to make recommendations that propose savings for the Council in the short-, medium-, and long- terms, address Hillingdon's above-London-average water usage and reduce the Council's impact on the environment.

To meet these aims the following Terms of Reference are proposed:

#### Terms of Reference

##### General

1. To gather evidence in order to develop a broad understanding of:
  - a. The Council's current water usage practices in both its green spaces and across the corporate estate,
  - b. The scope of the Council's existing policies regarding its own water usage,
  - c. The planning requirements that the Council places on developers building in the Borough.

##### Water and Our Green Spaces

2. To explore possible ways in which the Council could make short-, medium- and long- term improvements to its water usage in award-winning green spaces;

3. To explore alternative water supply options and determine where the Council can get best value for money and have the best possible impact on the environment;
4. To make recommendations that produce financial savings, increased efficiency and add to the Council's reputation as an authority with an innovative and leading approach to green spaces;

### **Water and Our Corporate Estate**

5. To explore how the Council could make cost-effective changes to its water usage practices across the corporate estate;
6. To make recommendations that improve how the Council uses water within its own buildings with a view to reducing usage and producing positive financial and environmental impacts;

### **Developing Our Water Strategy**

7. To contribute to the development of future water requirements set out in the Local Plan Part 2;
8. In conjunction with the Environment Agency and water companies, to contribute to future plans for conserving and reducing water usage in the Borough; and
9. To make recommendations that put measures in place to ensure that the Borough's water usage is brought in line with the London average as determined by the London State of the Environment Report.

### **Reasons for the review**

The issue of water conservation has never been explored by the Committee and officers were of the opinion that there was significant scope for improvements to be made in this area. The Committee felt that it would be timely to conduct a review that could have a number of wide ranging benefits to the Council, residents and the environment.

### **Supporting the Cabinet & Council's policies and objectives**

The review aims to contribute to the following areas:

1. The development of the Local Plan Part 2 and the strategies that it sets down for the future of water usage in the Borough;
2. The Council's existing policies on water usage and conservation; namely:
  - a. The Built Environment Policy, Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4; and
  - b. Environmental Improvement - Water Resources subsection.
3. The Cabinet's ongoing commitment to producing savings and efficiencies for residents across service areas; and
4. The Cabinet's commitment to reducing the Council's environmental impact and improving the Borough's environment.

In addition to the above, the review will also seek to contribute to the Council's ongoing commitment to improving its green spaces and attaining Green Flag statuses wherever possible. For a park to be awarded a Green Flag Hillingdon

must address eight key criteria which include providing evidence on a commitment to environmental sustainability and a clear management strategy. The review will seek to contribute significantly to both of these areas and thereby strengthen and increase the Council's innovative and leading approach to its green spaces.

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## **INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS**

For ease of reference, this section has been broken down to mirror the intended structure of the review and the proposed witness sessions.

### **Water and Our Green Spaces**

Maintaining the Council's award-winning green spaces involves significant water use which comes at both a financial and environmental cost to the Council. Despite the costs associated with the use of water, the issue has never been explored strategically at the Committee level and officers are of the opinion that improvements could be made to our operations following a comprehensive review.

There are two areas that officers believe could be productively reviewed:

1. Exploring water supply options: It has been advised that the Council could explore the use of bore holes throughout the Borough as a cheaper and more sustainable alternative to its current water supply. Introducing bore holes would reduce the Council's dependency on external water companies which, in turn, could lead to savings on water expenditure. The Committee would explore whether or not this would be a viable spend-to-save scheme and make appropriate recommendations in the light of the financial challenges currently facing the Council.
2. Exploring efficiencies within the current system: Irrespective of whether the Council can achieve savings through changes to its water supply, there is scope to review the use of water within our green spaces more generally. This could include exploring what vegetation is used, how vegetation is watered, whether new techniques could be used to reduce the amount of watering that is required etc.

Impact: Until a review is undertaken it will not be possible to assess what impact could be made on the use of water in our green spaces. However, officers are confident that there is scope for savings and efficiencies to be made at some level and that this would have a positive impact on the environmental and financial costs associated with this area of operations. The review would also make a contribution in assisting the Council to maintain and improve its Green Flag record and demonstrate a commitment to having a positive impact on the environment as well as an innovative approach to its parks.

### **Water and Our Corporate Estate**

Similarly to the above, the issues of water supply and water usage on the Council's corporate estate have not been explored by a Policy Overview Committee to date. The Council owns and maintains a significant estate including the Civic Centre, numerous satellite buildings and social housing and there is large-scale water use throughout this estate. Officers have advised that there is scope for improvements to how water is managed on the estate and how recycled water is used throughout the Borough.

It is suggested that this aspect of the review explore the following three areas:

1. The findings of the green spaces aspect of the review could be applied to similar operations on the Council's estate. This could look at how water is used to maintain open spaces on the estate (flowerbeds, gardens, etc.) and explore how efficiencies and savings could be achieved.
2. The use of grey (waste water excluding that from toilets) and rain water could be explored to ascertain whether this could be collected and reused at our sites to reduce water usage and the associated costs. If this proved not to be possible or too expensive to implement, there would still be scope to assess whether efficiencies could be made in how water is used on the estate, e.g. through the use of "Hippos" to reduce the amount of water used in flushing the toilet.
3. The use of rainwater, grey water and water from bore holes could, if viable, be used further afield than the estate in other areas of the Council's operations. Officers have suggested that there may be scope to use this water in street cleaning operations for instance.

Impact: Depending on the findings and the evidence presented to the Committee, recommendations could lead to significant financial savings in the short-, medium- and long- terms. An additional impact could be that the reduction of water entering the Borough's sewerage systems could have a positive impact on water levels and flooding in the area and the costs associated with this.

### **Developing our Water Strategy**

Officers have advised that there is guidance on what the planning department ask external developers to do regarding water conservation, although it has also been noted that further work could be undertaken to clarify the Council's position. Such clarification would help to bring the area in line with comparable areas (such as renewable energy) which already have more comprehensive policies and strategies in place.

Currently the London State of the Environment report flags up the usage of LBH as higher than the London average. Using this evidence, policy has been produced in the Local Plan Part 1 Strategic Policies which ensure the requirement of water reuse in all new developments as they apply through planning. The Built Environment Policy also states that all new homes should be built to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 and has requirements for Sustainable Drainage to be used which incorporates water reuse. Additionally, the Environmental Improvement - Water Resources subsection all new development must meet the London Plan Policy 5.15 for grey water reuse.

Given the policies and guidance already in place, this aspect of the review will focus on two main areas:

1. Officers are currently working on how water conservation will be included in the Local Plan Part 2 and it has been suggested that the

Committee could gather evidence on, and make a valuable contribution to, external water conservation requirements.

2. Officer have also suggested that the Committee could look at how the Council works with the Environment Agency and water companies to help manage and plan for future uses. Understanding what water companies are doing in the Borough to encourage uptake (a requirement of the 5 year water resources plans) would be a profitable area for review as it would help make the Borough more resilient and promote conservation with residents.

Impact: The development of more clear guidelines on water conservation in the Borough could lead to significant savings and efficiencies in the future. This would be achieved through internal and external developments being required to adhere to good water conservation practices. As above, this could have a positive impact on water levels and flooding in the Borough, produce savings on water costs in the short-, medium- and long- terms and have a positive impact on the local environment.

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## **EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY**

The primary way in which the Committee will gather evidence for this review will be through the three formal witness sessions set out below. However, should the Committee feel it necessary, there is also scope for conducting site visits to some of the Borough's green spaces and / or some of the properties within the corporate estate.

### **Witnesses and timeframes**

It is expected that this review will draw from a wide range of witnesses both from within and outside of the Council. It is for this reason that it is suggested that there are three witness sessions which will address the three key areas set out above.

The suggested witnesses for these sessions and the suggested dates are set out below:

<b>Session Information</b>	<b>Suggested Witnesses</b>
<b>Agree Scoping Report</b> <i>(25 September 2013)</i>	The Green Spaces and Leisure Services Manager will be present at the meeting to present the scoping report
<b>Water and Our Green Spaces</b> <i>(17 October 2013)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Representatives from the Grounds Maintenance Service (including officers responsible for a cross section of the Council's open spaces)</li><li>▪ Officers from Green Spaces</li></ul>
<b>Water and Our Corporate Estate</b> <i>(14 November 2013)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Representative from facilities management (Mitie)</li></ul>
<b>Developing Our Water Strategy</b> <i>(04 December 2013)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Council's Flood and Water Management Specialist</li><li>▪ The Head of Planning, Green Spaces and Culture</li></ul>
<b>Consideration of Draft Final Report</b> <i>(21 January 2014)</i>	The draft final report will be presented by the Democratic Services Officer.

### **Risk Assessment**

This proposed timeframe has been drafted in order that the review can make the maximum impact on the Council's water usage by gathering witnesses from a wide range of stakeholders. These sessions can be extended or shortened should the Committee deem it necessary.

Relevant officers have been advised that this review is proposed and are aware of the possible implications on their workload.