

## MAJOR REVIEW – USING OUR WATER: IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND DEVELOPING LONG-TERM STRATEGIES – WITNESS SESSION 1

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### REASON FOR ITEM

To enable the Committee to gather evidence as part of their Major Review into water conservation within the Borough.

### OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Question the witnesses
2. Highlight issues for further investigation
3. To make a note of possible recommendations for the review

### INFORMATION

On 25 September 2013 Members agreed that the first Major Review of this Committee should focus on the issue of water conservation within the Borough.

For this **first witness session** Members will hear evidence from:

Name	Position
Paul Richards	Green Spaces and Leisure Services Manager
Alastair Wilson	Environment Agency

### PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Water Conservation Review – Terms of Reference  
Information on this aspect of the review

### SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

- (1) Members are asked to question the witnesses to enable them to gather evidence as part of the review.
- (2) To identify any areas or other lines of enquiry which will be required to help Members in their review.

# **USING OUR WATER: IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND DEVELOPING LONG-TERM STRATEGIES**

## **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.

**Information on this aspect of the Review:**

**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.