

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

17 October 2013

Meeting held at Committee Room 3 - 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) and David Payne</p> <p>Also Present: Jane Wilkin (Planning Adviser, Environment Agency) and Alastair Wilson (Senior Environment Planning Specialist (Water Resources))</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Nigel Dicker (Deputy Director of Public Safety & Environment), Steven Maiden (Democratic Services Officer) and Paul Richards (Green Spaces and Leisure Services Manager)</p>
22.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillors Jackson and Melvin.</p>
23.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2013 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That, subject to the addition of "It was agreed that Members would be provided with a breakdown of the Council's water usage during the course of the review", the minutes were agreed as an accurate record.</p>
24.	<p>MAJOR REVIEW ON WATER CONSERVATION - FIRST WITNESS SESSION (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Witnesses</p> <p>To assist Members with the review Paul Richards, Green Spaces and Leisure Services Manager; Jane Wilkin, Planning Advisor at the Environment Agency; and Alastair Wilson, Senior Environment Planning Specialist (Water Resources) were present to provide evidence.</p> <p>A summary of the evidence provided to the Committee is set out below:</p> <p>Current Water Use in Green Spaces</p> <p>Witnesses noted that the Green Spaces Team had responsibility for managing and maintaining a diverse range of open spaces throughout the Borough, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Parks▪ Sports fields▪ Bowling greens▪ Golf courses▪ Allotments▪ Floral displays

- Cemeteries
- Street trees
- Rural Activities Garden Centre
- Water play features

All of the above users consumed water and it was noted that the primary users were the bowling greens, golf courses and the Rural Activities Garden Centre. However, allotments, floral displays, street trees and water play features also used a significant amount of water.

The water needs of these spaces were largely met by mains water supply with only one borehole currently being used at Ruislip Golf Course. Witnesses advised that the Council was charged both for the use of water and sewerage costs but, because water was primarily used for irrigation, it received a rebate on sewerage. In addition to the basic cost of mains water, the Council also paid for a licence from the water company to use fire hydrants for the watering of floral displays. Green Spaces' spend on water (excluding the licence for use of fire hydrants) for 2012/13 and the expected expenditure during 2013/14 was set out. It was noted that, due to increased usage during the warm summer, the spend in 2013/14 was expected to be higher.

To increase the Council's water efficiency and thereby reduce the associated costs, the team:

- was careful with how it used water by being selective about what and how green spaces were watered. For example, only small parts of the Borough's parks and golf courses were actually watered;
- had put measures in place at allotments to ensure that users could not use hose pipes and would instead have to use watering cans;
- were selective about what plants and baskets were used to ensure that they required as little water as possible;
- were using new science and technology including efficient sprinkler designs, tree watering bags and wetting agents;
- reduced thatch and spiked the Borough's grassed areas in order to increase the level of water uptake; and
- used mulch to increase water retention.

With regard to possible areas for improvement, witnesses advised that the Committee could choose to investigate whether the water butt that collected rain water (grey water) beneath the Civic Centre could be used as a water source. This water could be used for things such as flushing toilets, watering plants and street cleaning subject to the satisfactory resolution of hygiene and extraction issues. There was also work currently underway to investigate whether a borehole could be drilled at the Rural Activities Garden Centre but further work had to be undertaken to assess how financially viable this would be.

It was noted that the use of flood or drainage water was possible but that it would be extremely expensive and cost prohibitive.

Background issues to water usage

Witnesses advised that a licence to abstract water issued by the Environment Agency (EA) is required where water is abstracted from a watercourse and/or underground strata (e.g. via borehole), where the volume sought is greater than 20 cubic metres per day. Following discussion, it was clarified that even abstraction from the Ruislip Lido, despite it being owned by the Borough, would still have to be licensed by the EA.

The following key points were raised about the Borough's water supply and usage:

- Affinity Water supplied mains water in the Borough. The company operated local groundwater sources in the Borough but much of the water supplied was imported from sources outside of the Borough.
- There were presently 24 abstraction licences within the Borough. 20 from groundwater sources and 4 from either a local river or the canal system.
- Domestic use was the biggest percentage of the water used in the Borough.
- The current domestic use was 170 litres per person per day.
- The London Plan stipulates that new residential developments should be designed to achieve 105 litres per person per day.
- Domestic usage had been steadily increasing since the 1970s largely due to improvements in living standards and greater use of white goods (e.g. washing machines, dishwashers, power showers etc.)
- Reducing domestic water usage required water efficiency improvements in new and existing homes and behavioural change by customers in how they used water.

Members asked whether the EA provided advice on water efficiency for developments of housing within the Borough including the division of single dwellings into houses of multiple-occupancy. It was suggested that changes to housing and increasing density of population would have a significant impact on water usage in the Borough.

Witnesses confirmed that the EA would only provide advice on water efficiency for developments on which it was a statutory consultee. This advice was usually only provided when consulted on large-scale residential developments.

However, each water company was required to produce a water resource management plan on a 5 year cycle. These plans considered both existing usage and projected (i.e. new housing/population numbers) usage and how the water company would meet these requirements over a 25 year period. The EA reviewed each plan and discussed any technical / environmental / regulatory implications highlighted by the plan individually with water companies.

Witnesses advised that the Council would be allowed to abstract water but only if granted a licence to do so by the EA. There were considerable costs associated with holding a licence to abstract water including administrative costs associated with applying for a licence and yearly charges linked to retaining a licence. There were further costs associated with the infrastructure to facilitate the abstraction of water, for example, the cost of drilling a borehole and purchasing the equipment (e.g. pumps, pipes, storage tanks etc). It was noted that there was no guarantee that by drilling a borehole the yield sought would be obtained. Heathrow Airport faced this issue when they drilled a borehole that did not yield the volumes required. This does had obvious cost implications.

Witnesses suggested that some of the best ways to increase the Council's water efficiency would be through exploring roof capture to gather water and changing how and where water was used by using different watering methods. Further work to investigate the viability of using boreholes could also be done with guidance from Kensington & Chelsea and Camden Councils both of which had recently drilled boreholes.

During discussions it was agreed that officers would seek to organise site visits both to a nearby borehole and to Heathrow Airport. These visits would need to take place prior to the final witness session on 04 December 2013.

	<p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Deputy Director, Public Safety & Environment make arrangements for a site visit to a local borehole to take place prior to 04 December 2013; and 2. The Democratic Services Officer make arrangements for a site visit to Heathrow Airport to take place prior to 04 December 2013.
25.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Members noted the updates provided on School Crossing Patrol Officers and the leasing of loft spaces in the Borough and advised that they did not require additional information on these issues.</p> <p>Officers advised that an update on the Borough's road depots would be provided in due course.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
26.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME 2013 (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Following discussion, it was agreed that officers investigate and address the issue of private users of the Winston Churchill Hall bringing their own radio microphones that interfered with sound systems in other events.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Work Programme be noted; 2. the Deputy Director, Public Safety & Environment investigate and address the issue of frequency interference at the Winston Churchill Hall; and 3. the Deputy Director, Public Safety & Environment draft a letter for roadside memorials, agree this with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation & Recycling and report back to the Committee on 12 November 2013.
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.15 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.