

MAJOR REVIEW – USING OUR WATER: IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND DEVELOPING LONG-TERM STRATEGIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

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REASON FOR ITEM

The Committee has now undertaken 3 witness sessions on water conservation with officers and representatives from external organisations. A wide range of evidence has been heard regarding the Council's use of water in its green spaces and across its corporate estate as well on current planning policies relating to water conservation in the Borough.

This report is intended to provide Members with draft recommendations based on the evidence heard and give an opportunity to add, remove and amend those recommendations upon which the final report will be based. Once Members have provided advice and guidance on the recommendations, officers will develop a full length report for consideration at the meeting of 26 February 2014.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Put forward further recommendations for officers to investigate and, with the agreement of the Chairman, include within the final report.
2. Remove recommendations that are not considered to be viable, desirable or do not reflect the evidence gathered at the sessions.
3. Ensure that the recommendations adequately address the Terms of Reference agreed at the beginning of this review.
4. Provide officers with guidance on what should be included within the main body of the report.

INFORMATION

Within the scoping report for this review, the Committee agreed that its primary aim would be 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.

The intention was that exploring these themes would encourage savings in the Council's water bills and reduce impact on the environment. Although there were a number of initiatives considered within the review that were not viable at this time, the draft recommendations provided here do have the potential to have positive impacts across these three key areas.

In summary, the recommendations cover:

- Possible changes to the ways in which the Council liaises with partner agencies to learn about and promote best practice in water conservation. Recommendations relating to this are set out under the "Change of Practice" section below;
- Possible changes to the equipment and technology used by the Council to conserve water both within its green spaces and across the corporate estate.

Recommendations relating to this are set out under the “Change of Technologies” section below;

- Possible changes to the policies and guidance documents that the Council uses to ensure that planning developments within the Borough are implementing effective water-saving measures. Recommendations relating to this are set out under the “Change of Policies” section below.

PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Water Conservation Review – Terms of Reference
Draft recommendations

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following its review the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee recommend that Cabinet:

Change of Practice

- 1. That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services asks officers to facilitate regular meetings with Affinity Water, Council leisure centre operators and the Greater London Authority to share best practice, foster stronger partnerships and develop a strategic approach to reducing the Council's water usage;**
- 2. That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services asks officers to liaise with schools to pass on information regarding water-saving measures and encourage small-scale initiatives to reduce usage;**

Change of Technologies

- 3. That Cabinet commend the work already undertaken by officers to receive detailed billing data from Affinity Water and commit to pursuing this until it is agreed as a long-term measure;**
- 4. That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services requests that, once data is provided, officers undertake a comprehensive audit of the Council's water usage and produce a league table highlighting key users across the estate with a view to identifying areas for efficiencies;**
- 5. Notwithstanding the provision of detailed billing data from Affinity Water, ask officers to investigate the viability of gradually upgrading to smart metering across the Council's estate as a means through which to monitor real-time water usage and report findings back to the relevant Cabinet Members in due course;**
- 6. As part of the budget planning process, ask officers to investigate the use of a borehole at the Rural Activities Garden Centre as a spend-to-save project and report findings back to relevant Cabinet Members in due course;**

Change of Policies

- 7. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation & Recycling requests that officers consider the inclusion of the following areas in the Local Plan Part 2:**
 - Stronger and clearer policies on sustainable drainage in the Borough including the use of at-source collection;**
 - Water conservation policies relating to a wider range of planning developments than just major developments;**

As an interim measure prior to the introduction of the Local Plan Part 2, amend policy EM1 point 11 to remove the word “major” thereby making it applicable to a wider range of planning developments in the Borough.

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