

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: USING OUR WATER - IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND DEVELOPING LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jonathan Bianco Councillor Keith Burrows
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance, Property and Business Services Planning, Transportation and Recycling
Officer Contact	Steven Maiden, Administration Directorate
Papers with report	Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee review into water conservation in the Borough.

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To receive the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee's review into improving the Council's water conservation practices and developing related strategies and policies.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	The recommendations contained within this report are intended to contribute to the Council's commitment to review and improve the Borough's environment to encourage the use and enjoyment of our natural assets. This will be partly achieved through suggested amendments to the Council's existing planning policies and the developing Local Plan Part 2.
Financial Cost	There are financial costs associated with some of the recommendations which will only be taken forward on a robust invest-to-save basis following review and approval through the Council's strategic budget planning process.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Residents' and Environmental Services
Ward(s) affected	N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Welcomes the report from the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee (as in Appendix 1) on the review into water conservation.
2. Endorses recommendations 1-5 and 7-8 of the Policy Overview Committee as reflected below.
3. Notes recommendation 6 and the officer comments provided below.

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations

Change of Practice

- 1. That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services considers asking 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 water usage of the Council and its partners;**
- 2. That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services requests 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 considers 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, that the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services requests 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, that the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services requests 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 considers 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;**
- 8. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation & Recycling considers that officers investigate the viability of amending, as an interim measure, policy EM1 point 11 to remove the word "major" thereby making it applicable to a wider range of planning developments in the Borough.**

Reasons for recommendations

The primary objective of this review was to reduce the Council's consumption of water across its corporate estate and green spaces. By extension of that, the Committee also sought to propose measures to reduce the water efficiency of those organisations on which the Council has influence through its role as a local planning authority. These were felt to be extremely important areas to investigate due to the fact that Hillingdon is located in an area in which water is more scarce than in any other area of the country and has a growing population using more and more water. Furthermore, Hillingdon was marginally above the London average for domestic water use and significantly above the national average. Improving the Borough's performance in this area was, therefore, another major aspect of this review.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

1. The Terms of Reference of the review were divided into three broad areas: "Water and Our Green Spaces", "Water and Our Corporate Estate" and "Developing Our Water Strategy". These were felt to be the key areas in which the Committee could make valuable recommendations with real and lasting impacts on water consumption.
2. Reflecting these key areas, the Committee agreed to undertake three themed witness sessions and invited expert witnesses to present evidence. These sessions were supplemented by a visit to Heathrow Terminal 2 which was in the process of being redeveloped with a focus on environmental sustainability. The sessions and the site visit were highly productive and provided a wealth of information and ideas on what the Council could do to make simple changes to reduce the Borough's water consumption.
3. Full details of the Terms of Reference and the list of witnesses who presented to the Committee can be found within the report itself.
4. Due to the Committee's intention of exploring both the Council's own operations and the policies that it applies to planning developments within the Borough, it recommends that interim amendments be considered to existing planning policies and suggests additions to the Local Plan Part 2. These recommendations amount to very minor changes but it was felt that they would have a significant, positive impact on the Borough's overall water usage and assist in bringing Hillingdon's water usage in line with that of other London Boroughs.
5. Although a number of the recommendations could be undertaken with no financial implications, several of them could entail spend-to-save projects. The Committee was conscious that such projects could be problematic within the context of cuts to local government funding. Consequently, the review was carried out with the understanding that recommendations that made such proposals would only be undertaken with further feasibility work by officers and Cabinet as part of the service and budget planning process.
6. Specific updates on each recommendation and on some initial investigations of viability are set out below:

Implementing Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Head of Planning, Green Spaces & Culture advised during the course of the review that this would be both a helpful and easy recommendation to realise. Regular meetings could easily be set up with the Council's corporate partners and relevant officers could be asked to attend these meetings as appropriate.

Recommendation 2: The Flood & Water Management Specialist (in conjunction with the Schools Procurement Executive in Procurement and Commissioning, Finance Directorate) would be well placed to take this recommendation forward.

Recommendations 3 - 5: Subject to Affinity Water providing the Council with the detailed billing data requested, the Deputy Director – Asset Management, in consultation with officers from other areas of the Council, would be well placed to assess this data and highlight areas for improvement. Further work needs to be undertaken to determine the cost of introducing smart meters as this is subject to the number of units installed and where on the pipe system they would be located. This would be determined in consultation with Affinity Water.

Recommendation 6: Subsequent to the drafting of this report and as part of pre-existing work, it has been determined that it would not be expedient to implement such a borehole at this site at this point in time. This decision has been informed by a recent agreement with Affinity Water that they will be able to improve the mains water pressure available at the site which constitutes a cheaper and more efficient option than a borehole. Should such an option arise at a later date, the initial geological work assessing the viability of the project will inform any future decisions.

Recommendation 7: Officers will be expected to develop the areas of policy highlighted in this recommendation into robust and workable policies. As the Local Plan Part II is in the consultation stage, it will be possible for officers to include such policies in line with existing timeframes and with only minor implications on workload.

Recommendation 8: The Committee advocated the inclusion of the word "major" within the existing policy EM1 as well as the future Local Plan Part II. Initial discussions with officers have taken place and it was noted that this might have significant implications that could lead to changes being delivered just before the implementation of the Local Plan Part II. Therefore, the first step in this process is for the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation & Recycling to ask the Head of Planning, Green Spaces & Culture and Environmental Policy & Community Engagement to investigate viability further.

Financial Implications

One of the review's key aims is to identify and facilitate actions that can lead to a reduction in the Council's own water consumption with consequent financial savings on the Council's own operations. To this end, the expenditure on water usage from the Council's General Fund operations in 2012/13 was £167k, with the largest users being Green Spaces (£37k) and the Civic Centre (£34k). In addition, there was expenditure on water usage of £49k in the Housing Revenue Account and also £259k within maintained schools.

Hence any investment in reduced water consumption and alternative water supplies on an invest-to-save basis will need to be realistic concerning the level of financial savings that can be achieved on this expenditure base. As the report recommends, any such initiatives will be assessed through the Council's strategic budget planning (Medium Term Financial Forecast) process.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendations?

One of the main effects of implementing the recommendations contained within this report will authorise officers to investigate further short-, medium- and long-term measures for reducing the Council's consumption of water. This would be achieved through developing stronger partnerships with water providers and water users in the Borough and exploiting new technologies to increase efficiency.

Furthermore, the adoption of the recommendations under "Change of Policies" would ensure that the Local Plan Part 2 included water conservation policies applicable to a wider range of the planning developments in the Borough than is currently the case. As the Local Plan Part 2 is still currently being consulted on, measures would also be put in place to ensure that similar provisions were implemented in the interim.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

As noted above, the Committee heard evidence from a range of witnesses both internal and external. Representatives from the Environment Agency and Affinity Water as well as the Council's green spaces and planning departments provided valuable information for this review.

A site visit to Heathrow Terminal 2 which is currently being redeveloped was also undertaken to discover more about water conservation best practice.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Property and Construction

Corporate Property and Construction supports the recommendations set out in the report.

Corporate Finance

Corporate finance has reviewed the report and concurs with the financial implications detailed above.

Legal

There are no specific legal issues with endorsing recommendations 1-6 of the Policy Overview Committee concerning the review of water conservation. Such a review falls within the terms of reference of this Committee. However, in relation to recommendation 7 the proposed Local Plan Part 2 includes a suite of policies that will cover both residential and non residential developments within the Borough and will ensure that developers detail how water will be collected, managed, reused and conserved. Such policies include DMEI 11 (residential and non residential), DMEI14 (residential and non residential), DMEI15 (residential) and DMEI16 (non residential). Officers will be happy to consider any views on this from the Committee and Cabinet, as part off the current consultation on the Local Plan.

In relation to recommendation 8, Members should note that policy EM1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part I – Strategic Policies should not be read in isolation. The Local Plan is a high-level document aimed at making sure all strategic policies are in place and it therefore includes a suite of policies concerning water conservation/management which include EM6, EM8 and BE1.

These policies apply to all new developments thus capturing both residential and non residential properties.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL