



Executive
19 October 2009

**Report from the Director of
Environment and Culture**

Wards Affected:
All

Council's Environmental Policy – review and revision

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-09/10-14

1.0 Summary

1.1 The Council adopted an Environmental Policy in November 2005. This report reviews the existing policy and recommends a revised version.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Executive is asked to agree to:

(a) Approve the revised Corporate Environmental Policy Statement attached as Appendix A.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In November 2005 the Council approved a Corporate Environmental Policy Statement.

3.1.2 As a result of changes in policies and priorities and a number of internal and external drivers there is a need to review the existing environmental policy and to recommend a number of changes. The proposed new policy statement is attached as Appendix A.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 The background and reasons for making changes to the existing policy statement are set out in section three of the report dealing with the review of the Council's Carbon Management Strategy & Implementation Plan (CMS&IP), available on the Executive's agenda. In order to be brief these reasons will not be repeated in this report. It is also a commitment to review the policy for

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the environmental management system, ISO 14001, which currently only applies to the Environment and Culture Directorate and to two services located in other Directorates. There are plans to extend this management system to other parts of the council e.g. property and asset management and IT.

- 3.2.2 The proposed revised version of the corporate environmental policy statement includes a list of principles for the borough together with a list of specific commitments that the council will make. It conveys a message that the council recognises that combating climate change is critical to all our futures and that the council recognises that it must play its part. It also repeats the commitment to make sustainability central to everything the council does and for the council to become an exemplary organisation for recycling and sustainable activity. The revised policy emphasises that the broad context is sustainable development with a particular focus on the environment. The proposed wording is contained in Appendix A.

4.0 Financial Implications and Risk

- 4.1 The proposed new environmental policy does not, in itself, have any specific costs associated with it and should not lead to additional costs on services as long as the policy's requirements are included at an early planning stage. As the policy is implemented across the council and within the council's services, any costs incurred will be absorbed within the existing allocated budgets. However, there is an opportunity to make savings if good measures are introduced to control energy use, reduce waste, manage transport and travel costs and buy more sustainably. All these have environmental benefits.
- 4.2 There are risks associated with not adopting a policy as well as not keeping this policy up to date. The council's reputation could be damaged. Long term financial costs to services could be higher if the impact of environmental changes and climate change are not taken into account e.g. flooding, heatwaves, droughts, pollution, shortages of natural resources such as water etc. The increasing environmental impact of waste and its costs in landfill tax etc are also significant. By recognising and looking after the environmental impacts of the council's activities, such risks can be properly managed and the consequences reduced.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Council has power under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything which it considers likely to promote the environmental well-being of its area. In exercising this power the council is required to have regard to its Community Strategy (known as the Community Plan).
- 8.2 Furthermore, ODPM Circular 03/2003 on Best Value and Performance Improvement reiterates that sustainable development and equity are fundamental to the Best Value regime. It states that "the Government's definition of Best value is 'the optimum combination of whole life costs and benefits to meet the customer's requirements'".

- 8.3 In addition, the council has a duty to report on the government's national performance indicators, to participate in the Carbon Reduction Commitment and to ensure the transparent display on public buildings of Display Energy Certificates.

9.0 Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Both the environment and climate change affects everyone and particularly those who are physically vulnerable – the elderly and the young – as they will be exposed to greater temperature extremes and potentially new or increased threats of disease. Changes in climate are predicted to be felt most acutely in areas of the world where communities are less able to adapt. A number of council staff and residents have strong ties with these nations. In addition the impact of environmental problems in the borough, that could have been avoided with better management and policies, may have a more detrimental effect on disadvantaged groups depending on the location within the borough e.g. air quality.
- 9.3 The proposed environmental policy statement will ensure consistency across the council when taking into account the environmental impacts of all its activities and will show the council's commitment and priorities. This will enable services to consider the different impacts of environmental considerations on various groups and communities in the borough, ensure equality of treatment and to assess the impact these groups have on the environment.

10.0 Environmental Implications

- 10.1 Through the adoption of a revised environmental policy statement the council is showing its commitment to environmental sustainability. The policy sets out the council's priorities and commitments, demonstrates that it recognizes the importance of the environment and climate change and provides leadership. In this way it will be encouraging others in the borough to do the same. It sets out a clear set of principles for the borough in environmental terms and lists a set of commitments that will guide the council's services and future planning of these.

11.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 11.1 There are no specific staffing or accommodation implications by adopting this new corporate environmental policy statement.

Background Papers

1. **Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan 2007**
<http://intranet.brent.gov.uk/Groups.nsf/0/afe93f4488b0b864802572830042c348?OpenDocument>
2. **National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships 2008**
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/nationalindicators/>
3. **Climate Change Strategy 2009**
<http://www.brent.gov.uk/cmin.nsf/reports/LBB-5663>

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Corporate Environmental Policy Statement

Brent Council is committed to sustainable development and improving the environmental wellbeing of the borough in sustainable ways through the services that we provide and by reducing the adverse effects of our own actions. We do this at a council wide level by delivering our Corporate Strategy, which commits us to improving the quality of life, becoming an exemplar for environmentally sustainable activity and making sustainability central to everything through initiatives such as implementing the Climate Change Strategy, the Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan and the Energy Statement and Strategy. We recognise that we can enhance the quality of the environment through our services, through our use of resources, particularly natural resources, and improve Brent in ways that allows us to live today but also maintains a high quality of life for future generations. By acting locally we will play our part in improving the global environment and we will ensure that we continually improve our environmental performance. We recognise that climate change is critical to all our futures and will ensure that Brent Council plays its part in reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases, ensuring its services adapt effectively to changes in the climate and plan effectively for dealing with severe weather events.

To improve the environment we will:

1. enforce and comply with all relevant legislation and other obligations;
2. raise awareness of, and provide information on, issues affecting the environment;
3. work with partners to promote the sustainable development agenda;
4. improve resource use and waste management by encouraging waste minimisation, re-use, recycling, composting, and other recovery techniques;
5. control development in the Borough in consultation with stakeholders, to protect and improve the quality of the environment and improve access for all;
6. be an exemplar for green design including new schools and the new Civic Centre;
7. deliver a sustainable transport programme, work with Transport for London to improve public transport including bus services and bring forward new fast bus options to link our areas of need with our areas of opportunity;
8. prevent, control, and reduce the release of pollutants to the environment;

In particular the council will maintain and continually improve the environmental wellbeing of Brent and address the environmental impact of how we deliver our services by:

- making environmental sustainability central to everything we do;
- becoming an exemplary organisation for sustainable activity;
- integrating environmental considerations into Council procurement;
- improving resource use and waste management by encouraging waste minimisation, promoting reuse, and increasing recycling;
- responding to Climate Change by cutting emissions from our estate operations, including carbon dioxide, meeting specific targets, promoting energy efficiency, using renewable energy, and by adapting our services;
- motivating and training our staff, especially through our Going Green campaign;

- looking for renewable energy supply for all our buildings and developments in the borough;
- implementing the council's green travel plan;
- enhancing the ecological value of land for which the Council is responsible;
- integrating environmental and sustainability considerations into all decision making considered to have significant environmental implications;
- monitoring the environmental impact of our services and operations.

These commitments will be integrated into our Corporate Standards and our environmental performance will be monitored through the performance management arrangements and is subject to audit. We will also report to central government through the National Indicators which are also subject to an external audit. Our performance will be published in our annual Environmental Performance Report.

This Policy will be reviewed once a year and will be displayed throughout the Council and distributed to all members of staff and relevant parties. Copies will be available on the internet, intranet, and upon request from the Environmental Projects and Policy Team, or at environment@brent.gov.uk.