


<p>London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p>ECONOMIC REGENERATION, HOUSING AND THE ARTS POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE</p> <p>7th March 2017</p>	
<p>GREENING OUR ESTATES</p>	
<p>Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Lisa Homan</p>	
<p>Open Report.</p>	
<p>Classification - For Policy and Accountability Committee Review and Comment</p>	
<p>Wards Affected: All</p>	
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Hammersmith and Fulham's ambition is to be the best and greenest borough. To help achieve this ambition, the housing service has developed and implemented a number of key initiatives that help improve local air quality, management of surface water, the quality of our green spaces, and enhance biodiversity on our estates.
- 1.2. This report provides an overview of projects undertaken towards achieving this ambition, and outlines the opportunities available to roll out further environmental improvements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Committee notes and comments on the environmental improvement works undertaken by the housing service on Hammersmith and Fulham housing estates.
- 2.2. Committee notes this report focuses on specific strategies that deliver environmental benefits through greening of estates, does not cover other initiatives such as efforts to reduce our carbon footprint through our asset management programme, and provides a brief overview on initiatives to improve recycling & re-use.

3. 'GREENING' INITIATIVES COMPLETED TO DATE

- 3.1. Hammersmith and Fulham has provided residents with a dedicated 'improvement' budget for environmental improvement projects of their choice for over 15 years, with the works delivered by Groundwork London. The budget was historically managed by project teams under various names – Minor Estate Improvement and Housing Estate Improvement Funds. This budget is currently awarded through our residents' 'Neighborhood Improvement Fund' panel.
- 3.2. The first H&F/Groundwork project where green roofs, rainwater gardens, food growing and swales were introduced was in 2012/13 at Flora Gardens. Other joint projects have taken place since 2012 with wildflower planting, food growing and fruit tree orchards of varying size introduced at a number of housing estates and sheltered housing schemes. Some of these projects have led to the creation of protected habitats. We've also installed a small number of bug hotels, bird houses and bat boxes.
- 3.3. In 2013/14 we commenced a large scale project on three estates, partly funded by the European Union - Life+. The scheme has demonstrated the strategic opportunity for climate change adaptation of open spaces on housing estates, increased the functional green infrastructure there, and improved local strategic flood risk interventions. This project has received national and international interest, also achieving a prestigious Landscape Institute Award in 2016, as well as additional funding from Thames Water to develop the scheme further. The success of the EU Life+ project can be attributed to the involvement of all stakeholders – residents, in house service providers, and good inter department co-operation as well as the quality of the architects and contractors who delivered the project.
- 3.4. As part of the same project, we installed a green roof whilst the planned flat roof renewal took place at Richard Knight House. As well as the environmental benefits identified, a further anticipated benefit of the green roof is extending the lifespan of the roof beyond normal timescales. Subject to available funding for the green roof costs, there is scope to adopt this approach to all programmed flat roof renewal for residential blocks, and to upgrade all of the outbuildings on estates to achieve additional green surface in the borough.
- 3.5. The measurable outputs of the EU life+ project are:
 - 2,500m² of enhanced green infrastructure
 - 25% increase in permeable surfaces
 - 20,000m³ of water retention capacity
 - 600 trees planted
 - 600m² of green roofs
 - 400m² of food growing capacity
 - 10 rain water harvesting systems

- 3.6. Other residents have been enthused by the project, leading to further bids in 2015/16 through our resident led 'Neighborhood Improvement fund', to install more green roofs and for food growing – (including a large allotment at one estate that includes a bee hive). These projects are ongoing.
- 3.7. 2016/17 projects with an environmental angle are the improvement of an open space on West Kensington estate to create natural play and a community orchard, and garden improvement with food growing focus at Askham Court. The bids for 2017/18 are due to be considered in March 17.
- 3.8. We are developing a joint strategy to manage trees in estates and parks, and recently secured funding from the GLA to plant 32 trees on Wormholt and Bayonne estates, to complete the planting before the end of March 2017.
- 3.9. We have ceased using the potentially harmful weedkiller, glysohate in our parks and open spaces. Going forward we will use a chemical-free hot foam system to help reduce weed growth on estates.
- 3.10. Our grounds maintenance contractor idVerde (Quadron) composts all green waste where they are able. Residents have been encouraged to plant shrubs, herbs and flowers on their home estates in discussion with their own resident association. Together we've held 'Plant a Bulb' events, encouraging children to participate in gardening and hopefully develop a sense of ownership and achievement while creating a more pleasant space.
- 3.11. Officers from waste management and housing have collaborated over several years to improve recycling opportunities on estates, working together to introduce bring banks on block landings, and direct recycling through the chute refuse systems.
- 3.12. A more recent initiative has seen the creation of a repurpose/recycling hub on the White City estate known as The Loop. This has been effective in reducing bulk waste sent for incineration, provided good quality low cost furniture items for borough residents as well as volunteering and work opportunities for residents. Our ambition is to take this project forward and use the success of the White City scheme as a model for other estates subject to available funding.

4. LOCAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 4.1. A 1988 study of the borough's wildlife habitats identified a total of 225 hectares of green space in the borough that constitutes 14 percent of the total surface area of the borough. A breakdown of this into different habitat types shows that over 60 percent of green space in the borough (150 hectares) comprises formal parkland, sports pitches, and amenity grassland. Of the remainder, the majority is grassland (30 hectares) and herbaceous communities (18 hectares).

- 4.2. Resident led focus groups now influence strategy and policy. H&F's Air Quality Commission (established in Jan 2016) has produced a report recommending the further development of an Urban Ecology Plan to drive greening policy and practice across the borough. Other recommendations are to incorporate arboricultural policies into the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), stagger street tree pruning to one in every three trees every three years, and increase tree, hedge and grass planting on Council-owned land and highways.
- 4.3. The resident led Biodiversity Commission was set up in January 2017 to examine ways of maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity of the borough. It will produce a report of findings and recommendations for action by central government, the Council, business, industry, organisations and residents.
- 4.4. There is further potential to improve local biodiversity, surface water management and air quality through improvements to both the ground level surfaces, and also to the estimated 45,000sm footprint of flat roofed buildings on housing estates.
- 4.5. Our housing estates have both hard and soft landscaping, with the soft landscaping included in the calculations above. The large and small estates have some 4000 trees of varied species and sizes.

5. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1. There is a raft of legislation that governs environmental issues, all of which inform H&F's Local Plan (LP) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and departmental strategies. Example relevant legislation follows -
- 5.2. Section 40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 makes local authorities responsible for conserving biodiversity; the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 provides protection for a range of species and habitats; the Government's Biodiversity 2020: 'A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services' sets out the ambition to halt the overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020 with a longer term ambition to move to a net gain position; the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 requires us to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy; the National Planning Policy Framework requires that the local authority planning system both contributes to and enhances the natural and local environment.
- 5.3. The council's draft Local Plan sets out a number of planning policies to enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure in the borough including:
 - Maximising the provision of gardens, landscaping and green/brown roofs;
 - Protecting gardens and encouraging planting in back and front gardens;
 - Seeking retention of existing trees and provision of new trees

- Adding to the greening of streets and the public realm.

6. FUTURE PLANS AND OPTIONS

- 6.1. For future years, as part of planned maintenance and regeneration programs, we will where possible include low cost interventions that contribute to delivering further greening improvements, and develop future funding strategies. To demonstrate how this works, the masterplan for the estate improvement strategy of Aintree Estate was reviewed using the logics tested on the EU Life+ estates and resulted in changes to incorporate more permeable surfaces, drought tolerant planting etc. Using the key themes below will help us prioritise and develop further initiatives.

Improving Air Quality

- 6.2. The council is to consult residents and stakeholders on a new five-year 'air quality action plan', in line with our Air Quality Commission's recommendations. The agreed document will include an action plan with responsibilities for all council departments.
- 6.3. The Mayor of London has a target to increase the current estimated tree canopy cover in Greater London from 20% to 25%. In inner London the canopy cover is less so those large mature trees we do have within the estates are especially valuable and should be retained. In line with Greater London Authority policy, any tree lost should be replaced following the principle of 'right place, right tree, and wherever appropriate, preference should be given to planting large-canopied species.
- 6.4. Housing can contribute to achieving this target through the roll out of further improvements to green space and green roof schemes, and replacing all trees removed due to disease or failure. We should also only reduce the canopy of trees to address a statutory nuisance or health and safety risk as it is the large trees, on account of their greater biomass and canopy cover that provide increased environmental benefits.
- 6.5. A realistic assessment of the contribution trees provide should include these factors, together with criteria such as species and habitat diversity. Measuring benefits and outcomes solely in terms of tree numbers can be misleading.
- 6.6. Housing has invested year on year in increasing tree stock with for example 1000 'whips' planted in 2011/12 across the borough, of which our current estimate is that 20% survived and established. 150 'whips' were planted on Field Road estate in 2013/14, 2014/15 participating in the Mayor of London's street tree initiative and planted new trees on 10 housing sites. 2015/17 600 trees planted through EU Life+ project. These planned strategies are in addition to any trees replaced following removal if appropriate.

Improving surface water management

- 6.7. We have tested Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes (SUDs) as both small and large scale interventions, and subject to funding, we could deliver further SUDs schemes on most estates during planned maintenance or as unique projects.
- 6.8. A bid has been made to the Counters Creek Storm Relief Sewer S106 fund to introduce SUDs schemes on housing estates within the Counters Creek catchment area. If the Counters Creek scheme progresses by April/May 17, our funding bid would be considered by Committee later this year for decision around November, with successful bids achieving s106 payments in Q4 2017/18.

'Greener' gardening and improving bio diversity

- 6.9. We will undertake further discussions and consultation with residents in the coming year, to do more wildflower and long grass planting, which would both increase biodiversity and the habitat value of the amenity grass on housing land. These are low cost interventions that could be achieved through existing budgets, also involving the local community in the seeding and planting events.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. Consultation is due on our Local Plan, Air Quality Action Plan and Urban Ecology Policy.
- 7.2. Housing residents and/or their representatives could be involved in developing the individual improvement plans for their own estates.
- 7.3. Service providers (e.g. Mitie, Quadron) will also be involved in developing estate plans.

8. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. All projects already undertaken and in progress by the Housing & Regeneration department are funded from existing budgets.
- 8.2. The financial implications of any opportunities to roll out further environmental improvements will be considered by finance officers and presented for approval as the projects are bought forward for approval.
- 8.3. Finance officers will support the financial management of the delivery of the SUDS schemes (referred to in paragraph 6.8) should the bid for funding of £500k from Section 106 be approved.

- 8.4. Implications verified/completed by: Danny Rochford, Head of Finance, HRD, 020 8753 4023.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
N/A	None		