

## SUSTAINABILITY PANEL

TUESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Marion Mills (Chairman), David Coppinger (Vice-Chairman), Derek Sharp, Lynda Yong and Simon Werner

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Naomi Markham and James Thorpe

Also in attendance: Will Hattersley, WhiffAway

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicola Pryer.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2018 be approved.**

### OPEN FORUM

The Chairman stated the Panel continued to look for ways to reduce energy consumption. The new Energy Reduction Manager had hit the ground running since starting working at the Borough and would continue to keep up with energy savings initiatives.

### WATERLESS URINALS

Will Hattersley from Waterless Solutions by Elemental gave a presentation to Members on the benefits of using waterless urinals in Council buildings. He explained he originated from Australia and had lived in the UK for four years; water was a precious resource in Australia where they used tanks to preserve water and so, he had grown up with the lifestyle of preserving water. Will Hattersley stated men's urinals always bugged him due to the amount of water they used so he began working with Whiff Away to reduce the water used in public buildings.

Even through pricing regulation for water, there were still huge variants in the prices for water and urinals were the single biggest user of water per day with over 157,000 litres per day being used on average for four flushes per day. Will Hattersley continued to give his presentation which included the following key points:

- The WhiffaAway Group was founded in 1992, they invented the original waterless urinal in 1993, making it the world's first retro-fit. They now had in excess of 100,000 urinal installations across the globe.
- WhiffAway controlled the process from start to finish and were the only company to design, manufacture, install and maintain their waterless urinals.
- They had a nationwide network of qualified engineers and plumbers.
- One of their key USP's were their initial free site assessments. That was not just a count of the urinals in situ, they also determined compatibility with their retro-fit systems and any access issues to pipes for servicing.

- When retro-fit was not possible, they offered other options ranging from new bowls to alternative water saving options.
- Additionally. Their smart water metering was able to determine current water usage so that actual savings were fact rather than fiction.
- Everything they provided was backed up by their service and satisfaction guarantee.
- WhiffAway were happy to carry out free trials and they would not remove any urinals already fitted that were in good working order.
- Their traps were manufactured in Scotland.
- The traps used a one-way valve so the urine went down the valve and then the valve seals which stopped any smell.
- The device was patented and the seal worked with a cartridge which contained a green enzyme block which broke down the urine.
- The enzyme blocks were replaced quarterly and there was also a filter that captured any gum or hair to stop the device getting blocked.
- Their pipes were custom made and tested. Nothing would be removed that was needed and the Council could always revert back to using a water system if it chose to.
- WhiffAway provided three months' supply of cleaning product and they scheduled quarterly visits to carry out the service, replace cartridges and clear through the pipework; a flow test was also carried out.
- A report would be provided on how the system was working and if further cleaning was required. The cleaning products would also be replenished.
- Cleaning the system was a very simple process, using a spray and a wipe of the bowl every day. And then a deeper clean was to be carried out once a week.
- There were other systems out there but WhiffAway provided maintenance, replacement valves, cartridges etc.
- WhiffAway had installed sensors at Heathrow's T3 to show the water usage used. Heathrow were shocked to see how much water they used before WhiffAway installed their waterless urinals, compared to how much water they saved following installation.
- The waterless urinals were the Council's big opportunity to reduce water consumption and try and be greener.
- The bowls at the Town Hall were very easy to adapt.
- The Coach Park in Windsor had 12 urinals installed and WhiffAway could adapt those to waterless urinals.
- WhiffAway were unable to convert the bowls at Bachelors Acre but, they could work on a solution in the longer term.
- There was a long lead time on installation as WhiffAway needed to ensure the public and other stakeholders were happy before installation took place.
- Will Hattersley proposed installing a water metre to measure usage over two months. If a considerable amount of water was being used, the waterless urinals could be fitted, monitor how they were working for up to eight weeks and then provide the Council with a report putting the case together for all toilets that would work using the WhiffAway system.

Will Hattersley confirmed if WhiffAway converted five urinals in the Town Hall, that would cost £120 per urinal. It was then £45 per service per urinal which included the cleaning products. It worked out much cheaper than running a water based system. Councillor Sharp asked if the system was available to buy. Will Hattersley responded it was available to buy but, he tried to steer people away from that option. Sainsburys had installed the WhiffAway system nationwide and had their own cleaning team carry out the maintenance, but it went wrong so Sainsburys asked WhiffAway to go back in and do the maintenance. He added that it would cost a little more for WhiffAway to carry out the maintenance but, it would not cost much more and it was an option.

Will Hattersley confirmed each green enzyme cartridge cost approximately £13 each. He stated it would be marginally cheaper for the Council to change the cartridges and carry out the maintenance in house but, it was not that much cheaper. Councillor Yong said speaking from a feminine perspective, when she walked passed men's toilets, it often smelled. If the WhiffAway system stopped that smell, then the costs would be worth it. Will Hattersley

confirmed there was a seven month lead time and if the Panel wanted to see what they were like, they were installed in Sainsburys. He added he could also offer a one-way valve for floor drains too which stopped smells getting up through the drains.

The Chairman asked if any other Council's had installed the WhiffAway system. Will Hattersley responded trials had been carried out in Bath and with Greenwich Leisure. Other customers included the Olympic Stadium, Fullers, Heathrow, PFP Leisure, as well as other independent restaurants. The Chairman asked if WhiffAway were working with old bowls, and a bowl was to get damaged, would that be at WhiffAway's expense. Will Hattersley stated all bowls would be surveyed and if they were needing to be replaced, that would be built into the price. However, if a new bowl was not required, but got broken by WhiffAway, the costs would be covered by WhiffAway. The bowls were cleaned before and after works were carried out.

Will Hattersley confirmed that bleach would damage the seal in a one-way valve and then the smell would return; that would be picked up during a service and the seal would be replaced. The valve would go white if bleach is used, but it was easily fixed. If it was a one off, WhiffAway would not charge for a replacement but, if it kept happening, the Council's own maintenance staff could change the valve. He added the cartridges used were also recycled so it was a much more environmentally friendly system.

The Chairman stated the concept was very interesting and thanked Will Hattersley for attending and giving his presentation.

### FOOD WASTE CADDY REPLACEMENT BAGS

Naomi Markham, Waste Strategy Manager, stated she had looked at the costs since the launch of the food waste recycling campaign started in 2015/16, and they came to £68,000. The campaign involved door knocking and distributing food waste bags to all houses. The current costs were £19,000 for replacement bags and her team were now carrying out a leaflet drop with a few bin bags per household at a cost of £28,000. Replacement bin bags were available at the libraries and that was the most popular way of residents obtaining their replacement food waste bin bags.

Councillor Coppinger stated he was disappointed that biodegradable bags could not be used as they could not be broken down by the processing plant. The Waste Strategy Manager responded the Council used an anaerobic digestion system which meant biodegradable bags did not break down as they needed oxygen. Also, biodegradable bags started breaking down very quickly which made it difficult for the bags to be collected as they would break very quickly. They were great for garden waste but not for food waste. The Waste Strategy Manager added that when the Council distributed replacement food waste bags, the team were informing people they needed to use plastic bags and not biodegradable bags. Plastic bags were not sent to landfill, they were recycled into energy.

- ❖ **Action** – the Waste Strategy Manager to circulate the food tonnage collected figures to the Panel.
- ❖ **Action** – the Waste Strategy Manager to explain in an email why biodegradable bags could not be used in food waste caddies and what happened to plastic bags that were used instead and circulate to the Panel.

### PLASTIC DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEME

Naomi Markham, Waste Strategy Manager, stated she had been working with Greenredeem who were carrying out a trial plastic deposit return scheme. The scheme could include drinks cartons, cans and glass. The government were looking into plastic return schemes and were possibly looking at implementing a similar scheme as seen in Europe. Greenredeem were trialling a system where plastic got deposited and a voucher would be issued. Greenredeem were working in schools and had a prototype vending machine installed. Some of the schools included Furze Platt, Manor Green, Woodlands Park, Riverside and Hilltop First School.

For every plastic bottle deposited, the school received 5p up to the maximum value of £2,000. The scheme encouraged children and their families to recycle and a letter had been sent to all schools in the Borough encouraging them to sign up to the scheme. The information pack sent to schools included letters to parents explaining the scheme, a webpage that showed a league table of schools and sign up packs.

Greenredeem were working with Plastic Oceans UK which was a UK charity trying to reduce plastic waste reaching the oceans. The scheme enabled schools to plan lessons around recycling that linked with the curriculum and got children more involved in recycling.

Grundon would collect the plastic that had been deposited and they worked with plastic processors which made the collected plastic into a new plastic product. Greenredeem were hoping to provide community based ideas and the Council had a meeting with Greenredeem scheduled for the week commencing 28 January 2019 to look at how ideas could be developed further. If the pilot scheme was successful, Greenredeem were aiming to expand the plastic deposit return scheme into areas with high footfall.

The Chairman said she knew the item was gaining ground, and there was no better way than to start with the Children. It was a great idea to introduce a league table to increase the competition which also increased levels of recycling. She added Grundon were hoping to obtain a government grant and they were also looking at other funding streams. If schools reached their £2,000 target, they could continue to recycle.

Councillor Sharp stated he was impressed with the pilot and that it was a great scheme and requested the Waste Strategy Manager provide an update on the pilot scheme and bring the figures from the schools league table back to the next Panel meeting.

- ❖ **Action** – The Waste Strategy Manager to provide an update on the update on the pilot scheme and bring the figures from the schools league table back to the next Panel meeting.

## PLASTIC REMOVAL FROM COUNCIL OFFICES

Councillor Coppinger stated the Motion to remove plastic from Council buildings came about through the work of Maidenhead Matters. The Borough was not trying to create a plastic free world, it was just trying to reduce single use plastics. He added the Council wanted to work with businesses across the Borough.

Maidenhead Matters encouraged all firms to allow people to refill their water bottles for free, particularly cafes, bars and restaurants. Councillor Coppinger had met with officers and agreed a programme of work to get plastics reduced, including to work with external businesses.

Members of the Panel noted and endorsed the Motion and also congratulated the Members that had worked across political parties to produce the Motion to remove single use plastics from Council buildings.

## CLOSURE OF SUSTAINABILITY PANEL AFTER MARCH 2019

Councillor Coppinger stated the Panel were aware that the number of Councillors were being reduced in the Borough in May 2019. That put a strain on Councillors that remained due to the number of meetings so, the decision was made at Full Council to merge meetings such as the Sustainability Panel or, run them externally. He added there would still be Cabinet responsibilities for sustainability in the Borough so it would not stop issues being worked on and officers would still be driving sustainability forward but, there would not be as many meetings.

The Chairman stated she was disappointed the meetings would cease but, it would not stop the work being done. The Energy Reduction Manager would continue to work on the energy reduction agenda and had lots of work to do. The Chairman added she would continue to have an interest in sustainability and would not be giving that up. She would continue to work with groups such as Maidenhead Matters and Greenredeem and she would not let the issues be dropped by the Council.

Councillor Sharp stated he felt it was a big mistake to discontinue the Sustainability Panel. The Panel was responsible for a lot of dramatic changes across the Council. Sustainability issues could not be scrutinised without a Panel. He understood the Council needed to make adjustments but, to remove the Sustainability Panel was a big mistake.

The Chairman stated the Council had changed their lights to LED lights, added Solar Panels to buildings as well as other large projects which had all started at the Sustainability Panel. However, moving forward, issues would still be scrutinised, but at other Panels and officers just needed to work out which scrutiny panel items would go to.

Councillor Werner said he was disappointed, he feared sustainability would be squeezed out and forgotten about. Yes, there would be scrutiny but, that would be part of a huge range of issues being scrutinised. Councillor Coppinger said if the Panel still felt that way after a period of time, he was happy to promote bringing the Panel back into existence. Councillor Werner said the opposition parties would encourage the Sustainability Panel being brought back. The Chairman stated if Members were re-elected in May, they could push the agenda as individual Councillors.

#### DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was noted. Councillor Coppinger gave his apologies for the next meeting as he was unable to attend.

Councillor Yong shared some facts on textile recycling and asked the Waste Strategy Manager to provide an update on the Borough's recycling of textiles figures be brought to the next meeting. She stated it cost the UK economy £82m to send textiles to landfill and the Panel needed to keep the pressure on the Council and raise awareness on the impacts the clothing industry had on the environment.

The Key facts shared by Councillor Yong included:

- £82m - The amount it costs the UK economy a year for sending clothing and household textiles to landfill.
- 2050 - The year that the fashion industry will have used up 25% of the world's carbon budget.
- 500,000 - The number of tonnes of microfibres that are released into the oceans every year during clothes washing.
- 3% - The drop in EBIT margin companies can expect by 2030 if they do not invest in sustainability
  
- **Action** – The Waste Strategy Manager to provide Members with an update on textile recycling in the Borough and add a piece to raise awareness of textile recycling to the next edition of Around the Royal Borough.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....

