

KINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
Ethical and Environmental Policy 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

Kington Town Council agrees:

'That the state of the environment is a focus of wise concern throughout the world, and rightly so. The world faces an environmental crisis. The way humans are using energy and resources, altering ecosystems and producing pollution is putting at risk the future ability of the earth to support life'

All life depends on the use of resources. To support life indefinitely these resources must be used in a sustainable way. Currently, resources tend to be used in a linear fashion. Typically this involves: Extract raw material : process : manufacture : use : dispose of waste. This is unsustainable, not only because the raw material will run out. The production of waste products (including those from energy use) through the cycle, in many cases pose a greater threat to natural cycles and processes that sustain life.

Local authorities have a duty to minimise their own environmental impact and to set a good example to others. Their ability to do so may sometimes be constrained by their other duties and responsibilities, but environmental protection should always have a high priority. Agenda 21, signed by world leaders in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, requires local authorities to produce action plans to improve sustainability in their areas. Town and parish councils have limited powers and resources in comparison with principal authorities. However, a town council such as Kington has an impact on the environment through its activities. Furthermore, like other local authorities, it is in a position to set a good (or bad) example in its approach to the environment.

The activities of Kington Town Council impact on the environment in six interlinked ways:

- Purchasing
- Management
- Energy use
- Waste
- Investment
- Conditions attached to grants given by the council to local organisations

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This environmental policy is designed to ensure that all council activities are evaluated against a set of guiding principles. Wherever possible, the action that most meets the following criteria will be taken:

- The use of all resources shall be minimised, taking account of the whole-life environmental cost, both of the resource and of the intended use.
- As far as possible, resources used should be within a “closed-loop cycle” i.e. ideally they should be 100% recycled and 100% recyclable
- Resources whose production damages life supporting systems and natural cycles shall not be used

Kington Town Council will be guided by the ten principles appended to this policy at Appendix 1. It is recognised that these principles are aspirational, but Kington Town Council will as far as possible work towards the achievement of these principles, both in relation to its own functions and with other relevant bodies and individuals whose activities impact on the town.

3. POLICIES

Detailed policies are set out below. They are subject to annual review, which may be amended or the list expanded to take account of new activities. The Council will do its best to abide by these policies. When this is not possible, reasons for not doing so will be provided in writing to the (insert appropriate committee). The (insert appropriate committee) will monitor the implementation of this policy and will report, at least annually, to the full Council. Against each policy, guidance is provided as to the ways in which the policy can be implemented.

SECTION A - PURCHASING

Introduction

All products have impacts on the environment. These may be due to the resources they use, the methods of manufacture, packaging, transportation, how they are used and/or how they degrade in the environment once they have been used. Council purchases can adversely effect the environment during production, transport and packaging, use and disposal. Kington Town Council’s purchases are consumables such as paper, ink cartridges and bedding plants, as well as the occasional large capital item. Some large equipment is hired.

POLICY ENV 1: The Council will take into account the likely effect of its purchases, and equipment that it hires, on the environment.

POLICY ENV 1a: The Council will take into account the policy guidance noted below and will purchase the most environmentally friendly paper obtainable that is consistent with its needs.

POLICY ENV 1b: The Council will use as little paper as is consistent with its smooth operation and the need to keep Councillors and others informed in accordance with democratic principles.

POLICY ENV 1c: The Council will use recycled toner cartridges whenever this is possible and of suitable quality. When purchasing new equipment, care will be taken that good quality recycled cartridges are available.

Policy Guidance:

Paper, envelopes and card

Paper and card products should always contain some recycled fibres, preferably 100%. Compared to virgin products, recycled manufacturing consumes up to 50% less energy, up to 50% less water and involves fewer chemicals. It also uses resources that would otherwise end up in landfill or incineration sites.

Recycled paper and card can be divided into four categories:

A. Wood-free Mill Waste

Paper made from damaged or faulty goods rejected at the mill. It is of the highest quality but is the least environmentally friendly of the four.

B. Wood-free Unprinted Waste

Waste generated by paper converters and printers, and returned to the mill. It is generally of high quality.

C. Wood-free Printed Waste

Post-consumer paper generated from offices, which needs de-inking. Using this waste reduces pollution from dumping and incineration.

D. Mechanical Printed/Unprinted Waste

Waste made from post-consumer newsprint and magazines that would otherwise be landfilled or incinerated.

Chlorine bleaching is an environmentally damaging process and should be avoided. Recycled envelopes will be used as far as possible .

Staff and councillors will be careful about wasting paper and use both sides wherever possible.

Ink cartridges

Recycled toner cartridges for laser printers, faxes and photocopiers are now widely available. However, they are not available for all makes of equipment.

POLICY ENV 1d: Where it is acceptable and possible, permanent planting will be used in preference to bedding plants.

Policy Guidance:

Bedding plants

Bedding plants are expected in formal beds in parks and gardens. However, there is scope for more permanent planting to reduce the use of bedding plants.

POLICY ENV 1e: As far as possible, paints and varnishes will be chosen to have minimal detrimental impact on the environment. Only water-based paints will be used indoors.

Policy Guidance:

Paints and varnishes

Paints and varnishes often contain unpleasant solvents that can be environmentally damaging and, when used indoors, can have unpleasant and dangerous health effects.

POLICY ENV 1f: Cleaning materials, indoor and outdoor, will be chosen as far as can be ascertained, to cause minimum damage to the environment.

POLICY ENV 1g: Aerosols containing CFCs and HCFCs will not be purchased or used.

POLICY ENV 1h: The Council will do its best to only purchase wood from sustainable sources, preferably in this country, and will try to ensure that its contractors do likewise.

Policy Guidance:

Wood

Sustainable sources are those which do not destroy old-growth forests and do replace trees which are cut down. The destruction of old-growth forests, both tropical and temperate : is causing a rapid and severe depletion of the world's tree cover and contributing to global warming by decreasing carbon dioxide absorption. The destruction of fragile ecosystems causes a decrease in biodiversity. The planting of trees for wood production increases carbon dioxide absorption but cannot replace lost species.

POLICY ENV 1i: The Council will not purchase or use peat-based compost.

Policy Guidance:

Compost

It is now recognised that the extraction of peat for compost is causing environmental damage.

POLICY ENV 1j: Wherever practicable, reusable or refillable items will be used in place of throw- disposable items.

Policy Guidance:

Re-usable items

Many items can be bought in either disposable or reusable forms.

POLICY ENV 1k: The Council will buy and hire locally produced and marketed goods whenever possible and when this is consistent with quality criteria and the Council's financial regulations.

Policy Guidance:

Transport

Transport is a major user of energy and cause of pollution. Buying locally produced and marketed good and services both reduces transport and keeps the Council's money in the local economy.

POLICY ENV 1l: The Council will attempt to avoid buying goods with excessive packaging. When this cannot be avoided, the Council will register a complaint with the supplier.

Policy Guidance:

Packaging

Resource use **can** be significantly reduced by avoiding products that are excessively packaged. Plastic packaging, in particular, should be avoided as it remains difficult to recycle and is a major polluter in its manufacturing process.

SECTION B WASTE

Introduction

Waste results in air, water and land pollution. The emphasis should be to reduce use, then to reuse and finally to recycle. Waste produced by Kington Town Council consists mainly of paper (from the office) and prunings etc. (from the from the Recreation Ground).

POLICY ENV 2a: As far as is possible, the Council will try to avoid waste and re-use items (or pass them to others for reuse). Items that cannot be reused will be recycled.

Policy Guidance:

Reduction, Reuse and Recycling

Kington Town Council will aim to reduce paper and other waste and to recycle where possible. It will also encourage wider recycling of waste within the town. Green waste from the Recreation Ground will be shredded rather than burnt.

SECTION C

ENERGY USE

Introduction

The burning of fossil fuels, directly or to generate electricity, releases carbon dioxide, a gas recognised to be a major contributor to global warming. Burning fossil fuels also releases sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which contribute to acid rain. Additionally, these fuels are not renewable, so their depletion needs to be reduced.

POLICY ENV 3a: The Council will purchase energy that comes from renewable sources. Where this is not possible, the Council will purchase through a scheme that makes a contribution to renewable energy production.

POLICY ENV 3b: The Council will ensure that all its heating systems are in good working order and will do its best to provide a comfortable, but not excessively hot, working environment.

Policy Guidance:

Heating

Space heating is one of the largest contributors to carbon dioxide emissions.

POLICY ENV 3c: When buying or hiring electrical or other energy-using devices, including vehicles, the Council will take into account the energy consumption. Equipment, including vehicles will be used as economically as possible. As far as practicable, devices, including vehicle engines, will be switched off when not in use.

SECTION D

LAND MANAGEMENT

Introduction

There is often limited scope for imagination in the management of formal parks and playing fields. However, Kington Town Council will look imaginatively at how the areas that it manages encourage a diversity of habitats and species, and will encourage other land owners and users in the town to likewise consider biodiversity in their approaches to land management and use. Kington Town Council has adopted a policy on the use of herbicides (Appendix 2).

POLICY ENV 4: As far as is possible taking into account their use, any land areas maintained by the Council (including those of the Recreation Ground Trust) will be managed to maximise the opportunities for a variety habitats suitable for native flora and fauna.

SECTION E

INVESTMENT

Kington Town Council has a duty to try to ensure that its money is not used for environmentally damaging activity. The decision to move the bank account to the Unity Trust Bank has been taken in the light of its ethical policies as well as the services that it can offer to the Town Council.

POLICY ENV 5: As far as possible the Council's money will be invested with, and financial services will be obtained from, institutions with sound environmental and ethical policies.

SECTION F:

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO GRANTS

Kington Town Council makes a number of small grants to local organisations that contribute to the community. The way in which this money is spent should be covered by the council's environmental policy

POLICY ENV 6: When grants are made to local organisations, the receiving organisation will be required to abide by the council's environment policy in the spending of the money. Where necessary, the council will provide information, help, and advice to enable the receiving organisation to do this.

APPENDIX 1

TEN PRINCIPLES THAT WILL GUIDE THE COUNCIL

ZERO CARBON

Making buildings more energy efficient and delivering all energy with renewable technologies

ZERO WASTE

Reducing waste, reusing where possible, and ultimately sending zero waste to landfill

SUSTAINBLE TRANSPORT

Encouraging low carbon modes of transport to reduce emissions; reducing the need to travel

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

Using sustainable healthy products, with low embodied energy, sources locally, made from renewable or waste resources

LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Choosing low impact local seasonal and organic diets and reducing food waste

SUSTAINABLE WATER

Using water more efficiently in buildings and in the products that we buy, tackling local flooding and water course pollution

LAND USE AND WILDLIFE

Protecting and restoring bio-diversity and natural habitats through appropriate land use and integration into the built environment

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Reviving local identity and wisdom; supporting and participating in the arts

EQUALITY AND LOCAL ECONOMY

Creating bioregional economies that support fair employment, inclusive communities and international fair trade

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Creating active, social meaningful lives to promote good health and well-being