

**CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL**  
Record of Executive Decision

<b>EMERGING WATER RESOURCES REGIONAL PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE</b>
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**Decision of:** Councillor Thornburrow, Executive Councillor,  
Planning Policy and Transport

**Reference:** 22/URGENCY/P&T/01

**Date of decision:** 15/02/22                      **Published:**  
22/02/22

**Decision Type:** Non-Key

**Matter for Decision:** Response to the emerging Water Resources Regional Plan for Eastern England

**Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):**

Water Resources East (WRE) are carrying out consultation on the emerging Water Resources Regional Plan for Eastern England between 17 January and 28 February 2022. WRE are planning for sustainable and resilient water resources for the next 50 years and beyond. The Water Resources Management Plans produced by the water companies in this region will need to be in line with the Regional Plan.

For further information, see the emerging Regional Plan, the non-technical summary and the WRE press release.

The Regional Plan will be a key document for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. In the First Proposals, the Councils were clear that the preferred option for growth was contingent on there being evidence as the plan progresses that an adequate water supply would be available to meet the development needs identified without unacceptable environmental harm. Therefore, it is important that the Councils put forward their views on the emerging Regional Plan and the potential solutions to providing water supply in the future.

This is the first consultation on the regional plan. It sets out the scale of the water deficit in the region and the reasons for this, which relate to growth, climate change, the needs of the agri-food and energy sectors, and an increasing allocation for the natural environment. The plan focuses on:

- Demand management including reducing leakage and per capita consumption.
- New sources of water supply including large infrastructure options (>10 Megalitres/day (MI/d)) such as reservoirs, transfer, desalination, effluent re-use.
- 'Local' non-water company and smaller (<10MI/d) water company infrastructure projects and schemes.
- Possible water innovations and exemplars which could be supported or facilitated.

Appendix 1 to this decision sets out the proposed responses to the questions posed by WRE in the consultation. The purpose of this decision is to agree the responses so that they can be submitted before the deadline as a joint response from Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Appendix 1 can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD1606&ID=1606&RPID=74504025>

WRE will use the results of the consultation to develop the Draft Plan which will be subject to another round of consultation in Autumn 2022 and the final plan is expected in 2023. Officers are also carrying out ongoing engagement with WRE, the water companies and the Environment Agency to support the development of the Local Plan.

**The Executive Councillor's decision(s):**

To confirm that the consultation response set out in Appendix 1 of this decision should be made to the emerging Water Resources Regional Plan for Eastern England.

Appendix 1 can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD1606&ID=1606&RPID=74504025>

**Reasons for the decision:**

To provide the views of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council on the emerging Water Resources Regional Plan for Eastern England because future water resources will be a key issue for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

**Scrutiny consideration:**

The Chair and Spokespersons of the Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted on this matter.

**Report:** Appendix 1 – Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council response to the Emerging Water Resources Regional Plan for Eastern England (January 2022)  
Appendix 1 can be viewed at the link below:  
[Document Meeting 22.03.22 - ROD Emerging Water Resources Regional Plan Consultation Response - Cambridge Council](#)

**Conflicts of interest:** None known.

**Comments:** The following comments were received from Cllr Bick (Opposition Spokes, Liberal Democrats):

- i. This broadly goes in the right direction.
- ii. Although the point is made that demand management measures alone will only suffice in the interim and that supply measures (as referred to in A1) will be needed to accommodate the anticipated growth, we would like to see this even more clearly emphasised in answers to the later questions.
- iii. It seems to us that it would be likely to assist WRE if our input could also map out the implications of growth and its timing in both our current local plan and our embryonic new local plan, in terms of phased demand management goals on the one hand and supply infrastructure on the other. It seems at present that the challenge is not properly calibrated into needed milestones of change and is still being conducted at a level of generality.

Comments were received from Cllr S Davies (Opposition Spokes, Green and Independent).

- i. I would like the Council's response to be unequivocal about the fact is that "**current levels of abstraction are causing environmental damage**" (letter from the Environment Agency to Monical Hone, 7/8/2020 <https://twitter.com/MonicaHone/status/1291720198312132615?s=20&t=EC4LxZyAJG6J2iNJCLoWrw>) Hence, this is not an issue relating to some future period in time, this is with us already.
- ii. In this context, the description in the draft response that water "**could be** a potential 'show stopper' to economic and housing growth in Greater Cambridge" and the request that water supply "**be put in place in a timely way** to support growth" significantly

underplay both the immediacy and the severity of the situation, as we are already in deficit.

- iii. I hope you recognise the depth of the concern felt by the Green & Independent group councillors about this issue.

The Planning Policy Manager, Jonathan Dixon, acknowledged the comments. In response to the comments a number of amendments were incorporated into the final response and agreed by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport.